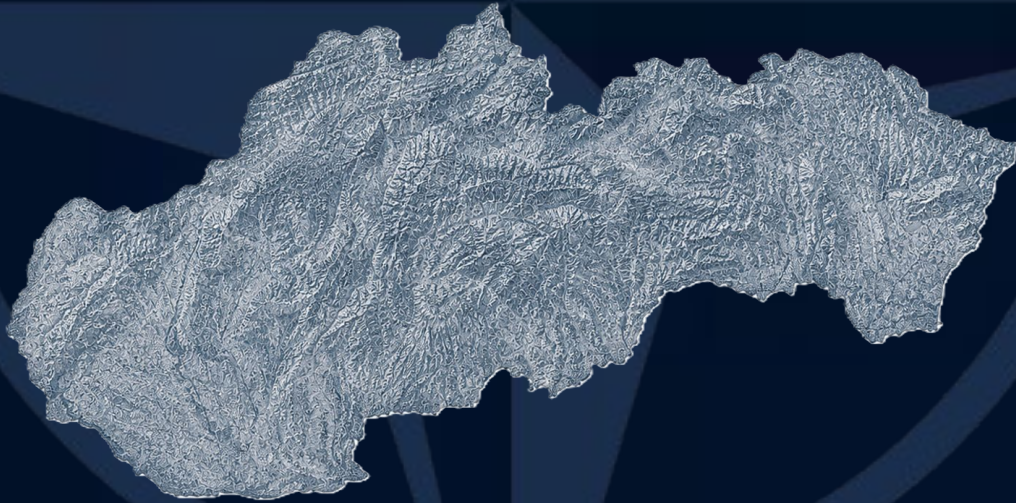




# SLOVAKIA

## NATO Country Assessment — *TIER THREE* —

EARLY UKRAINE DONOR • ACTIVE COUNTER-ALIGNMENT • POOR SPENDER



JULY 2026



# TIER 3

Lagging Ally



# AT A GLANCE

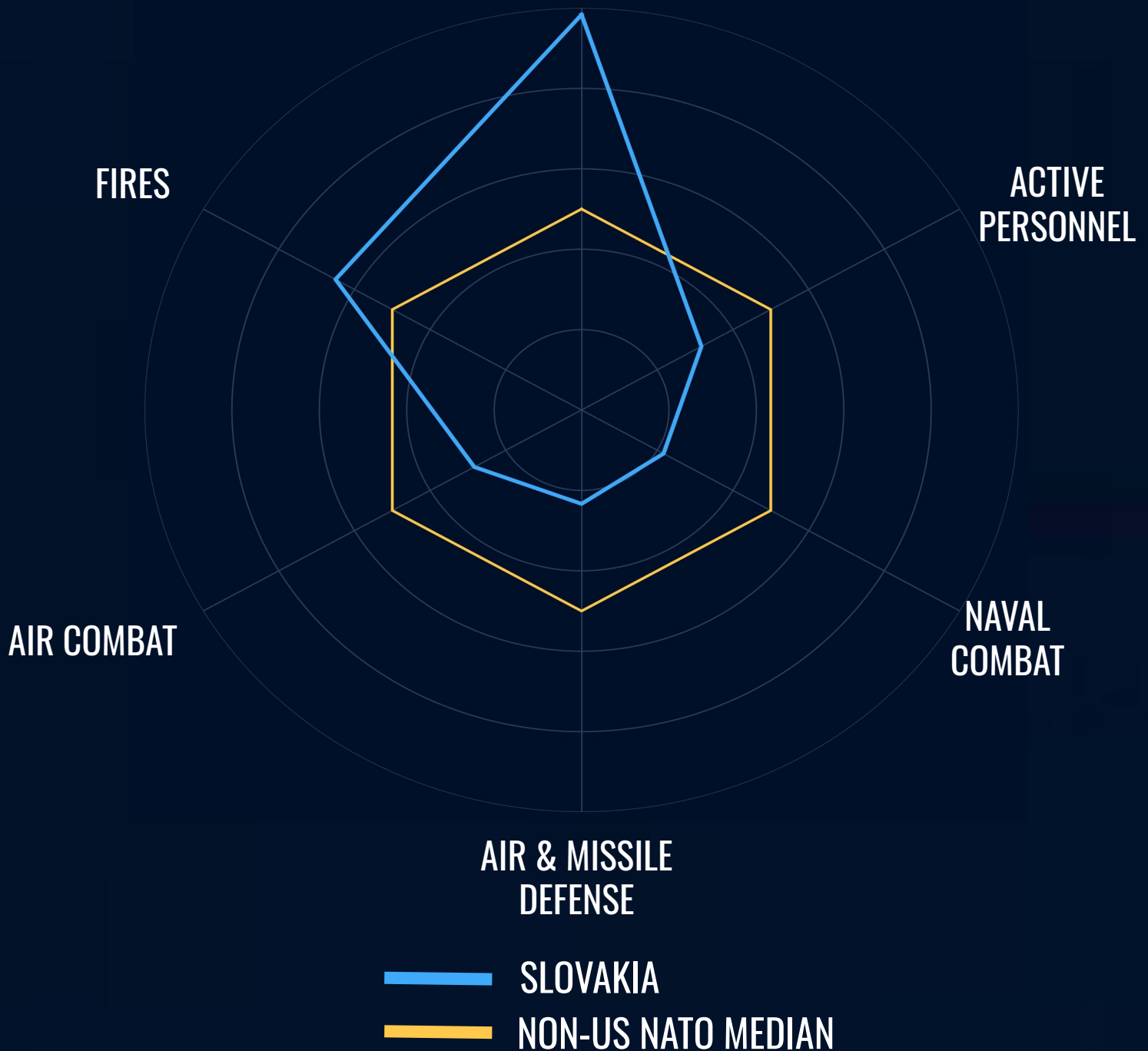
## *Toplines*

- **An early Proactive Supplier of European Defense:** Slovakia transferred the S-300 air defense system, 13 MiG-29s, and Zuzana-2 howitzers which were among the most significant early-war transfers by any ally.
- **Actively Aligning Against NATO and the US:** Prime Minister Fico represents the alliance's most extreme case of undermining NATO solidarity by attending the 2025 Moscow Victory Day as the only EU head of government, appearing alongside Vladimir Putin, Kim Jong Un, and Xi Jinping at China's Victory Day in September 2025, and returning to the Kremlin for bilateral meetings while simultaneously blocking Ukraine aid and threatening EU sanctions packages.
- **Skimping on Spending While Others Foot the Bill:** Slovakia's 2% defense spending figure is contested with critics putting current spending closer to 1.74% after removing dual-use hospital classifications. Additionally, Fico dismissed the Hague 3.5% framework as "absolutely absurd" while refusing to commit to any target date.



# FORCE STRUCTURE AT A GLANCE

LAND COMBAT



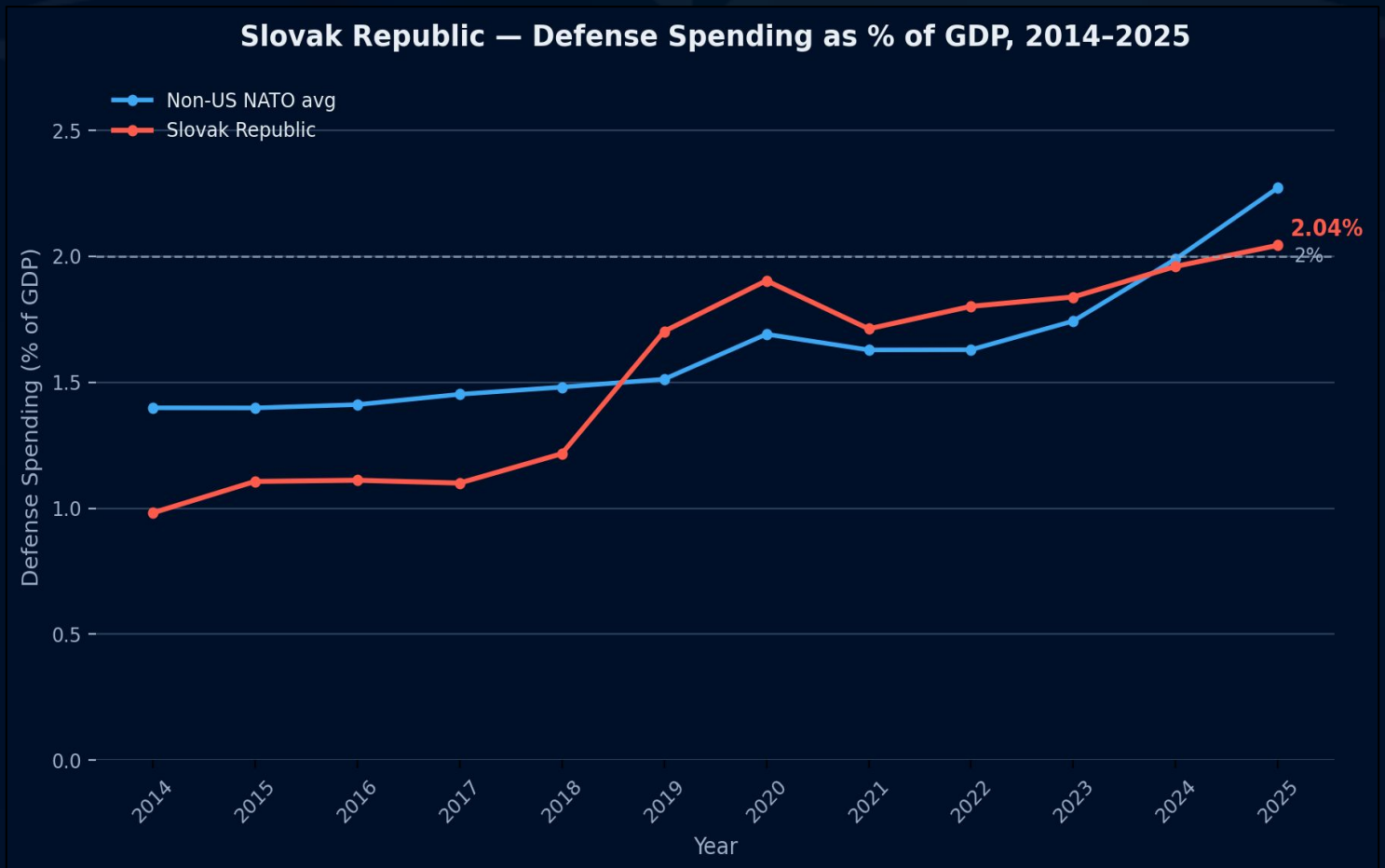
This radar chart compares a country's force structure to the Non-US NATO median (data from IISS's 2026 Military Balance) across six capability areas: Land Combat (tanks, IFVs), Active Personnel (total active-duty troops), Naval Combat (submarines, destroyers/frigates/corvettes), Air & Missile Defense (long/medium-range SAM systems), Air Combat (4th-gen+ combat aircraft), and Fires (artillery, rocket launchers). Scores are weighted, with modern platforms counted fully and legacy platforms counted at reduced weight.



# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Defense Spending Level*

Slovakia's [defense spending](#) has relatively improved since 2018. Slovakia reached 2.04% of GDP in 2025, nominally meeting the NATO floor. The figure is contested: [critics argue](#) that without dual-use hospital classifications covering roughly 35% of the military equipment budget, actual defense spending would be closer to 1.74% by NATO methodology. While Slovakia eventually signed the 3.5%+1.5% Hague framework, [Fico dismissed it](#) as “absolutely absurd” and refused to promise to meet the 2035 target date. The trajectory has shifted from convergence to defiance precisely when the alliance is accelerating.

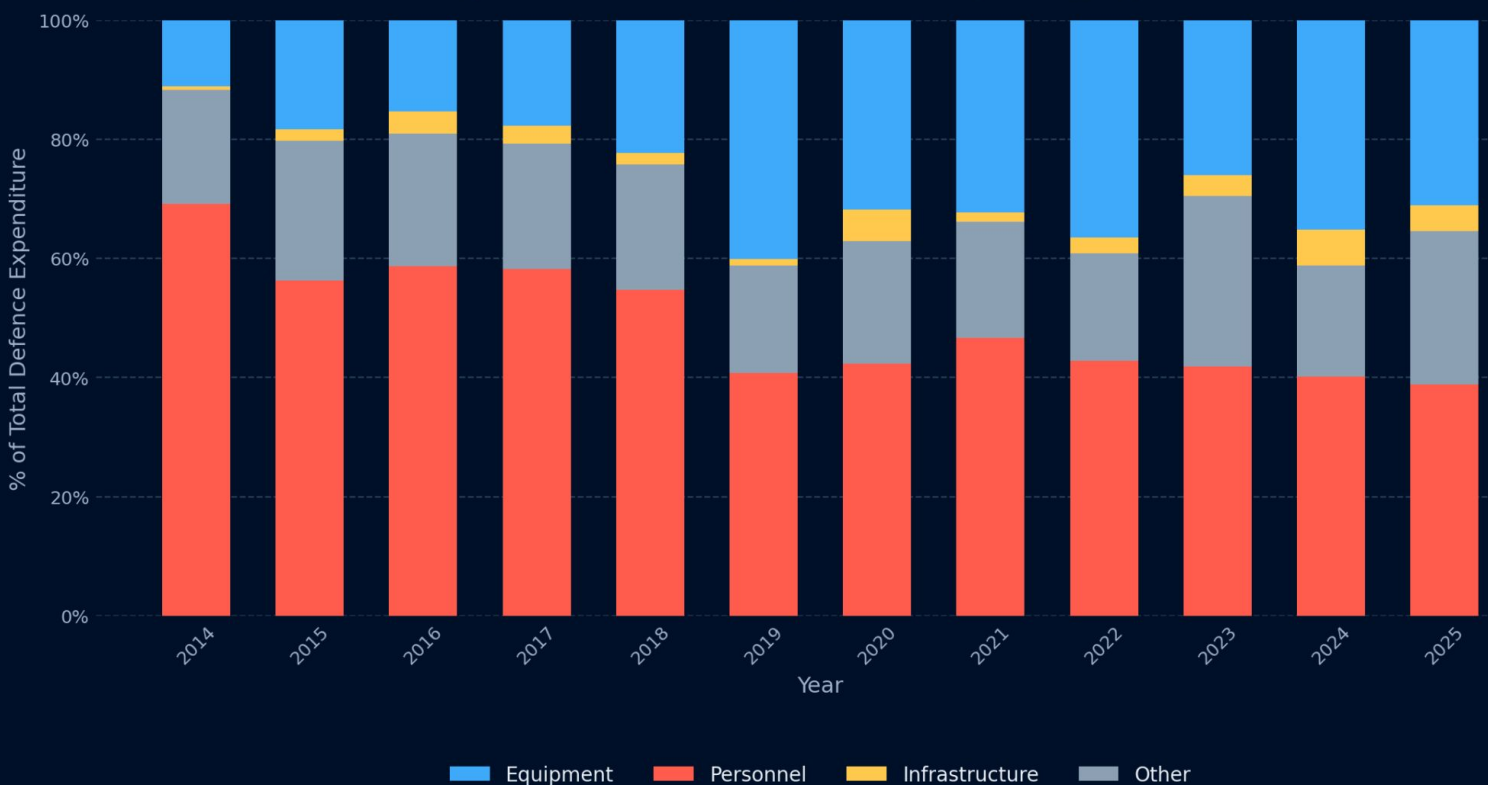


# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Equipment Share*

Slovakia's [equipment share](#) has risen substantially since 2019, reflecting a procurement pipeline committed largely before Fico returned to power. Major programs include 14 F-16 Block 70/72s (~\$1.9B), 152 CV90 MkIV IFVs (~\$1.4B), 76 Patria AMV XPs, and 6 Israeli mobile air-defense systems (€554M)—ambitious for a country Slovakia's size. The risk is whether Fico funds follow-on options (71 additional CV90s, future F-16 tranches) without the political commitment to higher spending that underwrote the original contracts.

Slovak Republic — Defence Expenditure by Category, 2014-2025

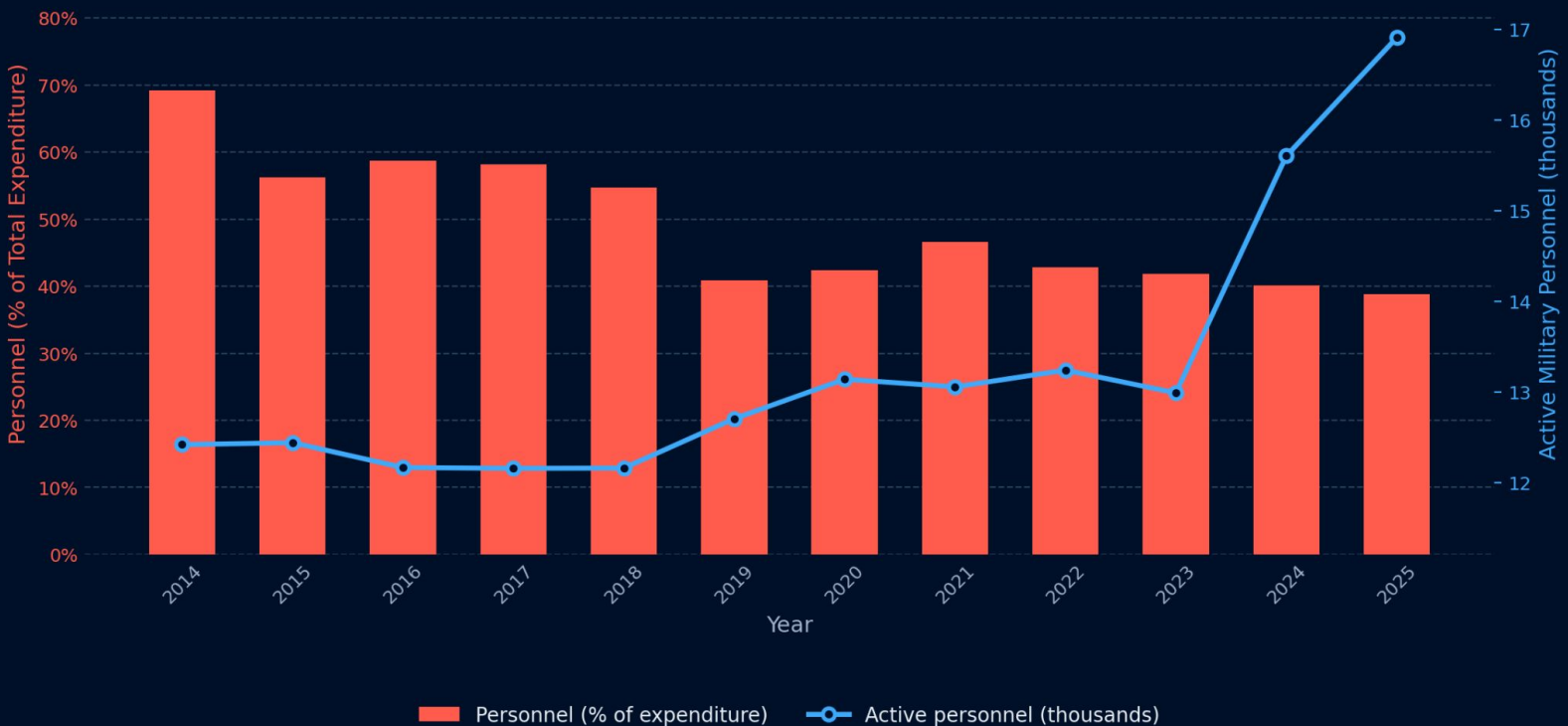


# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Manpower & Recruitment*

Slovakia is undergoing a significant recruiting campaign. [Personnel cost share](#) has fallen from ~70% in 2014 to ~40% by 2025 as equipment procurement has grown. Active personnel have risen sharply—from ~13,000 to ~17,000 between 2023 and 2025—a steep near-term increase. Slovakia has set a target of [25,000 active personnel](#) by 2030, requiring roughly 50% growth from current levels. Recruitment campaigns have emphasized salary increases and modernized equipment as incentives, with the CV90 and F-16 programs used explicitly in public messaging to attract younger recruits.

Slovak Republic — Personnel Cost Share & Active Personnel, 2014-2025



# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Capability Modernization*

Slovakia's [modernization strategy](#) is modest and directionally right. The 14 F-16 Block 70/72s—the most advanced F-16 variant, first delivered in 2024—replace MiG-29s donated to Ukraine in 2023, with talks underway on four additional aircraft to reach a full squadron. Ground modernization centers on 152 CV90 MkIV IFVs replacing Soviet BMP-2s, with domestic assembly at ZTS-Špeciál and deliveries running through 2030, alongside 41 Zuzana-2 howitzers and 15 Leopard 2A4 tanks. Air defense has transitioned from the donated S-300 to 6 Israeli Barak-MX systems delivered April 2026, though a long-range missile defense gap above medium-range coverage remains unaddressed.



# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Force Posture*

Slovakia hosts NATO's [eFP battlegroup at Lešť](#) training center, established April 2022 under Spain's framework leadership since July 2024, with capacity around 3,000 troops scalable toward brigade-level reinforcement. The [2022 US-Slovak Defense Cooperation Agreement](#) granted access to two Slovak air bases, though no permanent US installations are present. Slovakia contributes 230 troops to UNFICYP Cyprus and 31 CBRN specialists to Latvia, reflecting a pattern of specialized niche contributions rather than combat mass deployment. Its 60-mile Ukraine border gives it eastern front land without the force depth to independently defend it.



# MILITARY CONTRIBUTIONS

## *Industrial Base*

Slovakia's [defense industrial base](#) is modest but strategically significant in the domains European rearmament needs most. [ZVS Holding](#) has substantially expanded 155mm shell production since 2022, giving Slovakia outsized importance as an artillery ammunition supplier relative to its overall budget. [Konštrukta Defence](#) produces the Zuzana-2 SPH—a domestically designed 155mm wheeled howitzer with exports to Ukraine and allied partners—and is developing the lighter Eva M2 based on Ukraine battlefield feedback. ZTS-Špeciál assembles the CV90 fleet domestically under the BAE Systems contract. Slovakia has no sovereign combat aircraft or precision missile capability, but its concentration in ammunition and artillery production aligns precisely with where European industrial capacity has been most strained since 2022.



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Declared Posture*

Slovakia's 2021 [Security](#) and [Defence Strategies](#) meet NATO baseline alignment at the document level—identifying Russian Crimea occupation as aggression and Russian disinformation as a direct threat, while framing Slovakia's security within NATO structures. On China, the documents reflect standard EU alignment without explicit threat designation. A scheduled 2025 strategy review has not produced updated documents, leaving the 2021 frameworks as the formal reference point despite the significant shift in government practice since October 2023.



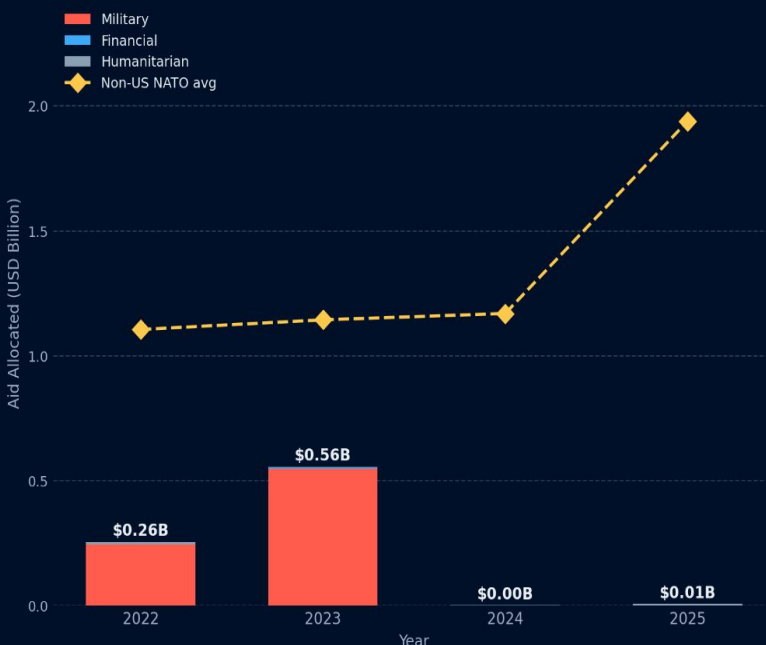
# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Ukraine Support*

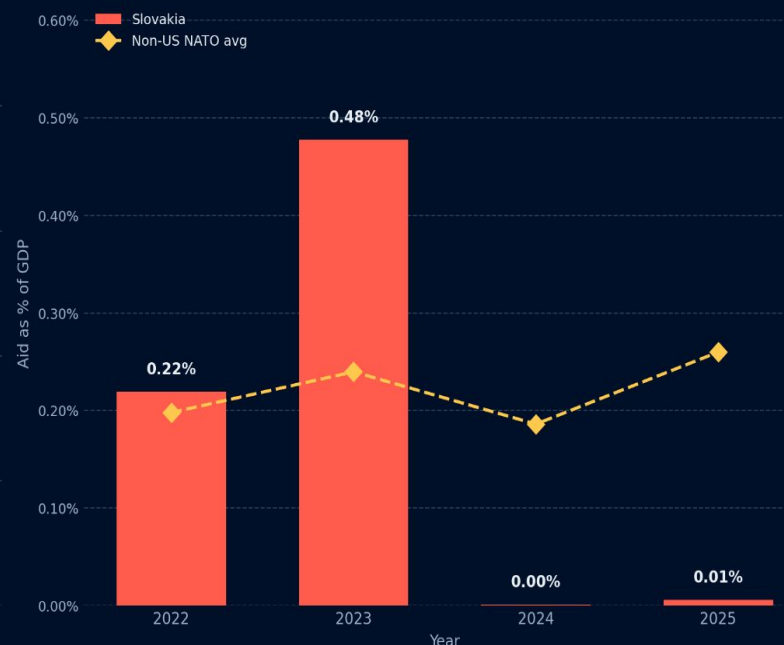
Slovakia's [Ukraine support](#) is dramatically bifurcated. Under pre-Fico governments through October 2023, [Slovakia delivered](#) ~€691M in aid including the S-300 air-defense system, 13 MiG-29s, and Zuzana-2 howitzers—among the most consequential early-war transfers by any NATO ally. The Kiel headline of €0.721B and 0.48% of GDP peak in 2023 reflects almost entirely this period. Since October 2023, military aid has effectively ceased. Commercial [defense exports to Ukraine](#) continued at roughly \$1.25B in 2024—framed as trade rather than aid—and a first non-lethal package was announced in October 2025, but the trajectory from one of NATO's most generous contributors to near-zero state military assistance represents the sharpest single reversal in alliance Ukraine support.

Slovakia — Ukraine Aid, 2022-2025

Slovakia: Aid to Ukraine by Type



Slovakia: Aid to Ukraine as % of GDP



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Russian Decoupling*

Slovakia's Russian energy decoupling is among NATO's worst. Russia supplied roughly 87% of Slovak crude oil in 2024, processed almost entirely at the MOL-owned Slovnaft refinery configured for Russian crude. Slovakia shifted to Russian gas via TurkStream after the Ukraine transit contract expired in January 2025. Nuclear fuel diversification agreements with Framatome and Westinghouse were signed in 2023 but substitution remains incomplete. On sanctions, Slovakia has threatened or delayed multiple EU packages since the 18th, with the 2026 Druzhba dispute—during which Slovakia declared a national energy emergency and suspended emergency electricity exports to Ukraine—illustrating both the depth of dependence and the willingness to leverage it.



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Public Support & Political Resilience*

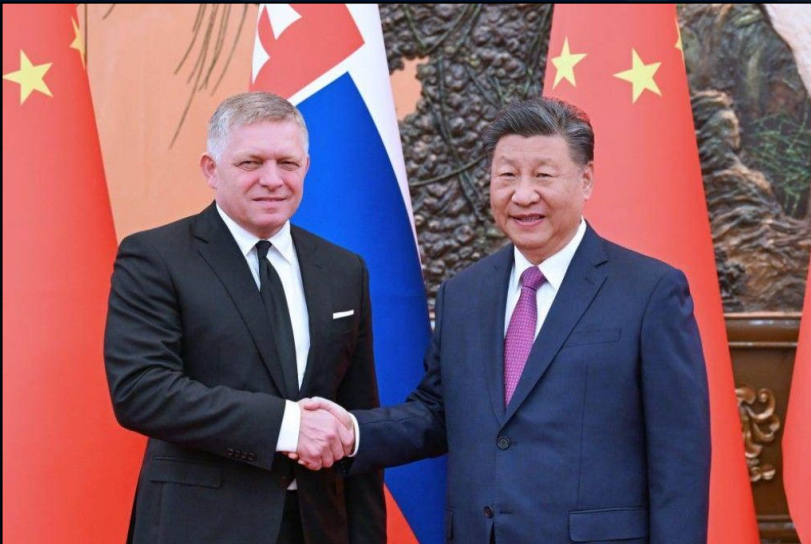
Slovakia recorded only 65% for staying in [NATO in 2024](#), among the lowest in Central Europe, while 61% agreed NATO membership makes a foreign attack less likely and 53% agreed Slovakia should defend another ally. Ukraine support was among the weakest in the survey at around 41% combined, consistent with the governing SMER-SSD's active effort to frame the war as a Western provocation. Prime Minister Fico has formally maintained NATO membership while blocking Ukraine aid, undermining sanctions consensus, attending Russian and Chinese Victory Day events, and advancing the most openly Russia-accommodating posture of any incumbent NATO government. The principal opposition force, Progressive Slovakia, is strongly pro-NATO and has been the most consistent domestic critic of Fico's hedging. The political risk is whether Fico's normalization of Russia-sympathy in public discourse leaves lasting damage to Slovakia's alliance reliability beyond his tenure.



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Hedging Behavior*

Slovakia's hedging behavior presents a mixed picture. The procurement profile is strongly Western—F-16 Block 70, CV90 MkIV, Israeli air defense—with zero adversary procurement and Soviet platforms donated rather than retained. Huawei remains excluded from 5G core networks. Against this, Fico met Putin in the Kremlin in December 2024, [attended Moscow Victory Day](#) as the only EU head of government in May 2025, appeared at [China's Victory Day parade](#) alongside Putin and Kim Jong Un in September 2025, and returned to Moscow for a bilateral Putin meeting in May 2026. There is no Hungary-style BRI industrial footprint, but the sustained adversary diplomatic engagement is the most extensive by any current NATO head of government and creates real risk regardless of procurement alignment.



# STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

## *Operational Cooperation*

Slovakia's operational cooperation is historically strong with recent worrying signals. Slovakia contributed troops to [both Iraq](#) and [Afghanistan](#). Slovakia hosts NATO's eFP battlegroup at Lešť—capacity around 3,000 troops, scalable toward brigade-level reinforcement—as its primary current operational contribution. Slovakia contributes to KFOR and standing NATO missions. Slovakia has not participated in Operation Aspides, Operation Prosperity Guardian, or Operation Epic Fury. The 2026 Druzhba dispute—during which Slovakia suspended emergency electricity exports to Ukraine in winter—represents the most operationally consequential negative, crossing from political obstruction into direct infrastructure harm against a bordering partner.

