Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to be here today, in Prague, at this outstanding biannual event. Its importance cannot be denied, as it focuses on the most valuable asset an army possesses, the main molecule: the soldier. That precious unit which needs to be adequately technologically and psychologically equipped in order to fulfill the paramount task: to protect and defend the Nation. This is exactly what soldiers are doing since the beginning of time.

In an era that technology and its evolution render hardware obsolete within short time, the soldier (and this term includes everyone from the youngest private to the most senior commander) should remain at the core of our attention. Since the beginning of times, the soldier has been the only constant in the art of war. I recently read with great interest the remarks of the US Army Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley. He described a highly lethal future battlefield, where connectivity and communications will be degraded, units will be dispersed and constantly under observance, and where resupply will be a luxury, providing only the basics. I could not agree more.

In this regard, this Conference comes at a very timely manner. The problem has been identified. It requires a dramatic change of approach once more by everybody engaged in formatting the armies of tomorrow. We should avoid being trained and prepared for the "previous" war. Revolutionary thinking must become the norm, to tackle potential adversaries that are adaptable, innovative, and sneaky and who do not stick to the same rules, nor do they adhere to our textbooks or to our Field Manuals. We have seen this happening before. It will surely happen again.
It is of great importance to try to predict how the next war will be. Maybe there will be no formal war as we use to know it. How many formal war declarations did we have since the end of WW II? Very few, if any. Our soldiers need to be trained, prepared and equipped for all types of conflict. Bottom line: They have to be trained for the chaos, because the battlefield was and will always be chaotic and full of surprises. The full spectrum of operations may cross the mind of the adversary.

The last Revolution in Military Affairs was characterized and initiated by the advancement in military technology. An advancement that gave us long-range precision weapons, intelligent sensors and command and control capabilities, enabling us to dominate conventional wars. This kind of war is less than likely to occur again in the future. What we witness nowadays is irregular or asymmetric conflicts between states and non-state actors who do not feel obliged to commit to any international laws or ethics, using brutality, horror and social media as a weapon. This is what I call chaos. It is already here. It is our today and for certain it is our tomorrow. To be more specific, I would insist that we need a new Revolution in Military Affairs if we mean to dominate the future battlefield. In a second thought I would say we need a permanent revolutionary thinking, an out-of-the-box approach on everything.

This future battlefield may have two very different forms: the first one will be in the form of an urban environment, highly condensed, extremely lethal. The other war fighting environment I expect the future soldier to encounter, it will be fundamentally different. It will be characterized by vast unpopulated areas and extreme climatological conditions, in a desert, on a mountain, in an arctic or a tropical environment. The differences between the two forms are deep and obvious. But there are similarities as well. In each of the cases, the future soldier needs to be well protected to survive, lightly loaded to be mobile, adequately equipped to perform his mission and self-sustainable to the maximum possible extent to be independent from a supply chain that may not exist in a reliable way.

We need to confront the personnel numbers of the potential adversaries with quality, professional training and high morale, coupled with dominant technology. This will be our comparative advantage, maybe our only advantage, but the one that will nevertheless make the difference.
defence industry is challenged with providing the right equipment while the military institutions will develop the human part of the “future soldier system”, with the proper education, training, mentality and skills to operate, fight, survive and prevail in tomorrow’s battlefield. As you understand, our efforts have to be coordinated and synchronized. This brings me to the next point.

Having the right equipment does only half the trick. Our efforts should also focus on the mental, educational and training preparation of the future soldier and his leaders. I place great emphasis on the development of the young leader and soldier. Our leaders have to be bold, able to keep their courage, remain optimistic under all circumstances and not hesitate to seize the initiative. They should be bold beyond their strength, adventurous above their own reason and when in danger to hope still the best. They should be ready to make instant decisions under extreme pressure and to participate or even to take strategic-level decisions. The strategic corporal is here. On their part, the young soldiers should learn how to fight in small groups or even alone, isolated, but not lost geographically and mentally. Mission tactics is the term, that Carl von Clausewitz used to call Auftragstaktik, but we need to go far beyond that. Western civilization prevailed because sometime in the past 2,500 years ago the soldiers of an ancient civilization stood in a close line, one next to the other, one protecting the other with his own shield instead of himself, stared the enemy in the eye and killed him.

Now the phalanx is broken. The line of soldiers is a target we cannot afford to give. Now we have to produce independent, highly trained and capable, lethal human fighting platforms, where our supremacy in mind and spirit will be coupled with cutting-edge technology. This will give us the superiority and the dominance we are seeking in our conflicts. But before that or instead of that, this future soldier will give us deterrence and this is something even more important. What is deterrence? Deterrence is the sum of capabilities and posture. Our industry will provide the capabilities, our soldiers and our leaders need to have and show the posture.

So, here is the challenge for us, to think outside the box, to feel limited by nothing, to approach the problem with a videogame developer mindset, one that knows no restrictions. I suppose you have all seen the American series “Game of Thrones”. In this series they used dragons as a weapon. Have you
ever thought which was the dragon in WWI? They were the gas bombs and the machine gun. 30 million casualties, among them 10 million dead. In the end, what we can do today would be science-fiction for the World War II infantryman seventy years ago or the soldier in Vietnam less than fifty years ago. This is why conferences like the present one are so important: they bring all sides together, the military and the industry, the users and the designers, to exchange views, to share experiences, to brainstorm. They also open a window through which we try to see the future.

Concluding, let us never let skip our mind that the center of our efforts is way more than just the protection of a human life, or the Nation or the Union, although this is undoubtedly priceless. What is the center of our efforts is the protection of the values we stand for and of our way of living. And this is what we do and we will continue to do. And this is what the soldiers always did and will continue doing in the future.

Thank you.