



## Minister on away day to see soldiers

(1 May) On 29 August, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad, Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko visited supply and training bases, as well as receiving a tour of a munitions storage depot. The MOD leaders want to stay updated by soldiers on all aspects of the units and priorities and to keep track of the MOD's investments in infrastructure improvements over the past months.

Minister Nad said: "I am pleased to see that over time in military units we come across positive news on what has been improved and repaired. Yet, there is a huge amount of work to be done in order to stabilise our troops – ranging from equipment, through to clothing and infrastructure."

First, they visited the Supply Base Nemšová where they saw for themselves the state of clothing supplies for soldiers. "For this area, we set aside a lot more resources than in the past, whereas our effort is to innovate clothing articles and increase their availability to soldiers, partly thanks to the modernisation of the clothing issuance system. Under the new arrangements, soldiers will be able to order their clothes and shoes via a mobile phone application," explained Mr Nad.

After that, they inspected the 5th Special Forces Regiment and the Special Operations Forces Training Base. There, Minister Nad was genuinely interested to get to know local needs and ways to improve the Service conditions and environment. Finally, he received a tour of the munitions storage depot in Rašov and made sure that all security and protection measures were in place and in order.

On 1 May, the head of the MOD visited soldiers in Martin. During their talks, he was mainly interested in the results of the MOD's investments in improvements of infrastructure and Service conditions for SVK Armed Forces personnel.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said: "Things have been taken forward in Martin-based military units. Sadly, even after more than a year in office, the reality in which our soldiers across the whole of Slovakia work gives us surprises. These are the remnants of the past long-term neglect of infrastructure spending which we are trying to redress – gradually from the most urgent [to the least urgent]." Defence Minister Nad also underlined that the MOD seeks to make effective investments in each area that needs it, saying: "Although the issue of modernisation and equipment purchases resonates most with the public, we've been working intensely on improving Service conditions in all respects."

Martin-based soldiers informed the Defence Minister of a gradual return to "business as usual", including to regular tasks and training activities under the improving pandemic situation, as well as of the restrictions in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 across the military units.

The Minister found out about the current needs of military personnel and their plans for the near future in terms of tasks and capabilities development.

## Production rolls out in Snina, continues in Dubnica and ends up in Spain's Granada

(26 April) On his visit to Granada, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad took part in an official launch ceremony for a significant defence industry cooperation project. SVK defence manufacturers produce munitions components that are delivered to the final assembly line at Fábrica de Municiones de Granada (FMG), a munitions production factory based in Granada, Spain.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said: "The factory in Snina produces the so-called body of munitions to which additional components are added at ZVS Holding in Dubnica nad Váhom, and the entire process is finalised in Spain's Granada. This is an example of excellent cooperation and good news for the SVK defence industry and the people whom it gives a livelihood." All companies involved in the production process belong to the portfolio of Slovak company MSM Group, whereas the Slovak Republic is a 50 per cent owner of ZVS Holding via the SVK Ministry of Defence. The head of the MOD reiterated the MOD leadership's full support for the SVK defence industry, as evidenced by his own presence at the official launch ceremony. "I believe more such successes in developing and expanding our companies abroad will follow in the future. This brings not only a good credit on our country, but also job opportunities for people living in Slovakia. This project, which employs dozens of people, bears testimony to that."



- As part of Host Nation Support (HNS), Prešov AFB hosted Allied CH-47 Chinook for the first time in history. The helicopter crews touched down to refuel and rested overnight before leaving the Helicopter Wing Prešov.

- Members of the Crisis Management Section, Crisis Management, Training and MWD Branch, MP Dept Vlkanová – Hronsek, attended a workshop on setting up new inflatable tents for the needs of a MP Company under Capability Targets 2017, the NATO MNMPBAT, domestic crisis management elements, and international missions and operations.

- A Holy Mass in tribute to **St George**, the Patron Saint of the Armed Forces, was celebrated by Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Mons Rábek. The forgiveness mass was enriched by the introduction of Military Chaplain Maj Slavko Ganaj as Senior Military Chaplain of HQ Bratislava Garrison and Military Administrator of St George Military Parish.

- Secretary General of the MOD Service Office **Peter Kozák** met with Chaplain General of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Col Viktor Sabo for the first time on 27 Apr. They discussed the drafting of the Spiritual Service Concept.

- The **Academic Senate of the Slovak Armed Forces Academy (AOS)** held an annual meeting online. It was chaired by Chairman of the Academic Senate Maj Jaroslav Kompan.

- Commander of the SVK Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach has announced a **selection process for service personnel to staff HUMINT positions** with the Intelligence Company, part of the ISTAR Battalion Prešov.

- **New appointments:** commander of the Tank Battalion (2nd Mechanised Brigade) Lt Col Ľubomír Bodnár has handed command over to Maj Ľubomír Mizerák. Lt Col František Hámor left the Service with effect from 30 Apr, and so did Commander of the Gen Mikuláš Markus 22nd Motorised Infantry Battalion Michalovce Lt Col Július Cepela.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as 24 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 3-9 May 2021, and so are SVK military road movements from/to: Martin – Trebišov and back, Martin – Michalovce and back, Zvolen – Prešov, Hlohovec – Trebišov, Sliač – Trebišov, Sereď – Trenčín, Rožňava – Zemianske Kostofany, Michalovce – Kamenica nad Cirochou and back, Trenčín – Sereď, Prešov – Moldava nad Bodvou, Trebišov – Kamenica nad Cirochou and back, Moldava nad Bodvou – Zvolen, within the municipality of Kamenica nad Cirochou, Moldava nad Bodvou – Trebišov, Kamenica nad Cirochou – Sliač, Kamenica nad Cirochou – Hlohovec, Nováky – Prešov, Nováky – Ruskov, Zemianske Kostofany – Poprad and back, Trenčín – Nováky, Zemianske Kostofany – Sereď and back. Also scheduled are rail movements from/to: Trebišov – Kamenica nad Cirochou, Nováky – Prievidza, and Sklené – Prievidza.

## Meeting at NATO HQ

(27 April) NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg met with Prime Minister Eduard Heger and Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad in Brussels. Mr Stoltenberg appreciated Slovakia's increased investment in defence, active engagement in the Alliance's collective defence activities, and deployments on international crisis management missions and operations. A step-change in the SVK MOD's Armed Forces modernisation was high on the agenda. Mr Nad presented the measures to improve working conditions for military and civilian staff. There was also a space to discuss preparations for the upcoming NATO Summit at NATO HQ in Brussels on 14 June 2021. Also addressed were the priorities on the forward-looking NATO 2030 agenda as well as the opportunities for Slovakia to get involved in Allied programmes. Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer joined the Minister in visiting NATO HQ, where he held talks with NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges David van Weel.

## Thanks go out to Petra Vlhová

(29 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad received skier Petra Vlhová, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica and recipient of the overall Crystal Globe for overall World Cup title in downhill skiing in the 2020/2021 season. On this occasion, he thanked her for representing the Military Sports Centre and the whole



of Slovakia so brilliantly and gifted her one-day Special Forces Experience with the SVK SOFs. The Minister was keen to learn more about Petra's next steps and the future of the skiing associations in Slovakia. He revealed that the financial support from the Centre to the top DUKLA athletes would be re-evaluated.

## Wildfire in Záhorie

(26 April) A fire broke out in the Military District Záhorie woodlands in an area called Turkish Hill on Sunday 25 April 2021. A total of seven hectares of young beech woodland burnt, with the damage estimate exceeding €100,000. Based on the preliminary statement by the fire control inspector, it will be difficult to determine the cause due to the extensive area of the wildfire and strong winds. Director of Military Forests and Estates Ján Jurica warns of an increased risk of fires over the dry period and calls on the public to respect the ban on setting up fires outside the designated fire places. Mr Jurica thanked the firefighters for extinguishing the fire.

## First four SVK Air Force pilots on training in US fly F-16 fighter jets

(29 April) First Lieutenant Lukáš Kúdela became the first SVK Air Force pilot to fly the F-16 fighter jet under the supervision of a US instructor at a United States AFB in Arizona, where four SVK Air Force pilots were treated to their first flight in the F-16 fighter jet.

Sharing his first impressions of the F-16 fighter jet, First Lieutenant Lukáš Kúdela said: "It is easier to pilot the F-16 fighter jet than the T-38 jet trainer. Even performance-wise, compared to the other aircraft we have flown so far, there is a big difference. Speaking on behalf of us all, after touching down for the first time, I must say we are all excited that we finally got into the F-16 cockpit and took to the skies despite the strenuous training curriculum."

Another two SVK AF pilots are undergoing the F-16 Pilot Training Programme in the USA. Additional eight pilots are

going through pre-deployment training at Sliač air base where they are practising flying the L-39 tactical trainer and improving their English language skills, including English



Airspeak. Subsequently, they will be deployed to undertake pilot training in the USA according to an agreed time schedule. The first seven F-16 fighter jets will be delivered into operational service with the SVK Air Force in 2023. The first group of SVK AF pilots is due to complete the pilot training programme that same year and the last group in 2028.

The acquisition of 14 new F-16 fighter jets was negotiated under a G2G deal by the former MOD leadership. The current MOD leadership has commissioned a complex infrastructure upgrade to Sliač air base and airport, with focus on accommodating the new F-16 fleet and on preserving the civilian section of the airport.