



Slovak Shield tested capabilities

(12 November) Ex Slovak Shield 2019 tested the capabilities and readiness of armed forces to defend the Slovak Republic. SVK Armed Forces personnel confirmed their readiness and ability to cooperate with Allied troops. This statement was made by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš at the Slovak Shield 2019 Distinguished Visitors Day at the Training Centre Lešť on 12 Nov 2019.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Every year the exercise marks the culmination of the training year for our armed forces and this year it stands out as one of the largest exercises in our history." At the same time, he underlined the fact that the exercise scenario was designed so as to allow troops to exercise in near-real combat conditions.

Highlighting the readiness of SVK Armed Forces personnel to carry out missions in coordination with Allied partners, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "The tasks fulfilled have brought a wealth of lessons learned that will be applied in practice and worked into the planning processes for 2020."

Commenting on the performance of tasks, Officer Conducting the Exercise (OCE) and SVK Army Commander Maj Gen Jindřich Joch said: "I evaluate the activity as accomplished, whereas the shooting phase of the exercise was rated as excellent." He added that one of the goals was to test the psychological resilience of service personnel as part of their long-term survival across challenging terrain.

Ex Slovak Shield 2019 was held at the Training Centre Lešť and on Nitra Garrison's training ground at Koliňanský vrch from 4 to 12 November 2019, with the participation of over 2,800 soldiers (support exercises included), of whom almost 1,500 were SVK Armed Forces personnel. In addition to SVK personnel, there were also troops from Czechia, Hungary, Poland, the United States of America, and, for the first time, also from Portugal.

The aim of the exercise was to test the capabilities of a mechanised brigade on a joint operation in a multinational environment in defending the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic in the context of enhancing collective defence and interoperability with Allied partners. Ex Slovak Shield 2019 was held concurrently with the support exercises – Air Shield 2019 and Clear Sign 2019.

Meeting of SVK and CZE Cabinets

(11 November) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš held talks with CZE Minister of Defence Lubomír Metnar in Valtice, Czech Republic. At their meeting, they discussed current issues of bilateral cooperation in the field of security and defence and appreciated the shift forward in the ongoing cooperation on delivering the inviolability of SVK and CZE airspace over and above the scope of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS). The meeting took place on the margins of the joint session of the Slovak and Czech Cabinets. Minister Gajdoš highlighted the joint training and education options for members of both armed forces at the University of Defence in Brno or at the M.R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš. He brought Minister Metnar up-to-date on Ex Slovak Shield 2019 with the participation of CZE troops and underlined the cooperation between SVK and CZE CBRN specialists at Toxic Valley 2019 and Toxic Leak 2019, as well as that on EOD operations at CETEX 2019. Ministers also discussed the SVK and CZE deployments on international crisis management missions and operations as well as their NATO and EU commitments.

Minister Gajdoš commemorates Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day

(17 November) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš along with Parliamentary Chairman Andrej Danko and members of the Cabinet commemorated Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day and the victims of the communist regime at a ceremony held at the Memorial to the Executed and Tortured Political Prisoners of Communism in Bratislava's Vrakuňa Cemetery. Reflecting on the occasion, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Our task is to preserve and cultivate the democratic values that the revolutionary streets of November 1989 called for. Equally important, we must never forget those whose lives were taken away from them due to the cruelty of the communist regime. After all, as engraved onto the Memorial here at the Vrakuňa Cemetery, "...they expected justice, but instead they were treated with contempt, they looked for freedom, but instead they found death..." Sadly, this quotation offers a very fitting image of the previous regime's cruelty." He underlined that building democracy on the principles of freedom and the rule of law is a responsibility of every individual even today.



■ Air Chief Maj Gen Lubomír Svoboda received a delegation of the **Indiana National Guard**, led by Assistant Adjutant General-Air Brig Gen Patrick R. Renwick, on 13 Nov 2019. The guests learned about the crew training and operations of UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters and were briefed on the training of F-16 flying personnel by Commander of the Tactical Wing Sliac Col Martin Kuterka.

■ Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini visited SVK service personnel deployed in support of **UNFICYP** in Cyprus on 13 Nov 2019. He paid his respects to the memory of the soldiers fallen in Cyprus, in the presence of Force Commander Maj Gen Cheryl Pearce, DCHOD Maj Gen Josef Pokorný, and SLOVCON Commander Lt Col Rudolf Rusnák. At the ceremony, he passed on greetings from homeland and thanked soldiers for their efforts and work.

■ MSgt Andrej Brzula and Cpl Jaroslav Fitzek were named **Best NCO and Other Ranks Soldier in the Tactical Wing Sliac** on 12 Nov 2019. Both will be considered for the SVK Air Force's Best NCO and Other Ranks Soldier.

■ Working in cooperation with the National Transfusion Station Martin and the First Aid Station at the Training and Mobilization Manning Base Martin, members of the Base participated in a **blood donation event** on 13 Nov 2019. 6 members of the Base and 66 soldier trainees took part.

■ A **Specialist Self-Defence Course for Policewomen** was held at the Crisis Management, Training and K9 Branch, MP Dept Vlkánová – Hronek on 4-8 Nov 2019. Course attendees were drawn from among the military policewomen of the Police Operations Branch Bratislava and the Crisis Management, Training and K9 Branch, and the policewomen of the Constitutional Representatives and Diplomatic Missions Protection Office (SVK Ministry of Interior).

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be 35 **Allied road movements** from 18 to 24 Nov 2019 in Slovakia. They will mostly involve CZE and POL troops. As well as ferrying oversized cargo, SVK Army convoys will conduct road moves on the following routes: TC Lešť – Sása Pliešovce, Sereď – Moldava nad Bodvou, Trebišov – Poruba pod Vihorlatom, Nitra – Nemecká, Moldava nad Bodvou – Martin and Martin – Sereď. There will also be rail movements on the following lines: Sása Pliešovce – Nitra, Sása Pliešovce – Levice, Sása Pliešovce – Kamenica nad Cirochou, and Sása Pliešovce – Michalovce.

Condolences and assistance

(13 November) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš expressed his sincere condolences to the surviving next of kin of the victims who died in a road accident at the village of Nitrianske Hrnčiarovce on 13 Nov 2019. The MOD made its military psychologists, of the Psychological Intervention Team, available to them. Based on a request from the Regional Road Traffic Inspectorate Nitra, military policemen assisted in regulating local traffic. "If there are any other requests for military personnel or equipment, we are ready to help immediately. We are absolutely committed to supporting the Interior Ministry and the Rescue Services," said Minister Gajdoš at the scene of the accident. He emphasised that the Armed Forces stand ready to assist in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Readiness check

(14 November) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš has tasked the Chief of Defence to check the readiness of standby units for potential deployment on flood relief operations. "In the event of requests for assistance by the crisis staffs in individual regions, we will thus be ready to provide soldiers, equipment and material," said Minister Gajdoš. He emphasised that armed forces are here for our citizens 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Third wave of PESCO projects



(12 November) EU Defence Ministers met at the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) in Brussels and adopted a decision to launch the third set of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)

projects. EU Defence Ministers had an opportunity to discuss the progress on security and defence, with emphasis on the latest PESCO developments and the coherence between the new EU defence initiatives (PESCO, CARD, EDF). Representing Slovakia at the meeting was State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Defence Róbert Ondrejčák. EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini highlighted the need to step up contributions to EU missions and operations, especially when it comes to the African continent. The newly appointed NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geoană updated EU Defence Ministers on the preparations for the upcoming NATO Leaders Meeting in London to be held on 3-4 Dec 2019. The European Defence Agency's (EDA) ministerial Steering Board met on the margins of the EU Defence Ministerial.

MOD honours veterans with Act of Commemoration and Run in Tribute to Veterans

(11 November) To mark International Veterans Day and the 101st anniversary of the WW1 Armistice, an Act of Commemoration dedicated to the victims of both World Wars and all armed conflicts was held at the Petržalka-Kopčany War Cemetery in Bratislava. Representing the SVK MOD at the ceremony were State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marián Saloň and General Secretary of the SVK MOD Ján Hoľko. The traditional 'Run in Tribute to Veterans' was symbolically organised at 11:11 as part of the event. The Trenčín-Kubrá War Cemetery, located in the grounds of a munitions depot, has been declared a National Heritage Site (NHS) this year. Most of the credit for the reconstruction of the cemetery lies with the Slovak Generals Club, especially Lt Gen (Rtd) Pavel Honzek, in cooperation with the Institute of Military History. This fact was highlighted in Brig Gen Slavomír Staviarský's speech at

an International Veterans Day ceremony at the cemetery on 11 Nov 2019. In attendance were representatives of SVK Armed Forces Command, Military Diplomatic Corps, Trenčín Self-Governing Region, Trenčín City, and veterans. Deputy Air Chief Brig Gen Róbert Kleštinec took part in an International Veterans Day ceremony at the Memorial to the Fallen RAF Pilots in Bratislava-Čunovo on 10 Nov 2019.

International Veterans Day ceremonies were also held at the Partisan Cemetery in Martin-Priekopa, at the War Veterans Memorial in Liptovský Mikuláš, at the Jozef Gabčík Memorial in Rajecské Teplice-Poluvsie, at the War Cemetery in Nitra-Mlynárce, at the WW1 Armistice Memorial at Sliac, and at Lešť-Oremov Laz on Lešť Training Area, with the participation of the Chief of Defence, and at other places across Slovakia.

