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Strategic Airlift of the Czech Armed Forces in an Alliance Context

Anna KARFÍKOVÁ[1]*, Jan KOTISA[1]

[1]*Department of Logistic, Faculty of Military Leadership, University of Defence, Kounicova 65, 662 10 Brno, Czech Republic*

*Correspondence: *anna.karfikova@unob.cz*

Abstract

his paper examines the strategic airlift capability of the Czech Armed Forces in the context of multinational alliance mechanisms. The study combines a DOTMLPFI-based capability assessment, expert consultation, and scenario-based modelling conducted in the LOGFAS environment. Three transport variants were evaluated: SALIS (An-124), SAC (C-17 Globemaster III), and framework nation support (C-5 Galaxy). The results indicate that the Czech Armed Forces remain structurally dependent on multinational heavy airlift solutions due to the absence of national strategic transport platforms. While the C-5 scenario proved most efficient, the SALIS mechanism appears to be the most realistic and operationally feasible option under current Czech conditions.

KEY WORDS*: strategic airlift, Czech Armed Forces, DOTMLPFI, LOGFAS, SALIS, SAC, multinational cooperation, military mobility airlift.*

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the global security environment has undergone fundamental changes that place high demands on the mobility and operational readiness of armed forces. Modern conflicts and growing instability in various regions require armed forces to be able to respond with a high degree of flexibility and speed. In this context, strategic airlift takes on extraordinary importance as a key tool for ensuring the mobility of troops, equipment, and supplies over long distances, which is essential for achieving strategic objectives in foreign operations. Experiences from recent years, such as the evacuation of personnel from Afghanistan in 2021 or logistical support during the COVID-19 pandemic, have clearly demonstrated that without access to adequate strategic capabilities, the Czech Armed Forces (CAF) would not be able to carry out missions to the necessary extent and within the required timeframe. [1 – 6]

However, the current situation of the CRAF Air Force in the area of strategic transport is characterized by significantly limited in-house capabilities. Analyses point to shortcomings primarily in the area of aircraft capacity and the range of existing aircraft. The smaller CASA C-295 transport aircraft lack sufficient power to transport heavy cargo over long distances, while the government-owned Airbus A-319CJ aircraft lack the self-defense systems necessary for operations in high-risk areas. Although the acquisition of new Embraer C-390 Millennium aircraft represents a significant qualitative leap, they still do not fall into the category of heavy strategic aircraft. [7; 8]

Given these limitations, alliance mechanisms and international cooperation play an irreplaceable role for the Czech Republic. Membership in programs such as SALIS (Strategic Airlift International Solution), which provides access to An-124 Ruslan aircraft, or in the multinational MRTT (Multinational Multi-Role Tanker Transport) fleet, allows the Czech Armed Forces to utilize capabilities that would be economically and logistically unsustainable for them to maintain independently. These shared capabilities ensure interoperability, reduce the financial burden, and increase operational flexibility in fulfilling both alliance commitments and national crisis missions. [9 – 14]

The aim of this article is to assess the strategic airlift capabilities of the Czech Armed Forces using the DOTMLPFI framework and to illustrate practical deployment options through three modeled scenarios.

2. Theoretical and Methodological Foundations

Definition of Strategic Air Transport Strategic Air Transport (Strat AT) is a key tool in military logistics for the rapid and efficient movement of large numbers of personnel, equipment, and supplies over long distances. While tactical transport typically focuses on the movement of forces directly within a specific theater of operations, strategic transport provides a link between the home base and the area of operations, often spanning continental borders. This type

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of transport utilizes heavy, high-capacity aircraft with a high payload (typically 40–200 tons) and a range of around 8,000 km, enabling armies to respond flexibly to emerging crises and achieve strategic objectives on an international scale. For the Czech Armed Forces, Strat AT is an essential prerequisite for participation in foreign missions and the fulfillment of alliance commitments. [1; 2; 15; 16]

DOTMLPFI Framework The DOTMLPFI (Doctrines, Organization, Training, Material, Leadership, Personnel, Facilities, Interoperability) analytical framework was selected as the primary methodological tool for assessing the Czech Armed Forces' capabilities in the area of strategic transport. This comprehensive approach, commonly used within NATO and the EU, was selected because it enables a holistic analysis of military capabilities that evaluates not only available equipment but also the level of doctrine, training, organizational structures, and infrastructure. The advantage of this framework is its ability to identify critical points and interdependencies between individual components of the system, which is essential for designing effective measures to increase operational flexibility and interoperability with allies. [17; 18]

The LOGFAS Tool The planning methodology is supported in its practical application by the use of the LOGFAS (Logistic Functional Area Services) software tool. This is an integrated set of NATO tools designed to support logistics processes such as the planning of strategic movements, transport, and force sustainment. The LOGFAS system is a key element of interoperability within the Alliance, as it enables the simulation of unit movements, the tracking of logistics data, and the visualization of force deployment, thereby providing an accurate picture of the real-world process of multinational logistics planning [19]

Scenario Modeling Methodology Practical deployment options are illustrated in the article through a model scenario simulating the strategic airlift of a Czech Armed Forces (CAF) company-sized task force over a distance of 6,000 km (destination: Kenya) as part of the fictional "Coastal Shield" operation. Within this scenario, three variants of strategic transport were modeled, representing different approaches to securing capacity:

1. A scenario utilizing the An-124 Ruslan aircraft under the SALIS partnership initiative, in which the Czech Republic is an active participant.
2. A scenario utilizing the C-17 Globemaster III aircraft operated under the multinational SAC (Strategic Airlift Capability) program.
3. A scenario utilizing the C-5 Galaxy aircraft, which would be provided by the operation's lead nation (the U.S.). The objective of these simulations in the LOGFAS tool is to compare the effectiveness of individual solutions in terms of the number of required rotations, aircraft utilization, and overall logistical complexity within the context of the Czech Armed Forces' actual capacities and contractual obligations.

3. Assessment of the Czech Armed Forces' Strategic Air Transport Capabilities (DOTMLPFI)

The application of the DOTMLPFI analytical framework enables a comprehensive assessment of the Czech Armed Forces' (CAF) readiness in the area of strategic air transport, not only in terms of equipment but also processes and cooperation with allies. Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that while the theoretical and legislative framework is of a high standard, the greatest challenges lie in material equipment and specific infrastructure limitations.

Doctrines. No significant shortcomings were identified in this area. The Czech Armed Forces (CAF) have a comprehensive documentation system that includes national doctrines (e.g., Use of the CAF Transport Aviation), standard operating procedures (SOPs), and relevant NATO directives. These documents precisely define the rules and standards for the planning and execution of strategic movements. This dimension is rated at Level 1 (full readiness).

Organization. The organizational structure for managing strategic transport is assessed as functional and effective. A key element is the Military Transport Department (OVD), where a specialized section directly handles these matters. The approval process for transport requests outside the territory of the Czech Republic is clearly defined and proceeds along the following chain: Commander of Operational Command – Logistics Section – OVD – Chief of the General Staff – Minister of Defense. A certain limitation is the small number of personnel in these structures, which can create staffing pressure during periods of increased operational activity.

Materiel. The materiel sector represents a critical capability gap in national capabilities. The Czech Armed Forces' own capabilities are significantly limited for strategic purposes.

Airbus A-319CJ: Two aircraft are used primarily for government purposes; they lack self-defense systems and are more suitable for transporting personnel than cargo.

CASA C-295: These aircraft have limited range and payload capacity, making them unsuitable for strategic distances (e.g., Central Africa).

Embraer C-390 Millennium: The acquisition of two aircraft (expected from 2025) represents a significant step forward, as the aircraft's parameters approach the strategic category (payload up to 26 t, range up to 8,000 km); however, it still does not fall into the category of heavy strategic aircraft. Dependence on alliance programs such as SALIS (An-124) and MMF (A330 MRTT) is therefore currently essential for the Czech Armed Forces. This area is rated at level 4 (insufficient national conditions).

Infrastructure (Facilities). In the Czech Republic, five airports technically allow for the operation of heavy strategic aircraft (such as the An-124): Prague-Ruzyně, Pardubice, Brno, Ostrava, and Mošnov. The transport aviation's home base at Kbely is unsuitable for strategic transport due to its short runway with low load-bearing capacity. The main infrastructure problem is the lack of alignment between technical parameters and logistical support. The airport in Ruzyně has an ideal runway but lacks military logistical facilities, while Pardubice has the support of the 14th Logistics Regiment, but the runway is at the technical limit for fully loaded aircraft. Rating: Level 3.

Interoperability. Interoperability is a strength thanks to active participation in the SALIS, ATARES, and MMF programs. The Czech Armed Forces are capable of cooperating seamlessly within NATO structures and accepting allied equipment. However, there is room for improvement in the efficient use of prepaid flight hours (e.g., in the SALIS program), where unused capacity can result in financial losses. Full integration into EATC structures represents a future challenge. Rating: Level 2.

Training, Leadership, and Personnel. These areas are maintained at a high level (Level 1–2). The personnel are qualified, including specialists working in international coordination centers (MCCE, MMU). Training is standardized, with a partial recommendation for more intensive practice of manoeuvring techniques in confined aircraft spaces.

Table 1 presents the generic evaluation scale applied in the DOTMLPFI assessment, and Figure 1 presents the evaluation of functional areas using the DOTMLPFI method.

Table 1. Generic Rating Scale

Value	Verbal description of the rating	Percentage (%)
1	The capability is fully available; all necessary conditions are met without restriction	More than 90 %
2	The capability is available, but with minor restrictions that do not have a significant impact on its performance.	75–90 %
3	he capability is limited; existing conditions significantly affect its effective fulfilment.	60–75 %
4	Conditions are insufficient and do not allow for the fulfillment of the specified capability.	Less then 60 %
5	There are no conditions for fulfilling the capability.	0 %

Source: Compiled by the author using [17]

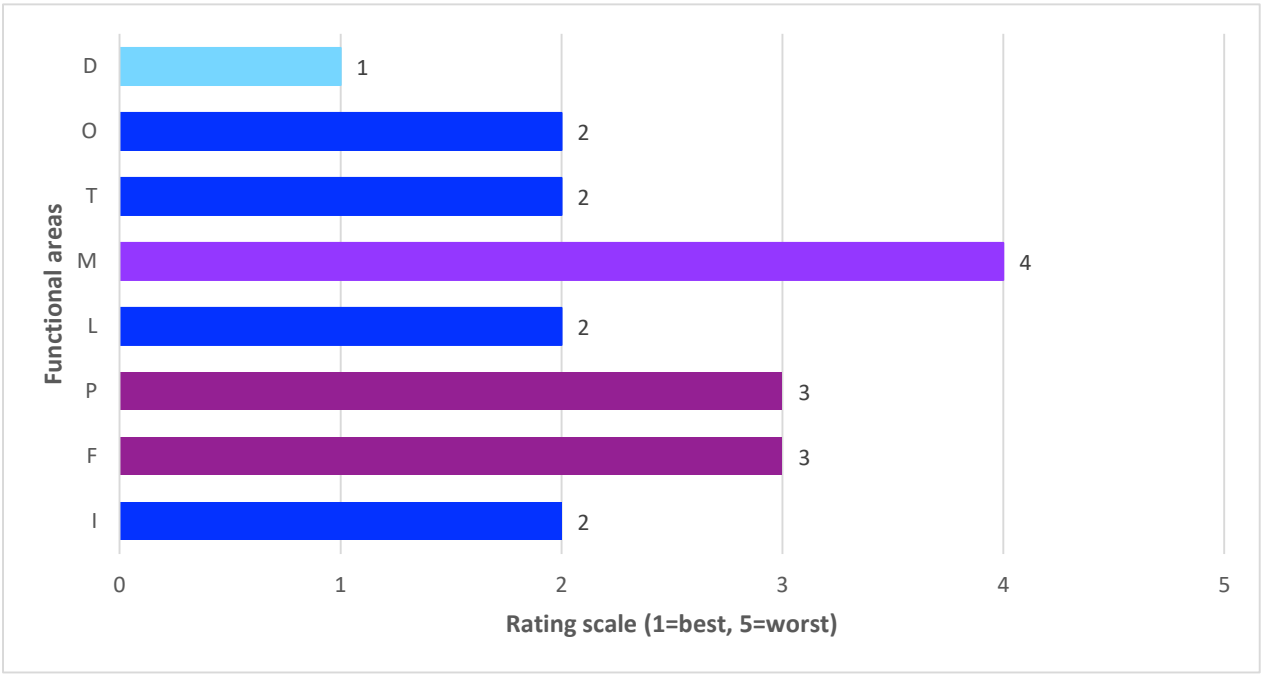

Fig. 1. Evaluation of functional areas using the DOTMLPFI method.

Summary of the Analysis and Basis for Simulation The main capability gaps are the absence of domestic heavy transport aircraft and the inadequate parameters of the home base in Kbely for strategic equipment. The greatest limitation is the high dependence on external providers and the necessity to use civilian airports for military operations, which complicates logistical support.

Given these limitations, it was necessary to proceed to scenario-based simulation using the LOGFAS tool. Only by modeling specific variants (SALIS, SAC, U.S. support) is it possible to objectively compare the effectiveness of various alliance mechanisms in the deployment of AČR units and identify which approach best compensates for the lack of domestic strategic capabilities

4. Model Scenario and Input Parameters

Characteristics of Operation "Coastal Shield" The model scenario is based on a fictional international stabilization and training operation under U.S. command called "Operation Coastal Shield." This mission responds to the deteriorating security situation in East Africa, and its primary objectives are to strengthen Kenya's defense capabilities, stabilize the region, and ensure the security of maritime routes in the Indian Ocean. The mission is non-invasive in nature and focuses on training Kenyan forces, sharing information, and supporting security infrastructure in the Mombasa port area.

Logistical parameters of the transport The simulation focuses exclusively on the strategic airlift of a Czech Armed Forces (CAF) company-sized task force from Václav Havel Airport in Prague (point 1) to the final destination at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya (point 3). The total route of the movement is approximately 6,000 km, with a planned stopover in Crete at Souda Bay Airport (point 2) for refueling.

Composition of the Model Unit and Personnel The unit is organized as an independently operating combat and support element based on the organizational structure of the 41st Mechanized Battalion in Žatec. For the purposes of logistical calculation in the LOGFAS tool, the following personnel parameters were established:

- Total number of personnel: 147 members of the Rapid Deployment Force.
- Organizational structure: Company command, command team (16 personnel), three mechanized platoons (36 personnel each), and a medical element.
- Vehicles and Equipment The key input for the strategic transport calculation is 24 vehicles of various types with a total weight of 426,565 kg. The vehicle composition includes:
- ISO containers: A total of 3 ISO Type 1C containers with a total cargo weight of 16,114.58 kg will be used to transport weapons and personal equipment.
- Personal equipment: Each soldier has two "Gorilla box" type plastic boxes for personal gear, representing a total of 300 boxes stored in the aforementioned containers.
- Weight and dimension data: The calculation takes into account the precise technical parameters of each piece of equipment (length, width, height, and weight), which are critical for determining the number of rotations and aircraft utilization.

This model scenario serves to analyze the capabilities of the Czech Armed Forces in the area of strategic mobility and to identify bottlenecks when utilizing various Alliance transport mechanisms.

5. Results of Scenario-Based Modeling

The practical component of the assessment of the Czech Armed Forces' strategic airlift capabilities utilized the LOGFAS software tool, which is the NATO standard for planning and managing logistics operations and movements. The goal of the simulations was to compare three different approaches to securing the transport of a model task force (147 personnel and 24 pieces of equipment) from Prague to Nairobi over a distance of 6,000 km. Each scenario was evaluated in terms of efficiency, number of rotations, and utilization of available capacities.

5.1 SALIS Scenario (An-124)

The first variant simulated the use of the SALIS (Strategic Airlift International Solution) partnership initiative, of which the Czech Republic has been a long-standing active member. An An-124 Ruslan aircraft was modeled for the transport of heavy equipment and containers, while personnel were transported by a national Airbus A-319CJ aircraft.

Number of rotations and utilization: Transporting materials and equipment required a total of 4 flights by the An-124. Since the SALIS program typically guarantees the immediate availability of three aircraft, the scenario assumed that one of them would have to perform two rotations. The utilization of the first three flights was very high (84.7% to 95.4%), while the last (repeat) rotation was utilized at only 48.7%. Personnel were transported entirely on a single Airbus A-319 flight.

Realistic availability: This scenario is assessed as the most realistic for the Czech Armed Forces. Membership in the SALIS consortium ensures contractually guaranteed access to aircraft (including the option to use additional aircraft upon request), and the request process is well-established within the Czech Armed Forces. The only limiting factor may

be the effective management of the prepaid flight hours allocated to the Czech Republic under the program (45 hours per year).

The transport plan for the SALIS scenario is shown in Figure 2.

Asset Type	Origin	StopOver	Load Status
AIRBUS A-319	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	94.9%
AN 124 Ruslan	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	84.7%
AN 124 Ruslan	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	95%
AN 124 Ruslan	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	95.4%
AN 124 Ruslan	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	48.7%
AN 124 Ruslan	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	84.7%
AN 124 Ruslan	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	95%
AN 124 Ruslan	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	95.4%
AN 124 Ruslan	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	48.7%

Fig. 2. SALIS scenario transport plan.

5.2 SAC (C-17) Scenario

The second option considered utilizing the SAC (Strategic Airlift Capability) program, which operates C-17 Globemaster III aircraft from the Pápa base in Hungary. Although the Czech Republic is not currently a member of this program, the scenario was modeled to assess the feasibility of this solution.

Number of rotations and utilization: Due to the C-17's smaller cargo capacity compared to the Ruslan (payload capacity of approx. 77 tons vs. 120–150 tons), this option required a significantly higher number of flights—a total of 7 rotations for equipment and supplies. Aircraft utilization was uneven, ranging from maximum (97.6%) to very low during the final rotation (25.6%). Passenger transport was again handled by a single Airbus A-319 flight.

Coordination demands: This scenario is characterized by higher coordination demands. Since the Czech Republic is not a member of the SAC, it would have to either lease capacity on an ad-hoc basis or join the program, which requires high investment costs and a political agreement on the redistribution of flight hours among member states. From a purely logistical standpoint, this is the most demanding option due to the high number of takeoffs and landings required. The transport plan for the SAC scenario is shown in Figure 3.

Asset Type	Origin	StopOver	Load Status
AIRBUS A-319	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	94.9%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	97.6%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	86.2%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	76.9%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	25.6%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	97.6%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	86.2%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	75%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	76.9%
C-17 GLOBEMAS	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	25.6%

Fig. 3. SAC scenario transport plan.

5.3 “Framework Nation” Scenario (C-5)

The third option was based on the assumption that transport would be provided by the operation’s lead nation (the U.S.) using its C-5 Galaxy heavy strategic transport aircraft.

Capacity efficiency: This scenario achieved the highest capacity efficiency. Thanks to its unique design, the C-5 Galaxy allows for the simultaneous transport of both personnel and cargo. As a result, personnel and equipment could be transported without the need to deploy a government-owned Airbus A-319.

Number of flights: The entire unit, including equipment, was successfully transported using just four C-5 flights. Two aircraft were used for combined transport, while the other two were used exclusively for bulky cargo. The cargo space utilization rate for the first three aircraft exceeded 90%.

Political feasibility: The main limitation of this scenario is its absolute dependence on the political and operational will of the United States. Although this is the most technically optimal solution, in real-world planning it is considered the least certain, as the Framework Nation may prioritize the use of its capabilities for its own units. The transport plan for the framework nation scenario is shown in Figure 4.

Asset Type	Origin	StopOver	Load Status
C-5 GALAXY	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	98.6% 84.7%
C-5 GALAXY	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	100% 63.3%
C-5 GALAXY	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	91.2% 0%
C-5 GALAXY	PRAHA - RUZYNE AP	SOUDA AP	74% 0%
C-5 GALAXY	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	98.6% 84.7%
C-5 GALAXY	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	100% 63.3%
C-5 GALAXY	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	91.2% 0%
C-5 GALAXY	SOUDA AP	NAIROBI (JOMO KENYATTA INTL) AP	74% 0%

Fig. 4. Framework nation (C-5) scenario transport plan.

Brief summary of results. Most effective option: From a logistical standpoint, the scenario utilizing C-5 Galaxy aircraft (Framework Nation) was the clear winner. The ability to combine the transport of personnel and heavy equipment in a single aircraft minimizes the need for additional flights and maximizes equipment utilization.

Most realistic option: Under current conditions, the most realistic option for the Czech Armed Forces is a combination of the SALIS program (An-124) and the government-owned A-319 aircraft. This model fully utilizes existing alliance commitments and national resources, and the number of 4 cargo rotations is acceptable for planning a mission to Africa.

Least advantageous option: In terms of the number of rotations and logistical burden, the scenario utilizing C-17 aircraft within the SAC performed the worst. The need to conduct 7 rotations instead of 4 significantly increases costs, ground handling requirements, and the overall duration of the unit’s deployment.

Modeling in LOGFAS confirmed that for strategic movements of the type carried out by the Czech Armed Forces (CAF), the key capability is access to heavy, high-capacity aircraft (An-124, C-5), which can compensate for the limited capacity of the medium transport aircraft that the CAF has in its own inventory.

6. Discussion

The results of the DOTMLPFI assessment and scenario-based modelling show that the strategic air transport capability of the Czech Armed Forces cannot be evaluated solely on the basis of the formal availability of alliance mechanisms. A clear distinction must be made between the theoretical availability of strategic airlift assets and their real operational usability. In formal terms, the Czech Armed Forces have access to several multinational arrangements, including SALIS, ATARES, and, potentially, other alliance-based transport solutions. However, the practical use of these mechanisms is always conditioned by factors such as allocated flight hours, advance planning requirements, contractual limitations, political priorities, and the overall availability of assets at a given moment. As a result, the existence of a transport mechanism does not automatically guarantee immediate or flexible access to transport capacity when required by the operational situation.

This distinction is particularly important for small and medium-sized armed forces that do not possess their own heavy strategic transport aircraft. In the case of the Czech Armed Forces, the absence of national heavy airlift platforms creates a structural dependence on shared or externally provided capacities. Such dependence is not only a technical or logistical matter, but also a strategic one. It affects the speed of deployment, the predictability of planning, and the degree of control over the transport process. From this perspective, multinational mechanisms represent both an enabling and

a limiting factor. They provide access to otherwise unattainable capabilities, but at the same time reduce the level of national autonomy in the execution of strategic movements.

The modelling of the three scenarios confirms this duality. The C-5 Galaxy scenario demonstrated the highest transport efficiency in purely logistical terms, mainly because it allowed the combined transport of personnel and heavy cargo with a reduced number of flights. Nevertheless, this option is highly dependent on the political and operational willingness of the framework nation to provide such capacity. Although technically optimal, it cannot be considered a fully reliable planning solution from the perspective of a smaller participating state. In contrast, the SALIS scenario proved to be the most realistic under current Czech conditions. It does not offer the same level of transport efficiency as the C-5 option in all respects, but it is embedded in an institutionalized and contractually secured framework that the Czech Republic already uses. This gives SALIS a higher degree of practical credibility for real planning. The SAC-based C-17 scenario, while fully interoperable and well established within the Alliance, was shown to be less advantageous in this case because of the greater number of required rotations and the associated coordination burden.

These findings suggest that the strategic mobility of a small state cannot be understood simply as a question of whether multinational mechanisms exist. What matters is how accessible, predictable, and usable these mechanisms are in practice. Real operational autonomy is therefore not defined by formal membership in alliance frameworks, but by the extent to which a state can translate those frameworks into timely and effective deployment capability. For the Czech Armed Forces, this means that alliance cooperation remains indispensable, but it cannot fully substitute for national capability development. Even when multinational solutions function effectively, they do not eliminate the inherent vulnerability created by dependence on shared resources.

From a broader perspective, the study confirms that multinational strategic airlift arrangements are essential for maintaining the deployability of smaller allies, but they should be understood as instruments of managed dependence rather than as a complete solution to national capability gaps. This has important implications for future defence planning. The Czech Armed Forces may not require a fully independent heavy strategic airlift capability, but they do require a realistic assessment of how alliance-based solutions can be combined with national assets, infrastructure, and planning procedures to reduce uncertainty and improve responsiveness.

7. Conclusions

This study assessed the strategic air transport capability of the Czech Armed Forces through the DOTMLPFI framework and scenario-based modelling of three alternative deployment solutions. The analysis confirmed that the most significant capability gap lies in the absence of national heavy strategic airlift platforms, which makes the Czech Armed Forces structurally dependent on multinational arrangements for long-distance deployment of personnel and materiel. Although the doctrinal, organizational, and interoperability dimensions are generally aligned with NATO standards, material limitations and infrastructure constraints remain decisive factors affecting operational flexibility.

The modelling results demonstrated substantial differences among the evaluated scenarios. From a purely logistical perspective, the framework nation option using C-5 Galaxy aircraft proved to be the most efficient solution, mainly because it minimized the number of flights and enabled combined transport of personnel and cargo. However, this option is strongly conditioned by political availability and therefore cannot be regarded as a fully reliable planning solution. The SAC-based scenario using C-17 aircraft was shown to be the least advantageous in this case due to the higher number of required rotations and the resulting increase in coordination demands. Under current Czech conditions, the SALIS-based scenario represents the most realistic and operationally feasible solution, as it combines acceptable transport efficiency with an already established multinational framework.

The findings indicate that the strategic mobility of the Czech Armed Forces depends not only on formal participation in alliance mechanisms, but also on the real usability, predictability, and availability of these arrangements. Strategic airlift should therefore be understood as a key enabler of operational effectiveness, but also as an area where dependence on shared capacities limits the degree of national autonomy. From the perspective of defence planning, this underlines the need to further develop national support structures, infrastructure, and planning procedures in order to make the most effective use of multinational strategic airlift solutions.

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