Comprehensive Information System for Logistics for the Czech Armed Forces Delivered by a Czech Company AURA

At the beginning of this April, AURA has celebrated its 25th anniversary. Its primary activity has always been development of its own information systems and their implementation in the armed forces, industry and public administration both at national and international levels.

Company´s Portfolio

AURA implemented its first projects for the military in 1991 employing its knowledge and experience in logistic SW projects tailored for the commercial sector. Gradually, the company specialised in information systems for military logistics. It extended significantly its operations in this area once Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and the Czech Republic launched measures to join NATO. AURA´s SW applications are also essential for logistic support of Czech units in peace operations abroad. The company is successful also in exporting its products and services. Currently, AURA is delivering military logistic software into 12 countries.

One of the milestones in enforcing company´s portfolio could be introduction of information systems into industrial sector after 2000 which was related especially to the codification of assets and services. The same applies to the public administration when introducing the standardised description of goods and services within the National Infrastructure for Electronic Procurement (NIPEZ) being developed for the Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic. Software products and related services of AURA are made use of by proving executors when exercising their legal routine.

Origin of the Information System for Logistics

In 1990s, the Czech Republic was invited to join NATO. One of the main tasks for the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic (AFCR) was to transform the then weaponry and technical support into a new component - AFCR Logistics - while introducing standards and procedures interoperable with those of NATO nations.

In 1994, AURA participated, being a member of the winning grouping, in a tender of the Czech Ministry of Defence for a system integrator for building up the Information System for Logistics (ISL). AURA´s primary task in this grouping was development of application software. Before 1996, the company developed its strategic concept for the information support of MoD and AFCR logistic processes sustained by a successful pilot solution which became the basis for the ISL. This enabled, inter alia, the process of unified identification and codification of assets based on the NATO Codification System (NCS) standards. After 1998, the co-operation with client´s experts led to gradual introduction of other subsystems and modules replacing previous partial or so called technical projects into a uniform integrated information system covering all key processes of military logistics and management of public assets provided to the defence department.

ISL Evolution

An important milestone in ISL development was the year 2000 when a system for planning and ensuring of operation and maintenance of ground-based equipment started its routine operation. In the years to come, other important functionalities were added thus living up to the accepted strategic concept. The system encompassed, very sensitively, support to the processes related to the operation and maintenance of air force equipment which is a very complex issue from the point of expertise and resources.

The new millennium brought a more extensive participation of AFCR units and components in collective NATO operations. Experience gained by the Czech service personnel both in missions and NATO structures has been incorporated in special ISL software modules that enable effective management of logistic activities for the benefit of in-theatre operations.

Talking about the ISL one cannot omit the issue of immovable assets. The existing solution dealing with administration of immovable assets fully covers needs of the defence department and it is being made

ready for outsourcing projects within the facility management.

ISL as a Strategic Concept of Information Support

The evolution of the ISL has been significantly supported and steered by the above mentioned strategic concept of information support to MoD and AFCR logistic processes dated from 1996.

The radical point here was the transition from the extensive management of technical support to the intensive and more efficient logistic support. It was necessary to change people´s minds as the logistic personnel requirements were changing. The introduction of the ISL and, most importantly, feeding it with data enables the competent commanders and managers to gain information from a single source. However, it is absolutely essential to comply with the Czech legislation and security requirements. What plays an important role is the monitoring of technological and procedural changes and their prompt integration into the ISL and thus offering all the benefits to the MoD and AFCR.

This concept´s substance is the introduction of standardization and codification processes based on NATO rules; and the specification of uniform logistic processes and their activation. All equipment is managed in compliance with the life cycle principles. The uniform Information System for Logistics supports operations within logistic processes and does not allow for other procedures, it provides integrated and comprehensible outputs. The especially important part - the database of the information system - is the source for the analyses of managing elements towards subordinate units. Of course, the ISL must be sufficiently flexible and ready to respond to applicable changes in organisation or legislation.

AURA´s close co-operation with MoD and AFCR guaranteed, and will continue to do so, that all client´s requirements in relation to the ISL are being satisfied on a continuous basis.

Currently, there are 5,000 active users of the ISL which is 18 % of the defence personnel. All logistic centres including those abroad are online in the system. The system is monitoring and managing almost half a million of vehicles, air force equipment, weapons and weapon systems and various technical devices. The ISL is in charge of defence assets worth of hundreds of billions of Czech crowns.

Currently, the integrated Information System for Logistics is being jointly employed both by the Czech Army and the Czech Air Force as well as by the civilian segment of the MoD of the Czech Republic. The fact, that all defence components are using the same logistic information system and a single database reflects positively in defence planning and decision-making and results in substantial financial savings.

Text and photo Antonín Svěrák