



A year of new MOD leadership

(22 March) A year on since the present leadership took over the MOD, senior MOD leaders assess progress over this period which they view as a daunting challenge, considering the ongoing pandemic and the transparency and openness issues in Defence. In the coming period, they want to continue to drive forward the agenda for real, transparent and intense development of the SVK Armed Forces and to honour Slovakia's foreign policy commitments.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "The entire year 2020 was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, not excluding the MOD. Nevertheless, I am immensely proud of the fantastic work done by our entire Defence and particularly by our Armed Forces that proved to be a truly functional and crucial element of crisis management in our country." He added that thousands of military personnel are deployed to hospitals, tracing contacts of those who test positive, testing and vaccinating people, and delivering security day in, day out.

The Armed Forces need supportive Service conditions in order to function effectively. This, too, was one of the challenging areas of interest for the new MOD leadership who had inherited Defence infrastructure often in a poor state of repair, inadequate stocks of military clothing, and cases of misconduct in modernisation projects. "Soldiers can rest assured that we care about them very much and that we are creating a supportive environment for them so that they can perform their duties at 100% – we will provide them with adequate support and clothing. Compared to the past, we have made an enormous leap forward in these areas – we have invested nearly €100m in infrastructure and another €17.8m in military clothing, and we plan to spend a similar amount of funds this year as well. Of course, we are also building new infrastructure, because our Armed Forces need to grow," said Minister Nad'. The Defence Minister praised the massive efforts underway to take modernisation projects forward, with transparency, openness and cost effectiveness as key priorities, he elaborated: "On the promotion of open communications, the declassification of several contracts, and the halt and review of non-transparent purchases by the MOD, we can say we have significantly shifted ahead too. We are continuing to work on the projects that make sense – for example, the armoured fighting vehicles, whether it be wheeled or tracked. We are going to enormous efforts to re-equip service personnel with standard issue weapons and to purchase new engineering equipment, vehicles and coaches."

Other successes include the approval of the new SVK Defence Strategy, which sets a clear course for SVK foreign and security policy, and the actual delivery of international commitments in the form of higher troop levels on international missions and operations and increased defence spend.

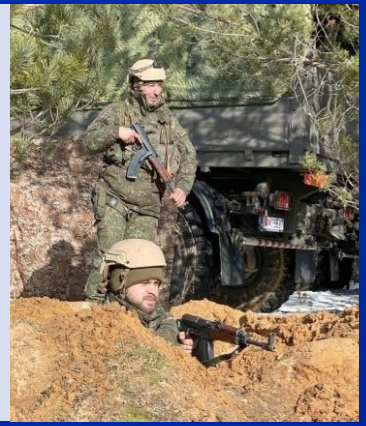
"For the first time in history, we have reached the 2 per cent GDP defence spending goal, which enables us to bring higher quality capabilities to our Armed Forces and to reassure our Allies that Slovakia is a stable and responsible partner in the field of security and defence," said Minister Nad'. As Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer confirmed, the past year has been challenging for the MOD. "Despite this, I think that the list of our achievements clearly points to the fact that it has been a year of efficiency," he said. CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko thanked the Service personnel for a remarkable job, the military families for their support, and the public for their trust and favour.

Paradoxically, for the MOD, the past year has been a year of stabilisation. Several areas have seen radical steps towards effecting changes to the inherited state of affairs, including filing 7 criminal complaints on the grounds of suspected criminal activity. The MOD leadership wishes to keep up the trend of encouraging transparency, openness and intense development across Defence into the future.

On the past year of SVK Defence under the present leadership, please view the PDF file attached to this article on the MOD [website](http://www.mosr.sk/ebulletin/).

Certification Ex Crystal Arrow

(25 March) A SVK artillery unit from Michalovce has served with NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Latvia since December 2020. This March, our artillerymen passed the toughest test so far – Certification Ex Crystal Arrow. Soldiers from all partner countries of the eFP Battlegroup Latvia met on Ādaži training range. The exercise tested the ability of the fire battery, reconnaissance teams and fire support group to cooperate together and the interoperability of partner weapons and equipment. EFP troops were deployed in the field for eight days during which SVK artillerymen provided fire support to manoeuvre units. "We carried out the most demanding tasks at night, when the unit performed over 50% of all firing tasks, kept changing the firing positions, and supplied munitions, fuel, food and water. Our supply and munitions teams were part of the international logistics unit. Electrical and mechanical engineers provided on-site repairs of damaged equipment during the exercise to keep the fire battery going. I found the exercise very beneficial, because it simulated near real battle conditions," explained Fire Battery Commander Capt Tomáš Quecke.



- On behalf of SVK Defence, Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer bid farewell to the outgoing Czech Defence Attaché, **Maj Gen Jan Gurník**. On this occasion, he presented him with the SVK Minister of Defence Medal. Maj Gen Libor Jílek has been appointed the new Czech Defence Attaché to Slovakia.

- According to an opinion survey conducted between 12 and 18 Mar by Median Agency, of 1,000 respondents, 63% found the Slovak Armed Forces to be the **most trustworthy institution** in Slovakia.

- On 24 Mar, members of the Military Police Operations Division Bratislava took over the **Minister of Interior Badge** for their exemplary cooperation and role in containing the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- On its 50th foundation anniversary, the International Institute of Humanitarian Law (IIHL), based in Italy's Sanremo, organised the **19th Military Academies Competition** online on 22-25 Mar, to introduce cadets to the Law of Armed Conflict. The SVK Armed Forces Academy was represented by cadets Michaela Zátorecká, Sarah Pangráčová and Jozef Lenhart who teamed up with the teams from the US Air Force Academy and the Netherlands Royal Military Academy.

- The Ministry of Defence provided **Host Nation Support (HNS)** to nine Allied helicopters bound for an exercise in the Baltics, with a stopover at Prešov Air Base for refuelling and an overnight stay, as well as waiting for favourable flight conditions to their destination.

- A total of 742 study application forms were submitted to the **Armed Forces Academy** as of 20 Mar, which represents a 37% increase in the number of applications against last year. 543 candidates applied to study at the Academy last academic year.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as six Allied road movements by US and CZE troops are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 29 Mar to 4 Apr, and so are SVK military road movements from/to: Poprad – Nováky and back, Hlohovec – Michalovce, Prešov – Michalovce, Kamenica nad Cirochou – Michalovce, and Sliač – Mokrad. Also scheduled is a rail movement from Vlkánová via Sliač to Zemienske Kostolany.

The FULL FIELD KIT radio programme on Radio Regina, live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, will bring highlights from the Armed Forces. Your suggestions and opinions are much appreciated by email: pinapolna@mod.gov.sk.

Joint patrolling

(23 March) The outcome of an agreement between the Police Department Zvolen, Military Forests and Estates – Pliešovce Branch and State Nature Protection Authority was joint patrolling across Military District Lešť. Aimed at preventing environmental crimes and checking the security of military estates and entry to military facilities and spaces, joint patrolling took place in late evening and early morning hours, even in difficult terrain. The parties involved have declared their interest in ensuring continuity of joint patrols.

Courses in bubbles



(22 March) One of the main tasks of the General and Special Training Sections under the Crisis Management, Training and K9 Branch, Military Police Department Vlkánová –

Hronsek, is to deliver career and specialist courses, training and preparation for Military Police and Armed Forces members. The most acceptable form of career courses during the pandemic is distance learning. During the training where theoretical and practical training must be combined, training bubbles are set up with the participation of instructors and trainees. A total of 22 courses and training sessions have taken place since the beginning of 2021. Of them, 9 career courses and 13 training sessions in Vlkánová – Hronsek have been delivered via distance learning and training bubbles, respectively.

Repairers and pandemic



(22 March) Alongside their business as usual, members of the Repair Battalion Martin have been involved in crisis management, assisting SVK populations in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of Op

Courier since the start of 2021, they have been distributing antigen tests and supplying material, as well as working as sanitary staff in the Central Military Hospital - Faculty Hospital (FH) Ružomberok, FH Žilina, Hospital and Outpatient Clinic Trstená, and assisting at the Regional Public Health Authority Martin and at the Mobile Test Sites in Martin, Ilava and Žilina. In addition, since February they have been carrying out assistance tasks with Police in Prievidza, Púchov, Považská Bystrica, providing security in the Martin – Bambusky quarantine area, and supporting the testing site at SNP Martin Barracks.

Slovakia and Israel sign Agreement on new 3D radar systems

(25 March) New, cutting-edge and reliable Israeli 3D Radar Systems will enter into service with the Slovak Armed Forces. The Agreement with the total agreement price of €148.2m incl. VAT for the procurement of 17 pieces of 3D Medium (M), Short (S), Very Short (VS) Range Air Defence Radar Systems was signed by Director of the International Defence Cooperation Directorate (SIBAT) Brig Gen (Res) Yair Kulas and National Armaments Director Jozef Zekucia, representing IMOD and SMOD, respectively. The radar systems will be delivered from April 2023 to 2025, while the payment of the total agreement amount will be made in four installments from 2021 to 2024.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "This marks a significant day for the security and defence of Slovakia. Given the alarming technical condition and lifespan of the in-service radars, the new radar systems for our SVK Air Force are more of a necessity. That's why I'm immensely pleased that the new equipment, which has only been discussed about for decades, will finally become a reality. Even with €6.89m in savings against the forecast total agreement price and with the Slovak defence industry's stake of €37.05m excl. VAT in the project being actually anchored in the Agreement."

The price covers additional devices worth €4.88m. Among the first to be signed were the agreements on the provision of industrial cooperation between ELTA Systems Ltd and Letecké opravovne Trenčín a.s. (LOTN). In this way, the Ministry of Defence wants to emphasise its support for the SVK defence industry. This will take on a role in the production of antenna elements, power generators, levelling jacks and pedestal rotation platforms for the 3D RL radar systems, as well as integrating them into the Command and Control (C2) systems of the Slovak Armed Forces.

With the Agreement thus construed, this will mean not only generating financial profit for SVK companies, coupled with employment support, but also securing the acquisition of new capabilities. LOTN's total turnover is planned at €27.6m, whereas LOTN is set to roll out its first manufacturing programme.