



Victims of occupation

(21 August) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď honoured the victims of the Warsaw Pact (WP) invasion of Czechoslovakia during a commemoration ceremony in Šafárik Square, Bratislava. He also paid tribute to them at the Warsaw Pact-occupied Czechoslovakia Victims Memorial in St Egidius Square, Poprad.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "Today we remember the 52nd anniversary of the Soviet Army's invasion of former Czechoslovakia – this was a response to the then government's efforts to democratise the communist system, including the idea of putting Slovaks on an equal footing [with Czechs] in the State. Never ever should we forget those who lost their lives in the fight against the suppressive totalitarian regime." He continued: "By remembering this event, we send a clear signal that we are not indifferent to the injustices and suppressive acts of the totalitarian regime, because the highest values we have in our society today are the universal values of freedom and democracy."

The Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, officially dubbed Operation Danube, was launched on the night of 20/21 August 1968. On the morning of 21 August 1968, an announcement by the Central Committee Chairmanship of the Czechoslovak Communist Party was aired at 5 minutes to 2am, informing the citizens of the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia. Warsaw Pact troops from Hungary, Bulgaria, Poland and East Germany participated in the invasion alongside soldiers of the Soviet Union. The objective of the military intervention was to normalise the situation and halt the democratisation of Czechoslovak society. In the first days alone, protests against the occupation forces claimed dozens of victims and hundreds of citizens were injured. The occupation lasted well until 1991. It took 16 months to the Soviet troops to pull out of the country.

Defence State Secretary Marian Majer, too, paid homage to the victims of the Warsaw Pact-occupied Czechoslovakia during a commemoration ceremony in Leopoldov on Saturday 22 August 2020.

Freedom was dearly paid for

(22 August) To mark the upcoming 76th anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP), Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď attended commemorations in tribute to the fallen anti-Nazi resistance heroes at the SNP Memorials on top of Jankov vršok near Uhrovec and in the village of Kunerad.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "Our freedom was dearly paid for with the suffering and lives of those who stood behind the armed uprising of our domestic resistance movement during the 2nd World War. For their courage to stand up for the rights and freedom of our country and nation even under the threat of death, the participants of the Slovak National Uprising are true heroes for me." He further pointed out that these principles are not a matter of course in today's world either. "On the contrary, it is being proved that living in democracy and freedom is a very precious privilege," he added.

Seven partisans rest in peace on top of Jankov vršok. Having been wounded, the partisans were rounded up and burned to death in a bunker by the Nazis on 13 February 1945. Kunerad Chateau was home to HQ "Milan Rastislav Štefánik" 2nd Slovak Partisan Brigade. It was torched by Nazi troops on 25 September 1944.

MOD wants to see soldiers engaged in work on (Amendment) Bill No. 281/2015

(21 August) The SVK MOD is preparing measures to improve the Terms and Conditions of State Service for active duty soldiers, including through the Active Duty Soldiers State Service (Amendment) Bill. It wants to see soldiers engaged in work on the (Amendment) Bill. Soldiers are invited to forward their suggestions for legislative proposals no later than 31 October 2020 by email at novela281@mod.gov.sk.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "I have been asked by the Chief of Defence to change the existing legislation in order to improve Service conditions for soldiers, and I will be very pleased to do so, however, on condition that the soldiers themselves must be involved in the process of changing the legislation currently in place. That is why I have written a letter to soldiers, calling on them to join us in working on the Bill together. I want to assure all servicemen and women that my colleagues and I will give every proposal serious consideration."

Amendment Bill No. 281/2015 aims to ensure that the active duty soldiers' Terms and Conditions of State Service are dynamic and flexible and that they reflect the requirements of the SVK Armed Forces, with the focus on developing the military education system, career progression, personnel assessments and non-financial benefits.

Through this move, MOD leaders want to enhance transparency, objectivity and professionalism across all areas falling under the remit of the SVK MOD and relating to the creation of optimum terms and conditions of State Service for active duty soldiers.

■ US Ambassador Bridget A. Brink paid a visit to the Colonel General Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing Prešov on 20 August 2020. Ambassador Brink was accompanied by Commander of the SVK Air Force Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda and Commander of the Helicopter Wing Prešov Col Róbert Tóth.

■ The first two weeks of August saw the final preparation of the **Igla Man-Portable Air Defence System (MANPAD) Platoon**, Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra, for its certification with the 13th Mechanised Battalion Group. Deployed on Nitra Garrison's Koliňany Training Ground, members of the Platoon practised executing missions against air targets, responding to recorded incidents, and camouflaging individuals and equipment.

■ Organised by the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, this year the **3rd Children's Camp session** took place at full capacity of 45 children at the Granit Hotel Smrekovica. Children were treated to hiking trips, museum and zoo visits, swimming, competitions, BBQs and holy masses.

■ Commander of the Self-propelled Artillery Battalion Michalovce Lt Col Roman Bobaľ opened the **4th Children's Day Camp**. The camp is intended for children of military and civilian personnel, with a view to presenting the mission and work of the SVK Armed Forces, as well as making the military profession more attractive. The four-day camp was enriched by static and dynamic displays.

■ The MOD has issued a traffic warning to local motorists as 9 **Allied road movements**, involving US, CZE, LTU, HUN and POL troops, are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 24 to 30 August 2020. The MOD stresses that the transit convoys have been approved in line with the guidance of the SVK Public Health Authority. Over the same period, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct convoy operations from/to: TC Lešt' – Sereď and back, Martin – Prešov, Prešov – Kamenica nad Cirochou and back, Kamenica nad Cirochou – Michalovce and back, Michalovce – Prešov, Michalovce – Banská Bystrica and back, Zemianske Kostolany – Prešov and back, and from Sliač to Žilina and back.

This week Regina Radio's FULL FIELD KIT, live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, will focus, among others, on Sereď honouring its military engineers by unveiling the Engineers Memorial in the town. Please, send your suggestions and opinions to plnapolna@mod.gov.sk.

Selection of candidates for 5th Special Forces Regiment

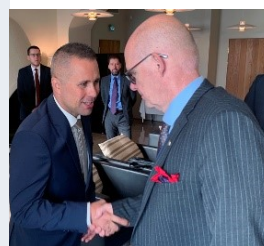
(21 August) The Special Forces Assessment and Selection (SFAS) has been underway for the fifth day in August. Of the 111 applicants, 91 candidates showed up for SFAS. Of them, 64 candidates are still in the assessment and selection phase, while 27 have quit on medical grounds or due to a lack of motivation or unsatisfactory results. In his opening remarks for the two-week SFAS, Commander of the 5th SOF Regt Col Pavol Šebík said: "We need you and only you know why you need us," adding that "we can give you education, special training, and courses and operations abroad. Most importantly, we need to select the right personnel and build the team spirit." So far, the SFAS



Government approves proposal

(19 August) The SVK Government approved the proposed agreement, put forward by the Defence Minister, with the presence of US military personnel on Slovak soil. Their mission will be to provide advice and training to members of the SVK Armed Forces. The proposal is still to be debated by the SVK Parliament. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "It is very important to stress that, under this proposal, there is no novelty about US troops serving in Slovakia. Having served on our soil already in the past, the presence of US military personnel is about long-term and continual cooperation with our key Ally at a high level, including intense military cooperation on training, exercises and consultancy." He added that four US soldiers, without any military vehicles or equipment, will be deployed to Slovakia. It follows from the given proposal that, if approved, members of the US military will be deployed to Martin Garrison, with 1 October 2020 as the start date of the 36-month-deployment on a 9-month rotational basis. The costs associated with their presence will be paid by the US side.

State Secretary in Finland



(20 August) On his foreign visit to Finland, State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence Marian Majer met with Permanent Secretary of the Finnish Ministry of Defence Jukka Juusti for talks to address ways of enhancing the bilateral relationship between both countries. Mr Majer presented the SVK MOD's security and defence priorities and underpinned the importance of Slovakia's active membership in the EU and NATO. He underscored the fact that both countries have many common opinions on foreign policy issues, which allows for a strengthening and deepening of the SVK-FIN engagement even in the politico-military area and appreciated the discussion on the reform and capacity building of the Finnish Armed Forces. The two leaders used the occasion to reflect on the Vydra 8x8 Infantry Fighting Vehicle Programme. Also discussed were the deployments of SVK service personnel on EU and NATO missions and operations and Slovakia's participation in the Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats in Helsinki. State Secretary Majer updated Permanent Secretary Juusti on work underway on the new strategic documents – the SVK Defence Strategy and the SVK Security Strategy, as well as on Slovakia's progress in delivering its international security and defence commitments. Mr Majer also received a tour of Patria Land Systems.

candidates have made it through physical fitness assessment, swimming combined with overcoming artificial obstacles, daytime and night-time loaded marching (tabbing) across different rugged terrain and firm tracks, marksmanship with a focus on Normal Safety Procedures (NSPs), instruction processing, weapon handling, and psychological tests. Only serving personnel of the SVK Armed Forces and cadets of the Armed Forces Academy are currently undergoing SFAS. Those civilian candidates who are interested in serving with special forces can contact the Army Recruitment Centres and will be assigned to the SOF Training Platoon at the Training and Mobilisation Manning Base Martin.