



**PRÍHOVOR PREZIDENTA SR
pri príležitosti inšpekčného
cvičenia SLOVAK SHIELD 2025**

Lešť, 26.5. 2025

Dear members of allied armies and Slovak Armed Forces,

Dear ladies and gentlemen,

Dear guests,

allow me to greet you at the occasion of today's Inspection Day within the framework of the international military exercise Slovak Shield 2025.

It is a particularly significant moment for me to meet with members of the Slovak Armed Forces, as well as with representatives of our allies and friends in the North Atlantic Alliance.

It is an opportunity for me, as the Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces, to witness the level of readiness of Slovak Armed forces whose mission is to defend Slovakia's sovereignty and protect the safety of its citizens as well as the ability of Slovak Armed Forces to cooperate with ours allies directly in the battlefield.

In today's tense times, it is also our duty to send a signal to the public that we rely on reliable and solid security guarantees provided by active participation in the collective defense system.

Slovak Shield is a complex exercise that is demonstrated not only by the participation of over a thousand participants but also by the diversity of participating countries. I am glad to meet our neighbors from the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland, as well as members of the National Guard of the U.S. state of Indiana, Czech, Spanish, and Romanian members of the Multinational Brigade operating on our territory, and observers from Georgia.

We are united by the values of freedom, democracy, and human rights — values and peace we must protect, as today's world constantly reminds us that they are not to be taken for granted.

This reality has become especially urgent in recent years, ever since a full-scale military conflict erupted in Ukraine. Suddenly, we perceive how dramatically the security environment is changing. We are facing efforts to change the international order and to weaken the authority of international institutions. Instead of rules, common values, and cooperation, a policy of economic, political, and military power is being promoted.

Armed forces readiness is more important than ever. It is essential to provide them with sufficient material, financial, and personnel support. The discussion on how to increase defense spending is taking place very intensively in Slovakia, as well as in the European Union and NATO countries.

However, one of the most important investments in our security is honest and regular training. Military exercises like Slovak Shield give us the opportunity to test how theory works in practice. They show us our ability to respond to threats, which are increasingly diverse today and which demand faster response.

It is clear that cooperation among multiple countries, joint operational planning at strategic, operational, and tactical levels, as well as the involvement of foreign units, all strengthen our capacity to respond flexibly. The exercise also provides an invaluable opportunity to build interoperability in a multinational environment, to share experiences, and to cooperate under challenging conditions. I am pleased that the members of the Slovak Armed Forces are equal partners to their colleagues in combat readiness and training.

On similar occasions, I often emphasize that the armed forces are not powered solely by training and equipment. Beneath the uniform, there must beat the heart of a soldier — a noble soul, a willingness to help, and a determination to defend the homeland and its citizens.

Thank you for your commitment and for your contribution to the success of this exercise that brought together experienced and capable partners, provide valuable insights, strengthened our cooperation, and further reinforced our readiness to face the challenges of today's turbulent world.

I believe that this military exercise confirmed not only the strength and resilience of our defense, but also the professional and moral value of the armed forces of all participating countries and the North Atlantic Alliance as a whole.

I wish you success and I hope that our efforts will ultimately help to protect peace in Europe.

Thank you.