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International cooperation of the Slovak Information Service: Strategic partnerships and multilateral engagement

Medzinárodná spolupráca Slovenskej informačnej služby: Strategické partnerstvá a multilaterálne zapojenie

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Abstract:

International cooperation represents one of the key pillars of the Slovak Information Service (SIS) in protecting national interests and state security in a globalized security environment. The aim of the presented study is to analyze the strategic goals, priorities and forms of international cooperation of SIS in the context of current security threats. The work focuses primarily on identifying the main areas of interest, which include the fight against international terrorism, illegal migration, proliferation, hybrid threats and monitoring of crisis regions. Special attention is paid to bilateral cooperation with strategic partners (USA, Great Britain, France, Germany and V4 countries) as well as to the multilateral engagement of SIS in the structures of the EU and NATO. The contribution of the work is the systematic mapping of the current state of international cooperation of the SIS, including its institutional framework, decision-making mechanisms and planned development in the period 2025-2032. The study also assesses the extent to which the SIS can effectively respond to the changing geopolitical environment and new types of security threats through balanced cooperation with both Western and Eastern partners. The results of the work contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of the civilian intelligence service in the system of national and European security and can serve as a basis for further research in the field of intelligence diplomacy and international security cooperation.

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Keywords: *Slovak Information Service, international cooperation, intelligence services, security threats, strategic partnerships, EU, NATO*

Abstrakt:

Medzinárodná spolupráca predstavuje jeden z kľúčových pilierov činnosti Slovenskej informačnej služby (SIS) pri ochrane národných záujmov a bezpečnosti štátu v globalizovanom bezpečnostnom prostredí. Cieľom predkladanej štúdie je analyzovať strategické ciele, priority a formy medzinárodnej spolupráce SIS v kontexte aktuálnych bezpečnostných hrozieb. Práca sa zameriava predovšetkým na identifikáciu hlavných oblastí záujmu, medzi ktoré patrí boj proti medzinárodnému terorizmu, nelegálnej migrácii, proliferácii, hybridným hrozbám a monitorovanie krízových regiónov. Osobitná pozornosť je venovaná bilaterálnej spolupráci so strategickými partnermi (USA, Veľká Británia, Francúzsko, Nemecko a krajiny V4) ako aj multilaterálnemu angažmánu SIS v štruktúrach EÚ a NATO. Prínosom práce je systematické zmapovanie aktuálneho stavu medzinárodnej spolupráce SIS vrátane jej inštitucionálneho rámca, rozhodovacích mechanizmov a plánovaného rozvoja v horizonte rokov 2025 – 2032. Štúdia zároveň hodnotí, do akej miery dokáže SIS prostredníctvom vyváženej spolupráce so západnými aj východnými partnermi efektívne reagovať na meniace sa geopolitické prostredie a nové typy bezpečnostných hrozieb. Výsledky práce prispievajú k hlbšiemu porozumeniu úlohy civilnej spravodajskej služby v systéme národnej a európskej bezpečnosti a môžu slúžiť ako podklad pre ďalší výskum v oblasti spravodajskej diplomacie a medzinárodnej bezpečnostnej spolupráce.

Kľúčové slová: *Slovenská informačná služba, medzinárodná spolupráca, spravodajské služby, bezpečnostné hrozby, strategické partnerstvá, EÚ, NATO*

Introduction

In the current globalized and highly dynamic security environment, international cooperation between intelligence services represents one of the most effective tools for protecting the national interests of states and the security of their citizens. No country, regardless of its size or economic strength, is able to effectively confront complex and transnational security threats, such as international terrorism, organized crime, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, hybrid operations or illegal migration, on its own. That is why mutual exchange of information, joint operations and strategic coordination between intelligence services have become an integral part of modern security policy.

The Slovak Information Service (SIS) as a civilian intelligence and security service of the Slovak Republic plays a key role in this context. It was established by the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 46/1993 Coll. on the Slovak Information Service and, within the scope of its competence, obtains, analyses and provides relevant state authorities with information on the most serious threats to the constitutional order, internal order and security of the state. In addition, SIS performs tasks in the field of protecting the foreign policy and economic interests of the Slovak Republic and actively participates in averting security threats to the member states of the European Union and NATO. [1]

A significant part of the SIS's activities is its international cooperation. This cooperation is not an end in itself, but serves as a strategic tool for obtaining information that would otherwise not be available and for building trustworthy partnership relations with selected foreign intelligence services. The fight against

international terrorism has become a priority for the foreign intelligence community, and therefore also for SIS, in the last two decades. Other key areas of common interest include the fight against illegal migration and smuggling, the proliferation of weapons and dual-use items, extremism, the activities of foreign intelligence services (counterintelligence) and monitoring developments in crisis and conflict regions.

SIS strives for balanced and fair partnerships when building international relations. It develops cooperation with the services of countries to the west of Slovakia, but also with selected partners to the east. The Director of SIS decides on the initiation of new cooperation, while the quality and intensity of relations vary according to the strategic importance of the partner and the results achieved. SIS maintains the most developed and effective partnerships with the strong intelligence services of the United States of America, Great Britain, France and Germany, as well as with the services of neighboring states, especially the V4 countries.

In addition to bilateral cooperation, SIS is an active member of several international intelligence platforms and structures of the European Union and NATO. Among the most significant is its position as a founding member of the international forum Middle European Conference (MEC), which was established in 1994 in Amsterdam. SIS liaison officers operating directly abroad are also an important tool for international cooperation. [2]

The aim of the presented study is to analyze in detail the goals, priorities and forms of international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service, as well as to evaluate its strategic direction in the coming years. The work focuses on identifying key areas of interest, the institutional framework of cooperation and the prospects for its further development in a changing geopolitical environment.

1 Strategic objectives of international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service

The international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service is strategically focused on protecting the fundamental national interests of the Slovak Republic, especially in the areas of political stability, economic security and the protection of citizens from external threats. In accordance with the official tasks of the SIS, foreign cooperation represents a key tool for obtaining relevant information and for active participation in solving transnational security challenges that Slovakia would not be able to effectively deal with on its own. The main strategic priorities of the international cooperation of the SIS can be defined in the following areas:

a) Combating international terrorism - Combating international terrorism has long been one of the highest priorities of the global intelligence community and at the same time a key area of international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service. Despite the significant weakening of some terrorist organizations in recent years, the threat of terrorism remains relevant, mainly due to ongoing radicalization, the return of fighters from conflict zones, as well as the spread of extremist ideology via the Internet and social networks. SIS is actively involved in international cooperation in this area at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Through the exchange of information with partners, it identifies terrorist networks and individuals, monitors their activities in Europe and beyond, and contributes to the early detection of planned attacks. Special emphasis is placed on protecting the territory of the Slovak Republic and the security of its citizens, including abroad. Within European and transatlantic platforms,

SIS contributes to a joint situational assessment of threats and to the coordination of preventive measures, thereby contributing to strengthening collective security in the EU and NATO areas. [3]

b) Illegal migration and smuggling - Illegal migration and the related smuggling represent a significant security challenge that goes beyond the framework of migration policy and is closely related to organized crime and potential risks to the internal security of the state. The cooperation of the Slovak Information Service in this area is focused on the systematic monitoring of the main migration routes to Europe, the identification of organized criminal groups engaged in human smuggling and the acquisition of relevant information on the risks associated with illegal migration. Special emphasis is placed on detecting cases where migrants include persons posing a potential security risk, including possible infiltration by persons with ties to terrorist organizations, extremist groups or foreign intelligence services. Within the framework of international cooperation, the SIS contributes to the exchange of information on the activities of smuggling networks, on the routes and methods used, as well as to the assessment of the broader security consequences of migration flows for the Slovak Republic and the entire European area. This area of cooperation requires close coordination with partners from transit and destination countries, as well as with European agencies active in the field of external border protection. [4]

c) Cybersecurity and hybrid threats - In recent years, cybersecurity and the issue of hybrid threats have gained strategic importance in the activities of the Slovak Information Service. Hybrid operations, which combine cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, influence operations and other forms of non-violent coercion, represent a complex and difficult-to-detect threat, often led by state actors. Given the increasing intensity of these activities, SIS is actively involved in the international exchange of information regarding cyber threats, disinformation and influence operations, as well as other hybrid activities directed against the Slovak Republic and its allies in the EU and NATO.

In this area, SIS focuses primarily on identifying actors of hybrid operations, analyzing their methods and goals, as well as monitoring disinformation narratives that threaten social cohesion, trust in state institutions and the integrity of the democratic process. Particular attention is paid to activities that can disrupt critical infrastructure, influence public opinion or weaken the resilience of society to external influence. Within the framework of international cooperation, SIS contributes to a joint situational assessment of hybrid threats and to the exchange of experience in the field of detection, attribution and countermeasures.

This area of cooperation is gaining increasing importance in the context of ongoing hybrid warfare and information operations, which have become an integral part of geopolitical competition. Effective protection against these threats requires close coordination with partners within the European Union and NATO, as well as the development of own analytical and operational capacities in the field of cyber and information security. [5]

d) Proliferation of weapons and dual-use materials - The proliferation of weapons and dual-use materials poses a serious threat to international security, as it enables the spread of technologies and materials that can be misused to produce weapons of mass destruction, conventional weapons or to support terrorist and

destabilizing activities. The aim of the international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service in this area is to actively contribute to preventing the illegal spread of such materials and technologies that could threaten the security of the Slovak Republic, its allies in the EU and NATO, as well as the wider international environment. Within the framework of this cooperation, SIS focuses on monitoring relevant activities, identifying risky entities and illegal trade routes, as well as obtaining and exchanging information on attempts to circumvent international control mechanisms. The Service actively participates in international efforts to control proliferation, through bilateral information exchange with strategic partners, as well as through multilateral platforms and export control regimes. This area of cooperation takes on particular importance in the context of geopolitical tensions, when some states use illegal channels to acquire sensitive technologies or to support conflicts in various regions of the world. Effective cooperation in the area of proliferation requires close coordination with partners who have broader analytical and operational capacities, while also contributing to the fulfillment of the international obligations of the Slovak Republic within the framework of the UN, the European Union and other international control regimes. [6]

e) Monitoring of crisis and conflict regions - Monitoring of crisis and conflict regions is an important part of the international cooperation of the Slovak Information Service, which enables timely acquisition of relevant information on developments in areas with high security risk. Special emphasis is placed on the Middle East, North Africa, the Sahel and the eastern border of Europe, i.e. regions that have long generated or may generate security threats with a direct or indirect impact on the Slovak Republic and the entire European area. Monitoring these areas allows the SIS to identify potential risks associated with regional conflicts, destabilization of states, the spread of extremism and terrorism, as well as illegal migration and organized crime. At the same time, it provides important information on the possible impact of these conflicts on energy security, supply chains and broader geopolitical stability. Through bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the SIS obtains information from areas to which it has limited or no direct access, and contributes to the joint assessment of threats within the EU and NATO. This area of international cooperation is becoming increasingly important in the context of ongoing conflicts and instability in Europe's neighbourhood. Timely and high-quality information from crisis regions enables Slovak state authorities to better anticipate the possible consequences of regional developments and to take appropriate preventive or reactive measures at both national and European levels. [7]

These strategic priorities for international cooperation are not fixed, but rather constantly adapt to the dynamically evolving geopolitical environment and new, often hybrid, forms of security threats. The changing nature of threats – from classic terrorism to cyber and disinformation operations to complex hybrid campaigns by state actors – requires SIS to be able to respond flexibly and to regularly reassess its foreign engagement. The effective implementation of these priorities is largely conditioned by the quality and credibility of partner relations, as well as SIS's ability to actively engage in European and transatlantic intelligence platforms. It is the combination of strong bilateral partnerships with strategic services and active participation in multilateral structures of the EU and NATO that allows the Slovak Information Service to obtain relevant information, participate in joint threat assessment and

contribute to strengthening collective security. In this context, long-term sustainability and development of international cooperation are key prerequisites for the ability of SIS to effectively fulfill its tasks for the benefit of the national security of the Slovak Republic.

2 Forms of cooperation: Bilateral and multilateral level

The Slovak Intelligence Service develops its international cooperation at two basic levels – bilateral and multilateral. These two forms of cooperation complement each other and enable SIS to effectively obtain information, build trustworthy partnerships and actively participate in solving common security challenges.

2. 1 Bilateral cooperation

Bilateral cooperation is the basic pillar of the Slovak Intelligence Service's foreign activities. The service maintains contacts with dozens of partner intelligence services around the world, while the intensity and depth of these relationships vary significantly depending on the strategic importance of the individual partners. The most developed and high-quality cooperation takes place with the strong intelligence services of the United States of America, Great Britain, France and Germany, which have global analytical and operational capacities. Regional cooperation with the services of neighboring states is also important, especially with the V4 countries, where the proximity of both geography and security interests allows for an intensive daily exchange of information on cross-border threats.

Within the framework of bilateral relations, there is a regular and confidential exchange of information, a joint analysis of the activities of foreign intelligence services, an assessment of influence and hybrid operations, and an exchange of knowledge in the field of energy security. This form of cooperation allows SIS to obtain information that is often more sensitive and more precisely targeted at the national security needs of Slovakia than is possible within broader multilateral platforms. It is precisely the bilateral format, based on the principle of "need-to-know" and mutual trust, that provides space for deeper exchange and long-term building of partnerships that would not be possible in a multilateral environment.

Bilateral cooperation thus enables SIS not only to obtain strategically important information from the global level, but also to respond effectively to regional and specifically Slovak security challenges in close coordination with trusted partners.

2.2 Multilateral cooperation

It complements the bilateral dimension by enabling SIS to actively operate in a broader international environment. The service is a member of five major international intelligence platforms, in which it participates in joint intelligence operations, international exercises and strategic threat assessments. This form of cooperation is extremely important in solving transnational problems such as international terrorism, proliferation or hybrid threats, as it allows for a coordinated approach by several states at once. In addition, multilateral platforms provide space for the exchange of experience and the formation of common procedures within the European and transatlantic security architecture.

As part of multilateral cooperation, the Slovak Information Service actively participates in several international intelligence platforms, which enable coordinated exchange of information and joint threat assessments. The most important include:

a) Middle European Conference (MEC) - An important multilateral platform in which the Slovak Information Service has been operating for a long time is the Middle European Conference (MEC). This regional intelligence forum was established in 1994 in Amsterdam and SIS is one of its founding members. The platform brings together civil intelligence and security services of Central European countries and its main goal is the regular exchange of information, joint analysis of regional security risks and building mutual trust between partners.

MEC focuses mainly on the issue of combating terrorism, organized crime and other threats that have a regional or transnational character. Regular meetings of the forum allow member services to coordinate procedures, exchange analytical outputs and strengthen operational cooperation in areas of common interest.

Historically, however, SIS's operation in this platform has not been uninterrupted. In 1996, during the government of Vladimír Mečiar and under the directorship of Ivan Lexa, the Slovak Information Service was excluded from the MEC. The reason was Slovakia's international isolation and deep distrust of Western partners, combined with suspicions of SIS involvement in the kidnapping of Michal Kováč Jr. After the parliamentary elections in 1998 and the subsequent reform of the intelligence services, Slovakia's membership in this forum was fully restored. This historical development illustrates how the international position of SIS has developed depending on the political direction of the country and the quality of its foreign cooperation.

Currently, the MEC is one of the stable and proven platforms for regional intelligence cooperation, in which SIS regularly participates and actively contributes to the joint assessment of security threats in the Central European area. [8]

b) EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) - The main strategic intelligence structure of the European Union, operating within the European External Action Service (EEAS). SIS regularly contributes to INTCEN's strategic assessments, especially in the areas of hybrid threats, terrorism and regional conflicts. The EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN) is the main civilian strategic intelligence structure of the European Union. It is organizationally integrated into the European External Action Service (EEAS) and reports directly to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Unlike national intelligence services, INTCEN does not carry out its own operational activities and does not have its own agents in the field. It operates exclusively on the principle of voluntary information sharing, when the intelligence services of the EU Member States, including the Slovak Information Service, provide their analytical knowledge to this centre. Based on the information provided, INTCEN analysts prepare comprehensive strategic and geopolitical assessments that serve as a basis for decision-making by the European Union institutions. The main areas of interest include monitoring international terrorism, hybrid threats, disinformation operations, illegal migration and developments in regional conflicts. INTCEN thus functions as a joint analytical centre that links information from different Member States into a coherent European view of security threats.

The Slovak Information Service actively participates in the activities of this centre. It regularly provides analytical contributions focused mainly on the Central and Eastern Europe region, the hybrid operations of foreign powers and cybersecurity. In this way, SIS not only fulfils its obligations arising from Slovakia's membership in the European Union, but also actively contributes to the creation of joint European threat assessments. Participation in INTCEN allows SIS to supplement its own analytical capacities with information and perspectives from other Member States.

In the broader context of European intelligence cooperation, INTCEN is also complemented by a military component – the Intelligence Directorate of the European Union Military Staff (EUMS INT). The joint analytical capacity of these two structures, referred to as the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), enables a more comprehensive assessment of threats with an impact on both the civilian and military dimensions. In addition, SIS also participates in the activities of emerging platforms, such as the Intelligence College in Europe (ICE), which focus on education and building a common European intelligence culture. [9]

c) Hybrid Fusion Cell - The Hybrid Fusion Cell is a specialised analytical unit established in 2016 as part of the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN), which falls under the European External Action Service (EEAS). Its creation was a direct response to the increasing intensity of hybrid threats against the European Union and its Member States, in particular in relation to disinformation campaigns, cyber attacks and influence operations by both state and non-state actors.

The main task of the Hybrid Fusion Cell is to act as a central point for the collection, analysis and fusion of intelligence on hybrid threats. It collects and evaluates data provided by Member States and, on this basis, prepares strategic analyses and early warnings for EU policymakers. In this way, it contributes to building a common situational awareness and to better coordinating the Union's response to hybrid activities.

The Slovak Intelligence Service (SIS) actively participates in the Hybrid Fusion Cell through national contact points and regular intelligence exchange. SIS provides information on hybrid threats identified on the territory of Slovakia, in particular in the field of disinformation and influence operations, and participates in the joint analysis of these activities. Participation in the Hybrid Fusion Cell allows SIS not only to obtain relevant information from the European level, but also to actively contribute to the formation of a common European view on hybrid threats and to strengthening the collective resilience of the EU to these challenges. [10]

d) Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) - The European Union Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN) is the main civilian strategic intelligence structure of the European Union. Its primary mission is to produce comprehensive all-source intelligence assessments based on the fusion of various sources of information. Every year, INTCEN produces approximately 200 strategic situational assessments and around 50 specialised reports and briefings, which serve as a basis for decision-making at the highest political level of the Union. Functionally, SIAC combines the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (EU INTCEN), which operates within the European External Action Service (EEAS), and the Intelligence Directorate of the EU Military Staff (EUMS INT).

The main recipient of INTCEN products is the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP). However, the outputs are also

provided to the senior management of the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Commission and the EU Member States, in particular through the Political and Security Committee (PSC). The distribution of products is strictly based on the need-to-know principle and requires appropriate security clearance.

INTCEN products are designated as "Limited" or classified up to SECRET UE/EU SECRET, depending on the sensitivity of the input information. In some cases, INTCEN also provides targeted presentations and briefings for specific recipients.

EU INTCEN functions as the intelligence hub of the EEAS. Its main output is a comprehensive strategic assessment based on information provided by the intelligence services of the Member States, as well as by relevant services of the Council, the European Commission and the European External Action Service, including EU delegations in third countries. Member States' contributions depend on the availability of information and the willingness to share it. INTCEN is able to securely process information up to TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET.

INTCEN's involvement in the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) is an important part of the European intelligence cooperation architecture. Within SIAC, the civilian component (EU INTCEN) and the military component (EUMS INT – Intelligence Directorate of the European Union Military Staff) are interconnected. The result is a joint civil-military threat assessment that provides a more comprehensive and comprehensive picture of the security situation.

In recent years, INTCEN's activities have become particularly important in the context of growing hybrid threats, disinformation campaigns and geopolitical tensions. The center plays a key role in creating a common EU situational awareness and supporting decision-making in the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The platform serves as a central European hub for strategic information, early warning and comprehensive assessment of security threats. All significant intelligence analyses submitted to Member States and EU high representatives within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy are created as joint civil-military products precisely under the SIAC umbrella. In this way, SIAC ensures a unified and coordinated view of the security situation that goes beyond the framework of individual departments.

The characteristic feature of SIAC is the "All-Source" approach, which fuses classified information provided voluntarily by the national intelligence services of the Member States with open sources (OSINT) and satellite imagery from the EU Satellite Centre (SatCen). This approach allows for the creation of a comprehensive, 360-degree picture of the security environment.

In the context of the EU's strategic development, in particular in the context of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence, SIAC's capabilities and resources are continuously being strengthened. The aim is to increase the Union's ability to respond effectively to today's complex threats, such as hybrid operations, cyber-attacks and geopolitical tensions. SIAC thus plays a key role in shaping a common situational awareness and in supporting decision-making at the highest political level of the European Union. [11]

e) Working groups of the Council of the EU - The Slovak Information Service (SIS) actively participates in the work of relevant committees and working groups of the Council of the European Union. Since the area of intelligence services and national security falls under the exclusive competence of the Member States, it is common practice for national intelligence services to send their expert delegations to

these forums. Thus, through its representatives and experts, SIS participates in the preparation of documents, assessment of security risks and harmonization of common positions of the Member States.

Key platforms in which SIS operates include the Terrorism Working Party (TWP) and the Horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats. These working groups prepare expert documents and proposals for higher formats of the Council of the EU, such as the Committee on Internal Security (COSI) or political representatives of the Member States.

Through its participation in these platforms, SIS contributes to the harmonisation of European legislation, the development of common policies (for example, in the preparation of sanctions lists in the field of terrorism), the assessment of current security threats and the harmonisation of national positions in order to strengthen the collective EU capacity to respond to terrorist and hybrid threats. This form of multilateral cooperation complements SIS's bilateral partnerships and allows it to actively influence the shaping of the European security agenda. [12]

In addition to these main platforms, SIS also maintains active contacts within the framework of specialised working groups focused on proliferation, cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection.

The combination of these levels of cooperation allows SIS to maintain balanced and effective partnerships that meet the current security needs of the Slovak Republic.

3 Foreign Capabilities and Partnerships in the Context of the Slovak Information Service (SIS) Development Strategy for 2025–2032

The Slovak Information Service (SIS) Development Strategy for 2025–2032 is a key strategic document that defines the long-term direction of modernization and adaptation of the civilian intelligence service of the Slovak Republic. The document was presented in the fall of 2025 under the leadership of Director Pavel Gašpar and responds to fundamental changes in the security environment, which is characterized by the increase in hybrid threats, cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns and geopolitical tensions.

The strategy is based on the need to strengthen the ability of SIS to effectively fulfill its statutory tasks in new conditions, mainly through the modernization of technological capacities, streamlining analytical processes and improving international cooperation. The document emphasizes the adaptation of the service to rapidly developing technologies, including artificial intelligence, and strengthening resilience to hybrid forms of threats.

The SIS Development Strategy 2025-2032 was also published in a declassified version, which is publicly available to both professional and lay audiences. Its aim is to increase the transparency of the service's activities and at the same time provide the public with an overview of the strategic priorities and direction of SIS in the coming period. The document defines specific objectives divided by time horizon into short-term, medium-term and long-term, focusing on several key areas, which include in particular strengthening bilateral and multilateral international cooperation, modernizing technological and analytical capacities, developing human resources and increasing resilience to hybrid threats. The strategy also reflects the broader strategic documents of the Slovak Republic in the field of security and defense, as well as the obligations arising from membership in the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance. Its ambition is to ensure that SIS is able to respond flexibly and effectively

to current and future security challenges and to maintain its position as a trustworthy and professional partner in the international intelligence environment and to implement the following objectives.

a) Strengthen existing bilateral relations

Bilateral cooperation is one of the key pillars of the Slovak Information Service's foreign activities. In the strategic horizon 2025-2032, SIS focuses on systematically strengthening existing bilateral relations in order to increase the effectiveness of protection against current security threats and improve preparedness for crisis situations. Particular emphasis is placed on more intensive exchange of information in the field of cyber and hybrid threats, as well as on joint analysis and coordination of countermeasures against these forms of threat.
Strengthening existing partnerships allows SIS to obtain better quality, more up-to-date and often more sensitive information that directly contributes to the protection of national interests and increasing the resilience of the state. Compared to multilateral platforms, bilateral cooperation provides a higher level of trust and flexibility, which is a key advantage, especially for sensitive information. Long-term development of these relationships also creates space for deeper operational and analytical cooperation, including joint threat assessment and coordination of preventive measures.

b) Establishing new bilateral relationships

In the short term, SIS plans to actively establish new bilateral partnerships with selected intelligence services. The aim is to expand the circle of trusted partners and ensure a more efficient exchange of key information that is essential for the timely identification and elimination of security threats. Establishing new relationships reflects the current geopolitical environment and changing security challenges, thereby contributing to strengthening the international position of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, it allows SIS to respond more flexibly to new threats and maintain a competitive position within the international intelligence community.
Expanding the network of bilateral partners is strategically important in the current security environment, as it allows for better coverage of regions and topics that are not sufficiently represented in existing multilateral structures. New partnerships can thus significantly contribute to improving the situational awareness of the SIS and to strengthening its ability to protect the security interests of the Slovak Republic.

c) Increase the number of official representatives of the Slovak Information Service abroad based on a reassessment of the distribution of residency offices, in order to adapt to current security threats and global challenges

Increasing the number of official representatives of the Slovak Information Service abroad is one of the important measures to strengthen the operational and analytical capacities of the service. Based on a reassessment of the distribution of residency offices, a targeted increase in the number of SIS officers abroad is planned in order to better respond to current security threats and global challenges.

The reassessment of the distribution of residency offices and the possible opening of new ones is based on the need to adapt to the changing geopolitical

environment and new forms of threat, such as hybrid operations, cyber threats or destabilizing activities in strategically important regions. The strategic location of the residency offices will enable more effective and timely exchange of information with key partners, improve the SIS's ability to monitor developments in priority areas and contribute to better coordination of joint activities.
Such an approach will also be in line with the security, political and economic priorities of the Slovak Republic. Optimizing the work of official representatives abroad will contribute to strengthening the service's situational awareness, improving the quality of intelligence outputs and more effectively promoting national interests at the international level. At the same time, it will enable a more flexible and targeted use of existing capacities depending on the current security needs of the state.

d) Develop a production matrix coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic as the legal recipient

Improving the efficiency of mutual communication between the Slovak Information Service and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MZVEZ SR) is a key measure to increase the quality and usability of intelligence production for the benefit of the state's foreign policy. The aim is to adapt intelligence activities to the real information needs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and at the same time to align its outputs with the diplomatic calendar – i.e. with the dates of official visits, bilateral and multilateral meetings, summits and international events under the responsibility of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

In sufficient time before these events, the SIS should provide relevant, up-to-date and targeted intelligence information, which will enable top state representatives to better prepare for negotiations and effectively promote national interests. Such an approach significantly contributes to the unified and coordinated appearance of the Slovak Republic abroad and minimizes the risk of uncoordinated or insufficiently substantiated positions.

Improving communication efficiency should include regular consultations between the SIS and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic when creating a diplomatic calendar, as well as the introduction of mechanisms for early identification of key events for which it is necessary to prepare intelligence support. This approach is of particular importance in the context of hybrid threats and disinformation campaigns, when timely provision of relevant information can help prevent negative impacts on Slovakia's position in the international environment. At the same time, aligning intelligence production with foreign policy needs will enable more efficient use of SIS capacities and contribute to greater relevance of its outputs. Ultimately, this is a measure that strengthens the synergy between the intelligence and diplomatic activities of the state and increases the ability of the Slovak Republic to act actively and in an informed manner in the international environment. [13]

Conclusion

International cooperation represents one of the most important tools for the Slovak Intelligence Service to fulfill its statutory tasks in the current complex and rapidly changing security environment. In the era of globalized threats, when terrorism, hybrid operations, cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns and organized

crime are not limited to the territory of a single state, the ability to effectively acquire, analyze and exchange information with trusted partners is a necessary condition for the successful functioning of any intelligence service. For SIS, as a relatively small civilian service in the Central European area, international cooperation is not only a complement, but an existential necessity, which allows it to compensate for its limited own capacities and obtain information with a global or regional impact, which it would otherwise not be able to provide independently.

That is why the management of the Slovak Intelligence Service must systematically and strategically focus on international cooperation. The quality and scope of bilateral and multilateral partnerships directly affect the service's ability to provide relevant and timely information to state authorities, thereby contributing to the protection of the national interests of the Slovak Republic. The service's management must be aware that building and maintaining trustworthy partnerships is a long-term process that requires continuity, a professional approach and strategic decision-making on priorities. At the same time, it is necessary that international cooperation is closely linked to the internal needs of the state and that its results are effectively used in decision-making processes at the national level.

By 2030, SIS international cooperation will face several significant challenges. Among the most important is the need to adapt to rapidly evolving forms of hybrid threats that combine traditional intelligence activities with cyber attacks, disinformation and influence operations. Another challenge is the growing competition in the international intelligence environment and the need to maintain relevance and credibility in the eyes of strategic partners. No less important is the issue of personnel and technological capacities - the service will have to ensure a sufficient number of qualified experts capable of operating abroad and working effectively with modern analytical tools.

Key milestones in the horizon until 2030 should be the successful fulfillment of the goals resulting from the SIS Development Strategy 2025-2032, in particular the strengthening of existing bilateral partnerships, the establishment of new strategic relationships, the optimization of the deployment of residency offices abroad and the introduction of an effective production matrix coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. An important milestone will also be the further strengthening of the SIS's active involvement in European intelligence platforms, especially in the area of hybrid threats and strategic assessment. In conclusion, it can be stated that international cooperation is not just one of many areas of activity for the Slovak Information Service, but a strategic necessity, on which its ability to fulfill its mission for the benefit of the security of the Slovak Republic largely depends. The management of the service must be fully aware of this fact and actively create conditions for its further development. Only through balanced, professional and strategically managed international cooperation can the SIS effectively contribute to the protection of national interests and to the strengthening of Slovakia's position in the European and global security environment.

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