



## V4 Defence Ministers in Hungary

(1 October) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď attended the Visegrad Four (V4) Defence Ministers Meeting in Hungary. This marked the first meeting under the Hungarian V4 Presidency (2021/2022), offering an opportunity to present the Presidency's priorities and activities in the field of defence and current NATO and EU issues. Minister Naď expressed his support for the HUN V4 Presidency and its programme of activities and events for the entire year. At the meeting, Ministers approved the Ministerial Tasking on Defence Cooperation during the HUN V4 Presidency. By adding their signatures to the document, they agreed on a number of steps to intensify the V4's defence cooperation, including on updating the Action Plan by the end of the HUN V4 Presidency, preparations for the extended V4+ format meetings, and regular consultations to press for their common interests.

The second session of the meeting was dedicated to NATO and EU issues. On NATO, Ministers addressed the NATO Strategic Concept, NATO 2030 and NATO's adaptation. On the EU, they took a close look at the four baskets of the Strategic Compass. Also discussed were the deployments of V4 armed forces on NATO and EU crisis management missions and operations and international collaboration. In this context, Mr Naď expressed his support for the proposal to establish the EUATM Ukraine to bolster professional military education in Ukraine.

## Friendship and cooperation

(28 September) While on defence and security Slovakia considers Serbia to be an important partner in the Western Balkans region, our friendship and cooperation with Serbia are based on solid foundations and cultural and historical ties, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď announced during his meeting with Serbian Defence Minister Nebojša Stefanović in Belgrade. During the talks, Mr Naď expressed his appreciation for European integration, which, as the only viable option, is among the Serbian Government's top priorities. He emphasised his support for EU enlargement and Serbia's integration and reform efforts.

The bilateral talks covered, among others, the potential areas of cooperation for domestic defence industries and the education and training options for armed forces. Topics of discussion included Armed Forces modernisation. The head of the SVK MOD updated his counterpart on the past and present modernisation programmes, including on the procurement of tracked and wheeled AFVs and IFVs for the SVK Armed Forces. He stressed that the development of armed forces and the stand-up of a Heavy Mechanised Brigade are among the SVK MOD's clear priorities to ensure the defence of the State and to deliver international commitments.

Mr Naď and Mr Stefanović also attended a concert by the SVK Armed Forces Band as part of the "Slovak Week in Serbia" event, featuring an exhibition dedicated to Alexander Dubček, a prominent Slovak politician and human rights advocate. At a meeting at the SVK Embassy in Belgrade, Minister Naď presented the SVK Minister of Defence Memorial Medal (3rd Grade) to Michal Špevák Sr., a Slovak lawyer and activist for cultural and national causes living in Serbia, for his life-long role in preserving and building Slovak traditions and culture in Serbia.

## MOD invites 33 countries to tender for delivery of tracked and wheeled armoured capability

(30 September) The Ministry of Defence is moving ahead with the procurement of new armoured vehicles for the Slovak Armed Forces. The MOD invited 33 selected countries to submit their bids in response to the Slovak Tracked IFV and Wheeled AFV Programmes Request for Government Proposal (RfGP). Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer said: "I have submitted the documents which contain the RfGP, a timescale for the acquisition process, the technical specifications, and a list of key criteria to representatives of 22 countries. The other countries will receive them via the diplomatic mail service." The deadlines for the submission of offers for the 8x8 AFVs and the tracked IFVs are 31 Dec 2021 and 31 Jan 2022, respectively. Out of 100% of the total score, the total Agreement price will represent 35%, the technical specifications 30%, logistics support across all stages of the vehicle's life cycle 10%, and the SVK defence industry's role in the programme 25%. Based on the overall ranking of bidders, three best bidders will be selected in each programme and their vehicles will undergo trials in the SVK Army environment. The MOD's ambition is to present the SVK Government with a recommendation for the procurement of the 8x8 AFVs by the end of March 2022 and the tracked IFVs by the end of June 2022. Ideally, the first vehicles are due to be delivered into service with the SVK Armed Forces at the beginning of 2024. On both projects, Deputy Defence Minister Majer praised the MOD's full engagement with the Ministry of Economy and the Ministry of Finance and its continual cooperation with the Value for Money Unit. According to National Armaments Director Jozef Zekucia, this procurement programme will be implemented via the G2G arrangements. Commander of the SVK Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach pointed out that our in-service armoured vehicle capability has reached a point of functional and technical obsolescence and has been affected by maintenance difficulties. Maj Gen Pach appreciated the acquisition of the new armoured capability for five SVK Army battalions.



- Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď and Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer received Hungarian Defence Attaché Lt Col László Tamás Leskő at the Ministry of Defence, as he takes over as the Hungarian Defence Attaché to Slovakia. Their discussion centred on the SVK-HUN defence engagement and the SVK MOD's priorities.

- To mark the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII, CZE Defence Minister Lubomír Metnar awarded the Honorary Memorial Badge to selected SVK WWII veterans and participants of the Slovak National Uprising. The Badge was presented to seven of them by Czech Ambassador Tomáš Tuhý at the CZE Embassy in Bratislava.

- 183 members of the Mechanised Battalions Martin, Nitra and Levice and HQ 1 Mech Bde Topoľčany conducted a **mortar exercise**, supported by Rožňava-based artillerymen, at the Training Centre Lešť.

- Members of a Field Services Company and a CSS and CIS Company deployed to Levice Garrison's training ground at Lipovník to undertake **field training**. They carried out tactical tasks, put engineer measures in place, practised working with CIS systems, and drove vehicles off-road.

- On 29 Sept, leaders of HQ SVK Air Force Zvolen, led by Commander of the SVK Air Force Brig Gen Róbert Tóth, met with **representatives of the Aviation Faculty of the Technical University of Košice** to discuss the current education programmes, with focus on the personnel needs of the SVK Air Force.

- On 27 Sept, the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) opened the **26th Professionally Qualified Officers Course** designed for the H10 Military Medicine Trade.

- The 36th edition of **Azimut 24/7**, available on YouTube, presents an International Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Specialists Course at the Training Centre Lešť.

- The **Central Military Hospital Ružomberok** needs to maintain the military's blood supply. Blood donors can contact the hospital by phone on 044 438 2401, from 10:00am to 12:00am and from 13:00pm to 15:00pm every working day. Blood can be donated from 07:00am to 10:00am on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

- The Central Military Hospital has upgraded its fleet of vehicles with **four new ambulances** for the Medical Transport Service. They will be used for transporting patients who are not in a life-threatening condition.

- After a year-long pause due to the pandemic, the **15th National Pilgrimage to Rome and the Vatican**, organised by the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, took place on 19-25 Sept. The pilgrims attended an audience with Holy Father Francis and met with Cardinal Jozef Tomko.

- The **20th Partnership for Peace (PfP) Consortium Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group Conference** was held under the auspices of the SVK Defence Minister from 27 Sept to 1 Oct in Košice. The conference was organised by the Institute of Military History in Bratislava in co-operation with the Bundeswehr Centre for Military History and Social Sciences in Potsdam and Pavol Jozef Šťafárik University in Košice.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as 27 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 27 Sept to 3 Oct 2021. Over the same period, the SVK military will conduct road movements from/to: Nitra – Kolíňanský vrch and back, Slovenské Nové Mesto – Lešť, within the city of Martin, Zemianske Kostolany – Lešť, Rožňava – Lešť, Lešť – Trebišov, Ožďany – Veľká Ida and back, Nitra – Lešť and back, Sereď – Topoľčany, within the city of Sereď, Sučany – Martin, Hlohovec – Lešť and back, Sliac – Trenčín and back, Trenčín – Záhorie and Trenčín – Nováky. There will also be SVK military rail movements from/to: Sása-Plešovice – Martin and Sása-Plešovice – Sereď.

## Alexander Dubček Memorial

(27 September) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď participated in an unveiling ceremony for the Alexander Dubček Memorial at the University of Trenčín. The Memorial, dedicated to this extraordinary politician and advocate of human rights and humanism, was unveiled to mark the centenary of Dubček's birthday. Speaking on the occasion, Mr Naď said: "Alexander Dubček was a leading personality of the Prague Spring and is one of the most striking and prominent personalities of our contemporary history. Commonly referred to as socialism with a human face, Dubček's democratic reforms embraced the values of social justice, democracy and freedom. I am convinced that this Memorial will be a permanent reminder of his pursuit of justice, truth and humanity for both students and members of the public."

## Training of blasters at Turecký Vrch



(30 September) Two dozen engineers from five military units attended the Basic Blasting Operations Course on Turecký Vrch Training Area. "The aim of the course was to provide the course participants with knowledge

and skills necessary for blasting operations, using engineering and military explosives," said Lt Col Pavol Židek, EOD Inspector, adding that blasting operations are very much part of the engineer units' basic capabilities.

## 152 new officer cadets at AOS



(1 October) To mark the beginning of their studies, 123 male and 29 female first-year officer cadets of the Bachelor of Science programme took the Academy's Pledge at the General M. R.

Šťefánik Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Liptovský Mikuláš, in the presence of AOS Commandant Assoc Prof Jozef Puttera CSc. Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer attended the ceremony as well, saying that the Academy represents an important educational establishment and acts as a guarantee of quality in educating future SVK Armed Forces personnel. Mr Majer presented the SVK Minister of Defence Memorial Medal to AOS Commandant Assoc Prof Jozef Puttera CSc and former Vice-Dean for Science Prof Marcel Harakal PhD for making their extraordinary contribution to developing military education and sciences. In addition to hosting the Academy's Pledge ceremony, the Academy also marked the beginning of the new academic year.

## International Ex Blonde Avalanche 2021 kicks off

(27 September) Army engineers from the TISA partner countries (Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine) attended the opening ceremony for the 19th edition of Ex Blonde Avalanche 2021. In his remarks, Exercise Director Col Alexander Kollárík, Commander 1 Mechanised Brigade, put a major emphasis on the unique opportunity for the Battalion staff and members to demonstrate that the TISA Multinational Engineer Battalion is capable of accomplishing its core mission. The aim of the exercise was to test and align the TISA Battalion staff to exercise command of national units and to conduct domestic disaster response operations, especially managing the effects of flooding in Slovakia.

Ex Blonde Avalanche 2021 was designed as a Command Post Exercise (CPX), assisted by computer simulation technology and combined with partial field deployments, and as a Field Training Exercise (FTX)/Live Exercise (LIVEX), with the SVK Active Reserves (AR) engineers and members of the SVK Fire and Rescue Service and the Red Cross in attendance. The exercise took place at a river training area.

