



Soldiers ready to assist

(9 October) The Ministry of Defence is to set aside up to 1,500 SVK Armed Forces personnel to help the Ministry of Health mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in Slovakia. They will be assigned to strengthen the Regional Public Health Authorities and hospitals and will deploy as mobile sampling teams. This proposal by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď has been endorsed by the SVK Government. The head of the MOD said: "Currently, we have a request for assistance from the Ministry of Health to set aside about 350 soldiers to help track down the people who have been in contact with those infected, take swab samples and keep order at hospitals. As a priority, they will deploy to the Orava region, where the situation is the worst right now."

Dukla heroes remembered

(6 October) On the occasion of the 76th anniversary of the Battle of the Dukla Pass, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, Defence State Secretary Marian Majer and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko paused to pay tribute to the Dukla heroes at the Czechoslovak Army Corps Memorial. Also in attendance at the commemorations held at Dukla and in Svidník was Prime Minister Igor Matovič. Mr Naď said: "Today serves a reminder of the unabating legacy of our heroes – fighters for universal values of freedom. They had the courage to rise up against evil during the Nazi regime, knowing that they may not win this struggle and, indeed, many of them never returned home." According to his words, by remembering such events, we call on society never to forget this landmark period of Slovak history. "At Dukla, soldiers marched into one of the bloodiest operations of the Second World War. From their perspective, however, they marched towards freedom and democracy. Therefore, Dukla is not only an exclamation mark for the horrors of war, but it also epitomises the immense strength of the Slovak Nation."

Reconstruction with suspicions

(8 October) Defence Minister Naď lodged a criminal complaint against an unknown perpetrator with the Prosecutor-General's Office on suspicion of several crimes that might have been committed in the process of reconstructing the Granit Hotel in Nová Polianka. Mr Naď said: "On taking to office, I called on respective elements of the MOD to start work on concrete comprehensive documentation. The first pieces of information confirmed that several directors of Horezza had committed, so to say, acts of insanity against the Defence estate with complete impunity." The MOD's internal audit report has revealed 23 deficiencies at MOD-owned Horezza JSC, of which 8 are deemed as highly risky, including breaching the law of the Slovak Republic. The criminal complaint is directly related to refurbishment works to the national cultural heritage site – the former Institute for Pulmonary Diseases in Nová Polianka, the building of which is run by Horezza. The reconstruction bill gradually swelled over the budget up to €6 million. Most of the money went on the construction works. The contractor, HAŠTRA JSC, was selected in a market research and was originally awarded a contract worth €3,535,143.02. The company signed an amendment to the contract to add a further €689,000 to the existing bill. It is estimated that over-billing may be as high as €912,849. Also, the Minister provided an update on the sell-off of several Defence land holdings in the High Tatras. According to the audit, 34,811m² of land was sold off, with the selling price varying from €18 to €44/m².

J. Naď at Globsec: NATO is a mainstay and compass of stability

(7 October) One of the most high profile security conferences in Europe – Globsec Bratislava Forum 2020 – began in Bratislava under strict anti-pandemic measures. This year's theme of "LET'S HEAL THE WORLD TOGETHER" is inspired by the COVID-19 pandemic. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď participated in the conference and was one of the speakers on the discussion panel titled "A Compass of Stability – NATO's Ageless Utility". Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "Even during this pandemic, it is being proven once again that there is no alternative to NATO for European security and defence." Mr Naď was joined on the panel by Minister of Defence of Latvia Artis Pabriks and Minister of National Defence of Canada Harjit Singh Sajjan. The ministers appreciated NATO's assistance in delivery of personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies under NATO's SALIS programme, which was used by Slovakia as well. Defence State Secretary Marian Majer, too, participated in Globsec. The panel on which the Defence State Secretary appeared focused on the EU's defence initiatives and the options for their further advancement. Mr Majer also discussed the impact of hybrid threats and climatic change on security and defence and the areas where the armed forces can set an example in mitigating the effects of climate change.



- On 5 Oct, Commander of the Multinational Corps Northeast Szczecin **Lt Gen Sławomir Wojciechowski** paid a visit to the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFUI SVK) at Vajnory Barracks, Bratislava. On this occasion, he also met with Defence State Secretary Marian Majer and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko.

- The members of the Self-propelled Artillery Battalion (SPA Bn) Michalovce and of the SVK Armed Forces assigned to **enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) role in Latvia**, led by Maj Michal Németh, DCOM SPA Bn and COM 1st SVK eFP rotation, have been undergoing intense pre-deployment training on Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area in preparation for Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL).

- Sgt 1st Class Ján Lukašik was promoted to Sergeant Major and took up the appointment of Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) for the **Supply Base II Martin**.

- On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the formation of the 11th Mechanised Battalion Martin, the Commander and the Chief of Staff awarded a memorial badge and a green beret to **101-year-old Lt Col (Rtd) Pavol Matejovič**, the last surviving member of the 16th Tank Attack Regiment.

- The SNP Central Military Hospital – Faculty Hospital Ružomberok has reintroduced its **COVID-19 triage points** at the entrances to both hospital facilities. 40 sanitary staff and 14 nurses of the SVK Armed Forces will assist with the triage of COVID-19-suspected patients.

- Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, the **Slovakia and Europe in 1940 Conference** will be attended, as a priority, by Slovak historians at the SNP Museum in Banská Bystrica on 20 Oct. Those international and national historians who cannot attend the conference are expected to send their papers by 20 Nov 2020 to be published in the conference proceedings.

- The **White Heart Award**, awarded by the Slovak Nurses and Midwives Association, went to two nurses from the Central Military Hospital Ružomberok for their selfless and dedicated care for COVID-19 patients.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to local motorists as 7 **Allied road movements** involving US, HUN, POL and ROU troops are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 12 to 18 Oct. Over the same period, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct convoy operations from Sliach to Martin and from Rašov to Sklené. Also scheduled are SVK Armed Forces rail movements from Kuchyňa to Zemianske Kostolany and from Prešov to Michalovce.

Exercise Fire Rescue 2020 overshadowed by COVID-19 pandemic

(9 October) A Defence Fire Service (DFS) exercise, dubbed Fire Rescue 2020, was held at the Training Centre Lešt' on 5 - 9 Oct 2020. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions in place, the exercise had to be scaled back. Notably absent from the exercise were the traditional participants from the Czech Armed Forces, Office of SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General, Medical Rescue Service Bratislava and students of Banská Bystrica-based Medical School acting as mock casualties. Exercise Director Lt Col Róbert Senček, of SVK Air Force Headquarters Zvolen, said: "The exercise was attended by members of the SVK Air Force's Defence Fire Service only. The main objective of the exercise was to coordinate and practise the actions of

Ex Slovak Shield rescheduled

(9 October) Ex Slovak Shield, an annual international exercise held at TC Lešt', will not take place in 2020, because soldiers are expected to support local communities in the fight against COVID-19. With the training audience from US, CZE, POL and HUN, the exercise was to validate our readiness to defend Slovakia's territorial integrity. The rescheduling of the epidemiologically most critical phase of the exercise will not affect the SVK military's capacity to deliver its core task – to defend our country. The training phase for the exercise is to continue with commanders and staffs engaging in staff rehearsals and testing the alert and standby procedures and the combat readiness of troops whilst observing strict hygienic and epidemiological measures.

Reservists train at Slanské Hills



(9 October) On 28 Sept, 15 reservists (5 women) reported to Trebišov for a two-week training programme aimed at basic soldiering skills, combined with live firing of personal weapons and tests, and section-level drills supported by combat vehicles on Trebišov Garrison's Training Ground at Velké Ozorovce in the foothills of the Slanské Hills. The training programme was led by 1Lt Marián Bačo. "While some of them were conscripts, others were ex-service personnel and still others former Voluntary Military Training soldiers. Despite this diversity, they made a good team," said 1Lt Bačo, praising the reservists.

16th MOD Literary Competition

The MOD has launched the 16th MOD Literary Competition open to secondary school, college and university students, with this year's theme: "What is the price of peace?" Entrants are expected to write their writing samples as a story or an essay. Entries must be in between 1,000 to 5,000 letters, including spaces, and typed as DOC, DOCX, ODT or PDF documents and forwarded along with your personal data (name, surname, address, school name, age and telephone number) and a written statement consenting to the processing of personal data in line with EU GDPR by 22 Nov 2020 to sutaz@mod.gov.sk. The MOD jury will select 5 best entries in each category. These will be published on the MOD's Facebook for an online vote through "likes" between 1 and 6 Dec 2020. The results will be announced on 8 Dec 2020. The first three winners of each category will receive cash prizes – €500, €400 and €300. The prizes will be presented to the winners by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď. The winning entries will be published in the MOD's Defence monthly magazine.



firefighting teams in carrying out specialist activities and rescue works during incident responses." The training audience at the Training Centre Lešt' included members of the Defence Fire Service teams from TW Kuchyňa, TACW Sliach, HW Prešov, AAM Bde Nitra and AOC Bde Zvolen. Among others, Ex Fire Rescue deepened the commanders' abilities to command and control incident responses, set up an incident response staff and coordinate the DFS units in the aftermath of an air disaster, aircraft fire, building fire and mass casualty event. Due to the current situation, they focused on better integration of new members into the teams. Despite the COVID-19 restrictions in place, Ex Fire Rescue 2020 met its objectives.

