



## Entry into NATO marked

(29 March) Slovakia celebrated the 17th anniversary of its accession to NATO in a somewhat untraditional manner. US Ambassador Bridget Brink said: "The stability the Alliance provides to NATO Member States is the foundation of prosperity, freedom and opportunities for the citizens of Slovakia, America, and all of Europe. We are pleased to have cooperated with the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Air Force on a short video highlighting the talented [SVK Air Force] pilots in training and our strategic partnership. Soon, the Slovak pilots will fly some of the most advanced supersonic jets serving the Slovak Nation. With their skills, abilities and bravery, these pilots are the pride of the Slovak Armed Forces."

Intense cooperation on SVK pilots training between Slovakia and the United States of America has been underway these past months and is soon to be extended to include technicians. A total of 8 SVK pilots are undergoing training in the USA. Another group of pilots are going through different phases of national training at Sliach Air Base. More candidates will be selected from the future graduates of the Technical University of Košice and the civil sector.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "For the past 17 years, Slovakia has been part of the Alliance that provides clear security and defence guarantees as one of the basic prerequisites for driving development. Through our responsible approach and performance of our commitments vis-à-vis our Allies and collective security, our effort is to work towards fulfilling this membership, which puts Slovakia among the advanced and stable countries in the region. Joint training of our troops is an excellent opportunity for deepening the interoperability of our countries in the field of defence and security, and, in the case of our cooperation with the United States, this also applies to the training of our pilots and the alignment of specific procedures for airspace protection. Our pilots have a unique opportunity to access expertise directly from their experienced US colleagues, pilots of F-16 fighter jets. This is an excellent project of sharing expertise and advancing cooperation effectively – because we are stronger together, we are NATO."

The video, made at the Tactical Wing Sliach, captures the pilots learning theory in the classroom, using the flight simulator, undergoing pre-flight preparation at an aircraft stand, following English language training provided by the US Embassy and led by Paed. Martina Babiaková. In short interviews, the pilots speak about their stories on the path to becoming military pilots and about different aspects of their training. The video "Slovak Top Gun – Slovak Pilots on the 17th Anniversary of Slovakia's Accession to NATO" is available at <https://youtu.be/-xuWY3wSacl>.

Lt Matúš Bartalský, F-16 pilot trainee, said: "I believe that on completion of our training we will be ready to protect SVK airspace in new aircraft."



## President Zuzana Čaputová appoints new SVK Cabinet

(1 April) President Zuzana Čaputová appointed the new Cabinet led by Eduard Heger in succession to Igor Matovič who took up the appointment of Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister. Marek Krajčí was succeeded by Vladimír Lengvarský of OĽANO. The Ministry of Interior will be run by Roman Mikulec, the Ministry of Health by Vladimír Lengvarský, the Ministry of Defence by Jaroslav Nad', the Ministry of Agriculture by Ján Mičovský, the Ministry of Environment by Ján Budaj, the Ministry of Culture by Natália Milanová, and the Ministry of Transport and Construction by Andrej Doležal. Štefan Holý will assume the post of Deputy Prime Minister. The nomination for the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is up for reconsideration. Branislav Gröhlings has been announced as Minister of Education, Ivan Korčok as Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Richard Sulík as Minister of Economy and Deputy Prime Minister, and Veronika Remišová as Minister of Investments, Regional Development and Information and Deputy Prime Minister. Congratulating Brig Gen Vladimír Lengvarský, the former Surgeon General of the SVK Armed Forces and Director of the Central Military Hospital – Faculty Hospital Ružomberok on assuming the post of Minister of Health, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "I keep my fingers crossed for him and I wish him a lot of strength and good health, so that he can take on all tasks and challenges with the right mindset and with a good team of people."



- On Easter Monday, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko visited soldiers serving alongside members of the Police Corps at the border crossings.

- Off-road driving and driving in near combat conditions were the core themes of a training course for BVP-1, OT-90, BVP-M and BPsV-I drivers that took place on Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area at the end of March.

- On 30-31 Mar, munitions for the SVK Artillery Unit serving with NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) were transported to Latvia. The contractor transported the munitions 1,150km across Poland and Lithuania all the way to Latvia. The loading of munitions and coordination at the Munitions Depot Nováky was supported by members of the SVK Military Movement Coordination Centre.

- As part of their operation to combat the pandemic, soldiers of the CSS Battalion Prešov have been conducting assistance tasks in cooperation with members of the SVK Police Corps across the Prešov Self-Governing Region. For their dedicated work in the first wave of the pandemic, the Minister of Interior have awarded them the Honorary Badges. These have been handed over to them by Lt Col Ján Farkaš.

- On 1 Apr, the Director of the MOD Central Logistics Office approved Annex 2 to the Methodological Guidance by the Director of the MOD Central Logistics Office to process orders and issuance of clothing items for servicemen and women in and out of Slovakia.

- To replenish the fuel stocks of the CBRN Battalion Rožňava, 21st Mechanised Battalion Trebišov and Helicopter Wing Prešov, 50,000l of fuel were transferred to the units in coordination with the Supply Base III Zemianske Kostolyany and supply staff of the Transport Company, CSS Battalion Prešov.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as eight Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 5 to 11 Apr. The transits have been approved in line with the SVK Public Health Authority-issued guidelines.

**The FULL FIELD KIT radio programme on : RÁDIO REGINA live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, will present the training of DUKLA sportsmen and women for the Summer Olympics. Your suggestions and opinions are much appreciated by email: [plnapolna@mod.gov.sk](mailto:plnapolna@mod.gov.sk).**

## Amendment Bill on social welfare for police and military personnel

(31 March) The Ministry of Defence welcomes the initiative of Juraj Krúpa MP (OĽANO) and Vladimíra Marcinková MP (For the People) to amend the Act on provision of social welfare for police and military personnel.

The new legislation envisages greater stability of social welfare for members of the Police Corps and the Slovak Armed Forces, whereas maternity benefits are set to increase to 75% of daily net Service pay. The legislative proposal must still be approved by Parliament. Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "I am very pleased that with this step we are gradually accomplishing the goals and tasks derived from the Government Manifesto. I am all the more pleased because this is an area which will deliver a real impact,



resulting in a higher quality of life for not only our servicewomen." He added that the MOD aims to make the entire social welfare system a long-term mainstay for servicemen and women, as well as contributing to greater social prestige of the military profession. The aim of the submitted legislative proposal is to improve the social standing of the female members of the Armed Forces, the Police Corps and other armed and security agencies who are claiming maternity benefits because they are looking after newborn babies and cannot perform their State Service duties as policewomen or servicewomen. Currently, maternity benefits account for 70% of daily net Service pay.

## Informal meeting with DAs



(31 March) At the invitation of HUN Defence Attaché Lt Col Csaba Vido, Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer met with resident NATO De-

fence Attaché (DAs) to Slovakia for an informal meeting. He summarised last year's MOD achievements, reaffirmed its political priorities, and discussed its key areas for the years to come: a Heavy Mechanised Brigade and investments in the infrastructure and personnel of the SVK Armed Forces. The DAs were interested in the response of the SVK military to the coronavirus pandemic and its implications into the future. Also discussed were the current and future SVK deployments on international missions and operations.

## Call for blood donation

(30 March) The Central Military Hospital – Faculty Hospital Ružomberok calls on donors to give blood at its Haematology and Transfusion Medicine Clinic. All blood types, especially type 0 negative, are in high demand. Due to the necessity to respect the hygiene and epidemiological measures in place to stop the new coronavirus from spreading, the hospital asks donors to make a phone arrangement in advance on 044/4382401 during the working days from 10:00 to 12:00 and from 13:00 to 15:00. Blood can be donated on Tuesday and Thursday from 07:00 to 10:00, but an individual time slot can be requested by phone. More information is available on the CMH website.

## News from Military Forests



(1 April) SVK Military Forests and Estates (VLM), state-owned enterprise (SOE), continues to deliver its vision for supporting and

protecting the environment. As part of this vision for a greener and cleaner Defence, VLM is replacing its vehicles as they transition out of service. Most recently, some of its obsolete vehicles have been replaced by eight new Dacia Duster SUVs with combined petrol and LPG fuel tanks. On beekeeping, VLM has made a financial contribution to the Slovak beekeepers who kept bees across the military woodlands in 2020. Based on the Memorandum of Cooperation between the SVK Beekeepers Association and SVK Military Forests and Estates SOE, a total of €7,340 in grant aid has been distributed to 24 beekeepers. Given that, for beekeepers, 2020 was the most difficult year in the past 30 years, the recipients welcomed the financial support with gratitude.