



Hejce victims remembered

(19 January) In an Act of Remembrance, MOD leaders marked the 15th anniversary of Slovakia's worst air disaster and paid tribute to the Service personnel who lost their lives in the crash of a SVK Air Force Antonov AN-24 transport aircraft on 19 Jan 2006 in Hejce, Hungary. Due to pandemic restrictions in place, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, President and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces Zuzana Čaputová, and Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer paused to remember the 42 victims and laid wreaths in silence in front of the Reconciliation Memorial at the Ministry of Defence. Elsewhere, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko participated in a remembrance ceremony in the Hungarian village of Hejce and on top of Borsó Hill.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "On 19 Jan 2006 the Slovak Armed Forces lost a part of their military family, our colleagues – servicemen and servicewomen who after accomplishing their mission in Kosovo had only one more task to fulfil – to return home to their loved ones. Unfortunately, this never happened. We pledge never to forget."

As Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko noted, the symbolic oak posts erected at the site of the crash stand as a permanent reminder of the bravery and sacrifice of the men and women in uniform – the heroes who had lived up to their noble mission of giving a helping hand wherever needed.

"The Slovak soldiers left to build a better world, they cleared obstacles together and experienced collective victories and successes. Sadly, 42 of them never came back home. They will forever remain in our hearts and minds," he added.

On this occasion, the head of the MOD pointed out that by signing the decision to declassify the Service Inquiry Report into the Antonov AN-24 Air Disaster, after 14 years of waiting and unanswered questions, the next of kin and members of the public were allowed to learn about all aspects and circumstances of this incident. "We owe this not only to them, but also to our soldiers who sacrificed their lives in service of the Nation," he added, noting that the Service Inquiry Report is the 8th most frequently viewed page on the MOD website. Over 18,000 people have accessed it since its release on 31 Jul 2020.

Another remembrance ceremony was held at the Victims Memorial in front of the Airfield Club at the Gen M. R. Štefánik Transport Wing, with the participation of Commander Transport Wing Col Peter Prokop, Chief of Staff Lt Col Tibor Fehér, and acting CSEL SSgt Emil Šefčík. Spiritual support to the ceremony was provided by Staff Chaplain Maj Slavko Ganaj.

The SVK AF Antonov An-24 transport aircraft was carrying SVK military personnel from Kosovo when it went down on 19 Jan 2006. The annual Act of Remembrance has been held in Hungary's Hejce where the SVK Ministry of Defence and the Slovak Armed Forces offer a salute to the victims at the site of the air disaster on Borsó Hill, where 42 symbolic oak posts stand in honour of the Service members, and at the Hejce air crash memorial in the village of Hejce.

Minister meets Commander NATO JFC Brunssum Gen Vollmer

(21 January) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď met with Commander Allied Joint Force Command (JFC) Brunssum Gen Jörg Vollmer at the Ministry of Defence for talks on security and defence issues of current relevance and NATO's multilateral cooperation. On this occasion, Minister Naď briefed Gen Vollmer on the basic pillars of Slovakia's Security and Defence Strategies and updated him on the SVK military's role in the fight against COVID-19. The head of the MOD provided an update to Gen Vollmer on the plans and progress being made in the field of Armed Forces modernisation and military infrastructure development, including on the planned G2G procurement of 3D radars in order to meet the operational demands of the SVK Air Force. The delivery of international commitments received due attention too, among others, the expenditure targets of 2% of GDP on defence by 2024. "I wish to see this commitment being carried through continually," said Minister Naď.



- In the presence of Commander of the SVK Army Brig Ivan Pach, HQ 2nd Mechanised Brigade hosted a Change of Command (COC) ceremony in Prešov on 18 Jan, with Brig Vladimír Kubáň handing over command to Col Slavomír Verčímač.

- Commander of the Tank Battalion Trebišov Lt Col Ľubomír Bodnár bade his farewell to service leavers Maj Jozef Horváth, SSgt Peter Badid and SSgt Marián Štatník after 25 years of service in the Slovak Armed Forces.

- On 19 Jan, Supply Base II Martin handed over new Hyundai i30 T-GDI service vehicles to Defence Munitions (DM) Rašov, DM Trenčín, DM Sklené, DM Poprad, DM Nováky, CTM, Military Laboratory CMSaOTD Žilina and UVZ Lešť.

- Although Petra Vlhová, alpine ski racer of the SVK National Team and member of the Dukla Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre, did not repeat her excellent 4th place at the Audi FIS Ski World Cup in Switzerland's Crans Montana on Sat 19 Jan, as she did the day before, yet she ended up among the elite top 10 skiers and gained on Michelle Gisin (CHE) in the overall assessment. The 25-year-old SVK skier from the Liptov region placed 7th and is three places ahead of the other contender for the crystal globe.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as ten Allied road movements by US, CZE, HRV and POL troops are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 25 to 31 Jan 2021. The MOD stresses that the Allied transits have been approved in line with the SVK Public Health Authority-issued guidelines.

- From 25 to 31 Jan 2021, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct road convoy movements from/to: Zvolen – Veľká Ida, Veľká Ida – Zemianske Kostofány, Prešov – Michalovce, Zemianske Kostofány – Zvolen, Michalovce – Prešov and back, Zemianske Kostofány – Kuchyňa and back, Zemianske Kostofány – Nováky and back, Sliač – Zemianske Kostofány and back, Ruskov – Nováky, and Záhorie – Ruskov, as well as railway movements from Prešov to Zemianske Kostofány and from Kuchyňa to Zemianske Kostofány.

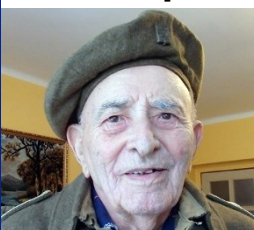
On procurement of radars

(22 January) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď spoke to Israeli Defence Minister Benjamin Gantz by video call. The aim of the conversation was to launch the processes needed for the procurement of new 3D medium, short and very short range radars which the MOD plans to buy on the basis of the Government-approved mandate through a G2G agreement with the State of Israel. With his Israeli colleague, Defence Minister Naď shared his vision for the G2G procedure and conditions. The head of the MOD informed Israeli Defence Minister Benjamin Gantz about the procurement conditions, including the work timeframe, the role of the SVK defence industry, and the required investments.

Soldiers help with testing

(24 January) As part of Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) arrangement, military personnel, once again, supported the nation-wide screening for COVID-19 by organising testing at individual testing sites on 18-26 Jan. To this end, Regional Commands (RCs) were re-activated to coordinate testing efforts. Adolf Uličný was assigned as COM RC Zvolen, Col Jozef Paňko as COM RC Nitra, Col Peter Prokop as COM RC Malacky and Col Peter Kríž as COM RC Trebišov. SVK Armed Forces members were also present at hospitals and regional public health authorities, as well as serving alongside policemen on the roads and in the streets. Over the weekend, 2,472 soldiers supported the country-wide screening for COVID-19.

Bernard Papánek passes away



(21 January) Bernard Papánek, veteran of the WW2 Western Resistance, died of COVID-19 at the age of 101. As a member of the Czechoslovak Army in WW2, he was involved in the Siege of Tobruk and in the Battle of Dunkirk.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď offered his sincerest condolences to Papánek's family and his friends. Bernard Papánek was born on 19 Jan 1920 in Vienna, his father came from a Jewish family from Slovakia and his mother was from Morava. For some time, he lived with his wife in Israel. "Having served as a member of the WW2 Western Resistance, life for him was far from easy. He was persecuted by the communist regime. Nevertheless, after his beloved wife passed away, he returned to his country for which he showed no hesitation to sacrifice his life," said Jaroslav Naď.

Provisional bridge over River Hornád restores shortest and safest road connection



(18 January) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, Interior Minister Roman Mikulec, Chairman of the SVK State Material Reserves Administration Ján Rudolf, and representatives of the Košice Self

Governing Region opened a provisional bridge over the Hornád River between the villages of Kysak and Veľká Lodina. The original bridge was closed in August 2020, because it was in poor repair before collapsing last October. Over the past days, 20 Army sappers of the Engineer Battalion Sereď and 13 firefighters of the Fire and Rescue Brigade Humenné have worked hard to install the provisional 54-metre-long M4959 bridge system on loan from the State Material Reserves.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "The bridge replacement means bringing comfort to local residents and securing their safety and the protection of their health." He thanked

the soldiers, firefighters and all those involved in the logistics of transporting the cargo, which was over 80m in length and weighed over 70 tonnes, and for working continuously to put the bridge in place, even in bad weather. "Thanks to their intense work, the bridge is open to traffic today already," he stressed.

Defence Minister Naď added that for soldiers it was an important training activity. The last time they deployed this bridge system was in the former Yugoslavia. "Today, our soldiers go to the Czech Republic to practise laying this type of bridge. That's why I welcome that they've honed their engineering skills in this real domestic environment," he said. In close cooperation with the Road Administration Authority, the replacement bridge was subjected to tests on the bridge's load capacity and safety. The bridge is open to passenger cars, coaches and lorries of up to 40 tonnes gross weight, as well as to pedestrians. Traffic is restricted to one lane for both directions.