



Comprehensive Review 2020

(12 May) The Ministry of Defence has informed the SVK Government of the situation in Defence by submitting the Comprehensive Review on SVK Defence 2020 for consideration. This is the second time that the annual document, which describes the improvements and shortages in Defence, has been made available to the public and is downloadable from the MOD website. In the interest of promoting openness and transparency in the field of State defence, the MOD has submitted it to the Government as an unclassified document. Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer said: "We want to publicly present the advances in improving the state of SVK Defence and openly point to the serious shortages we had inherited as a result of long-term neglect in this field and hence justify important measures that need to be taken in the coming period." Deputising for Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad, Mr Majer introduced the document to the Government. Deputy Defence Minister Majer emphasised that in 2020 the MOD leadership had done the maximum to deliver the defence of the State and to develop the Armed Forces, and that they look to continue this positive trend. As part of last year's successes, he highlighted the progress achieved in the transparent and financially responsible modernisation of Armed Forces equipment, in particular, the procurement process of new 3D air defence radar systems, the soldier clothing modernisation project, and the step-change in replacing tracked armoured fighting vehicles. He reminded that the MOD had made historically highest investments of almost €100 million in Defence infrastructure improvements, as well as supplying €100 million worth of material to the SVK Armed Forces and spending the historically highest amount of funding on purchases of military clothes worth €17.8 million, which accounts for an increase of €5.4 million (44 %) against 2019. Among the successes in 2020 were the new strategic documents – the SVK Defence Strategy and the SVK Security Strategy. These came to replace the strategic documents of 2005, which fell short of reflecting today's security environment. Additionally, last year Slovakia came close to reaching the 2 per cent GDP spending goal and NATO's Annual Report was made available to the public for the first time.

Success in the cooperation between the SVK MOD and the SVK defence industry was high, as evidenced by the participation of SVK defence companies in EDIDP. On purchases through NSPA, there was a 50 per cent increase in the number of orders for the SVK defence industry, amounting to €12.6 million against the previous year.

The document also lists major shortcomings. Among them are the readiness of the SVK Armed Forces, the stagnating processes in defence planning, and the provision of State defence support. The latter was caused by lower funding, which slightly fell from €4.5 million in 2019 to over €3.8 million in 2020. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and the downturn in training activities, tasks were performed to high standards, and this equally applied to international missions and operations and domestic crisis management. The SVK Armed Forces proved their 24/7 readiness to carry out tasks during the largest logistics operation codenamed Op Shared Responsibility in Slovakia. It is also noteworthy that for the past three consecutive years the number of citizens recruited into the SVK Armed Forces has been higher than the number of Service leavers. Thanks to this, the total strength of the SVK Service Personnel rose from 77.1% in early 2020 to 78.4% in late 2020. The document admits that the Armed Forces are below their target strength, because there is an existing limit to manpower levels as set by the Ministry of Finance.

Military Forests and Estates to plant over 400 linden trees in support of beekeepers

(13 May) SVK Military Forests and Estates (VLM), an MOD-run, state-owned company, is aware of the vital role the bees themselves play in the functioning of ecosystems. Recognising this, VLM has begun to plant over 400 linden trees and other bee-friendly honey plants across the woodlands it manages. The project is designed to provide direct support to beekeepers and to ensure better conditions for 734 bee families living across military forests. Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad said: "SVK Military Forests and Estates approaches woodlands management in a highly responsible manner and takes an active role in boosting local biodiversity and ecosystems. As I attach great importance to such activity, during my voluntary work in the military forests I am pleased to have given a helping hand in planting linden trees, which will help both our woodlands and bees." Director General of SVK Military Forests and Estates Ján Jurica said: "Last year, we cancelled the fee the beekeepers paid for placing their beehives in our woodlands. The only condition is that they must enter their bee colonies into the Central Register of Farming Animals and that their application to use a specific location for beekeeping must be approved by Military Forests and Estates." The cooperation between Military Forests and Estates and the SVK Beekeepers Association is being taken forward on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding on Forestry.



- Flying and technical personnel of 1 and 2 Tactical Squadrons undertook live fire training before a live fire exercise. MiG-29 fighter jet pilots from 1 Tactical Squadron practised destroying ground targets by unleashing their onboard cannons, while pilots of L-39 aircraft from 2 Tactical Squadrons captured aerial footage and practised firing the onboard cannons without live ammo.

- More than a year on since their last training, members of the SVK Army Headquarters, led by Commander SVK Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach, participated in a firing training activity at the Lipovnik Firing Range on 10 May.

- The first permanent arts gallery to promote art works by disabled artists from Slovakia has opened at the County Office's Clients Centre in Bratislava's Tomášikova Street. Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer has given his patronage to this year's initial exhibition, staged by the Slovak Agency for Support of Disabled Citizens, which is due to run until 30 June.

- Prešov-based airmen and logistics personnel took off from the Helicopter Wing on Wen 12 May, heading for the annual exercise **Adriatic Strike 2021** in Slovenia. The aim of the exercise is to improve the skills of pilots and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs).

- Nearly 2,000 Czechs and Slovaks celebrated Victory in Europe Day by joining the **Liberation Run**, a charity event in support of veterans. Cadet Michaela Zátoreczká, of the M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy, placed first with 122km. Soldiers from Sliac, Zemianske Kostolyany and SVK peacekeepers from Cyprus joined the event as well.

- Pilots of L-410 aircraft practised emergency procedures, unusual flight positions, and engine failure procedures at a flight simulator facility in Prague.

- A complex command staff exercise rehearsal involving Martin-based 11 Mechanised Battalion HQ and Staff and company commanders in preparation of **Ex Slovak Stone 2021** took place at the Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy. The training event made use of the WASP simulation software.

- 16 years passed on 10 May since the Mi-24D helicopter crewed by Maj Imrich Gonda, Maj Vladimír Rišian and SSt Mikuláš Ragáň died in a helicopter crash at the village of Ražňany in County Sabinov. Members of the **Helicopter Wing Prešov** paid tribute to their memory on their home base in Prešov and at the crash site.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as 22 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 17 to 23 May 2021. Over the same period, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct road movements across Slovakia from/to: Sliac – Kamenica nad Cirochou, TC Lešť – Nitra, Sereď – TC Lešť and back, Sereď – Martin and back, Hlohovec – Dubnica nad Váhom, Zemianske Kostolyany – Nemšová and back, Zemianske Kostolyany – Veľká Ida and back, Zemianske Kostolyany – Sliac and back, Nováky – VTSÚ Záhorie, Sliac – Zemianske Kostolyany, Zemianske Kostolyany – Ružomberok and back, as well as within the cities of Nitra a Zvolen. Also scheduled are SVK military rail movements from/to: Sása-Pliešovce – Nitra, Zemianske Kostolyany – Kuchyňa, Vrútky – Trenčín, Malacky – Sása-Pliešovce, Martin – Sása-Pliešovce, and Trenčín – Prievidza.

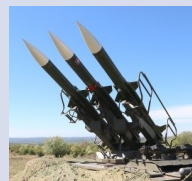
FULL FIELD KIT on RADIO REGINA, live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, will present a horse riding trip to Romania in honour of Ladislav Skultéty-Gabriš.

Slovak and Polish Chiefs of Defence inspect Exercise Combined Effort

(13 May) Exercise Combined Effort 2021, an international Surface Based Air Defence (SBAD) exercise involving Slovak and

Polish air defenders, is culminating at the Training Centre Lešť. Yesterday and today, Slovak CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko and Polish CHOD Gen Rajmund Andrzejczak inspected the exercise and checked the results. Following an inspection of the Operations Centre in Poland's Warsaw, both generals along with their delegations flew over to the Training Centre Lešť.

Speaking at TC Lešť, CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "Exercise Combined Effort achieved all the set goals and tested the exercising troops as well as the deployed SBAD and other support systems. Given its complexity and intensity, we validated the interoperability of the international task force in near real conditions. The exercise has shown us the direction we need to take in modernising and integrating the SBAD and surveillance systems and in employing Army and Special Operations Forces elements in support of SBAD operations. Gen Andrzejczak and



I agreed that, as Ex Combined Effort 2021 culminates, it sets a new tradition and we will keep it going into the future."

As well as forming an interoperable bilateral SBAD task force with several firing elements, the exercise aims to create a real-time Air and Ground Situation Picture. Advanced tactical aircraft, combined with aerial and land systems of the SVK and POL Armed Forces, are deployed to create the most realistic Air Situation Picture (ASP). Similarly, the Ground Situation Picture (GSP) is complemented by Army components, special operations forces, reconnaissance troops and electronic warfare (EW) units.

The exercise is culminating with the SBAD Task Force and the SVK and POL SBAD systems being exposed to simulated attacks by different aircraft and threats typical of modern warfare. Thanks to its complex scenario, this unique exercise has thoroughly tested not only the response against Air Breathing Targets, but also the SBAD Task Force's complex readiness to carry out tasks in a simulated combat situation.

Wolverine Splinter in Latvia



(12 May) An ISTAR Battalion recce team, part of the SVK Contingent's Fire Battery in NATO's eFP in Latvia, competed in the Wolverine Splinter patrolling competition on Meža Mackeviči Training Area. The recce team joined

their Polish colleagues from the Tank Company in creating a Combined Platoon under Polish command. Part 1 of the competition was focused on dismantled troops executing an infiltration behind the enemy line, identifying and destroying the command post and the bonus targets of high value before an exfiltration from the area across the enemy line towards their own positions. Part 2 focused on the screening line where the infiltrating units were spotted and indirect fire was called in against them. The SVK-POL platoon placed 3rd, losing 35 points behind the second Canadian platoon and 40 points behind the first Spanish platoon.

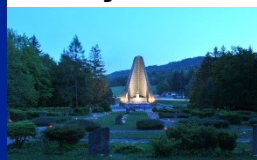
Artillery apprentices on placement



(13 May) Cadets of the Bachelor's and Magister's studies in the G-20 military occupational specialty (MOS) received a military work placement with the Self-Propelled Artillery Battalion Michalovce. They staffed different positions at the Battalion HQ and Staff, as well as serving with the batteries of the Battalion.

The activity of the cadets was exceptionally high, as Dukla Barracks will become their home workplace in a few months.

Military Museum Night



(13 May) Despite the anti-pandemic restrictions in place, the Institute of Military History Bratislava – Military History Museum Piestňany decided to join the pan-European Museum and Gallery Night 2021.

Linked to the International Museum Day, the event presents our cultural heritage and the need to protect it as there is the cultural exchange and cultural diversity of European countries. During the event, the military museum staff presented the museum's secrets and treasures and the charming aspects of their work. Using the Internet, they prepared a rich programme: virtual displays and presentations of collections, books, personalities of SVK military history, as well as showing military documentaries on YouTube.