



## New impulse for cooperation

(7 October) The talks with French Minister for the Armed Forces Madame Florence Parly provided a new impulse for the Slovak-French political and defence engagement, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď announced after meeting his counterpart at the French Ministry of Defence in Paris.

The central theme of today's talks was the way ahead to deepen the bilateral defence and security cooperation between Slovakia and France. Mr Naď and Madame Parly were appreciative of the Slovak-French military programme of activities in areas such as military education, training, and public engagements. Both leaders went over the potential areas of SVK-FRA defence industry collaboration. Alongside this, Minister Naď offered a range of concrete options to carry on the defence engagement between Slovakia and France to include Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), education and training activities at the SVK MOD's unique training establishments and facilities, and the French Air Force's participation in SIAF 2022. Given the recent international developments, the Slovak and French Ministers put the situation in Afghanistan and the Sahel region as a priority theme on the agenda of today's meeting.

On the upcoming French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Ministers discussed the French MOD's ambitions to engage on issues relating to the EU's Strategic Compass and the NATO-EU relationship.

As part of the Defence Minister's official visit to France, the Slovak Embassy organised a service, dedicated to the French partisans who died in the Slovak National Uprising (SNP), at St. Louis Cathedral in Paris. Roger Naël, the last French partisan to have fought in Slovakia, passed away at the age of 96 on 14 April 2020.

During WW2, France became one of the centres for anti-Nazi resistance groups. These included Czechoslovak military units. The Slovak delegation, led by the Defence Minister, paid tribute to their contribution at the Czechoslovak Army Memorial Plaque in the city of Agde in southern France.



The ceremony in Agde was followed by a remembrance ceremony for Gen Štefánik in the village of Paulhan. On this occasion, Mr Naď posthumously awarded WW1 pilot Isidor August Marie Louis Paulhan, French Flight Leader, for saving the life of seriously ill Gen Štefánik by flying him from Serbia's Prizren to Albania's Vlorë for treatment on 22 November 1915. His action entered history as the first patient air evacuation mission. The Minister also attended a remembrance ceremony at the General Štefánik Statue at the Meudon Observatory in Meudon, a suburb of Paris.

## Minister pays tribute to Battle of Dukla Pass heroes at "Freedom Gate"

(6 October) The SVK MOD leadership and service chiefs gathered for a commemoration ceremony at the Dukla Memorial to mark the 77th anniversary of the Battle of the Dukla Pass. Defence Minister Naď was there to pay tribute to the selfless deeds of the heroes who died in one of the bloodiest operations in the Second World War, as well as visiting other places of remembrance in Svidník. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "Even 77 years on, the casualty figures from this battle still send shivers down the spine. May their thwarted lives serve as a lasting reminder of today's threat posed by terrorism, racism and other forms of hatred." The poignant atmosphere of the event was reinforced with a flypast of SVK Air Force aircraft over the Memorial. To mark this anniversary, Minister Naď awarded the SVK Minister of Defence Memorial Medal in Silver (2nd Grade) to František Orlovský, who joined a partisan group as a sixteen-year old and served with the Capt Jozef Trojan Upper Nitra Partisan Brigade throughout WW2. "Thanks to acts of bravery by men like him, today we can live in peace and freedom. Out of respect for their actions and for the sake of future generations, we must preserve their values," added the Minister. After the commemoration event at Dukla, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď participated in wreath-laying ceremonies at the Army General Ludvík Svoboda Statue and at the Soviet Army Memorial in Svidník.



- President Zuzana Čaputová met with **Matej Tóth** and his coach **Matej Spišiak**. She expressed her admiration for his podium placements and thanked him in person for representing Slovakia.

- Slovakia and France cooperate together on various security and defence matters, including on military training and education, which creates solid conditions for intensifying the SVK-FRA relationship. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď announced after his meeting with the French Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr **Pascal Le Deunff** at the Ministry of Defence on 4 Oct.

- On 5 Oct, Defence Minister **Jaroslav Naď** met with the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) Museum's senior managers and staff to discuss his vision for the Museum's operations, ensuring that it operates in a cost effective and transparent way. Mr Naď confirmed that the MOD has ambitious plans to develop and support the Museum moving forward.

- With his presence at the **International Defence and Security Technologies Fair (IDET) 2021** in Brno on 6 Oct, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď showed his support for the SVK exhibitors showcasing the best of their products.

- The official visit of Deputy Defence Minister **Marian Majer** to Brussels involved a series of meetings with senior EU and NATO officials and permanent representatives of the Slovak Republic to the EU and NATO. Also in attendance was Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security **Juraj Krúpa**.

- Michalovce-based **22nd Mechanised Battalion** personnel participated in **Ex Joint Endeavour 2021** in Ukraine.

- Working in cooperation with the Red Cross, Army chaplains **Marie-Claire Khadjij (CAN)** and **Capt Simon Czup (SVK)** organised a **food donation event**, involving CZE and SVK soldiers, to help the poor in Riga, Latvia.

- On 5 Oct, 1st and 2nd Tactical Squadron pilots from **Sliac Air Base** conducted a **live fire training exercise** over the **Záhorie Air Weapons Range (AWR)**. The activity was supported by military staff of the **Kuchyňa Transport Wing**. **MiG-29** pilots of 1st Tac Sqdn destroyed targets by firing their cannons, while **L-39** pilots of 2nd Tac Sqdn engaged targets with their cannons without ammunition, while obtaining aerial photos of the targets.

- **Maj Adrián Korobanič**, **MSgt Peter Molnár** and **MSgt Václav Papcun** from the Training and Mobilisation Manning Base **Martin** have left the Service with effect from 30 Sept. **Capt Michal Migát** has taken up an appointment at SVK Army HQ **Trenčín**.

## SNP Athletics Stadium refurbished and new director of Military Sports Centre appointed

(5 October) Sportsmen and women of the Dukla Military Sports Centre **Banská Bystrica** can enjoy training at a newly refurbished athletics stadium. After its refurbishment, the **SNP Athletics Stadium Štiavničky** is fully compliant with all the stadium infrastructure standards and regulations of the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) for a **UEFA Category 3 stadium**. Defence Minister Naď handed the redesigned facility over to Dukla sportspeople today.

Compared to the old stadium, the redesigned one has more track and field facilities. A newly built training ground was completed and handed over for use earlier this April. Importantly, the new football pitch with heated grass holds **UEFA Category 3 stadium status**. Also reconstructed were the stands, although they required more funding than originally planned. This was because the stadium's seating capacity increased from 4,000 to over 7,000, with 30 wheelchair viewing spaces for disabled visitors and accessible toilets.



Changes to the project were initiated by the current MOD leadership to make sure that the stadium would meet all the technical specifications for hosting international athletic events and football tournaments. The **Athletics Stadium Štiavničky** is also open to regional sports clubs. Interestingly, it will host the **European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF)** next year. The **Dukla SNP Athletics Stadium Štiavničky** was officially opened on 22 August 1959 to mark the 15th SNP anniversary. 60 years on since its opening, the refurbishment works to the stadium were launched to coincide with the 75th SNP anniversary.

At the stadium opening ceremony, **Matej Tóth**, member of the SVK National Team, Olympic winner and legend of SVK athletics, was named by the Minister as the new director of the **Dukla Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica** with effect from 1 November 2021. The head of the MOD thanked the outgoing director, **Col Roman Benčík**, who is leaving the Service at his own request, for his dedicated work.

## Transitioning to two-year cycle



(7 October) The Slovak Armed Forces are transitioning to a two-year planning and training cycle. **CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko** signed the documents for all the Services for the period of **October 2021 and September 2023** at a ceremony held at the Defence Staff today. With the transition to the two-year planning and training programme, the Armed Forces will align their planning, programming and budgeting processes, taking on a wider and longer vision of activities.

## Medical professionals recognised



(4 October) **Assoc Prof Robert Rusnák MD**, Director of the **Central Military Hospital**, presented military medals to **22 SVK Army medical personnel** at the **MILMEDCON 2021 Conference** at the

**Armed Forces Academy Liptovský Mikuláš**. In this way, the hospital leadership, joined by Minister Naď, thanked military professionals for their actions in support of the hospital's coronavirus operations during the state of emergency due to the pandemic. Thanks to their service, the hospital coped with the two waves of the pandemic.

## Dukla Lookout Tower



(6 October) To mark the 77th anniversary of the **Battle of the Dukla Pass**, the newly refurbished **Dukla Lookout Tower** reopened its doors to the public following a vital refurbishment project. The opening ceremony was attended by Defence

Minister **Jaroslav Naď**. The aim of the project was to improve the site's attractiveness, accessibility and visitor comfort. To mark the **Battle of the Dukla Pass Heroes Day**, the key role of **32 soldiers of the 1944 Slovak National Uprising** in the fight against the Nazis was recognised by Defence Minister Naď with the posthumous award of the **SVK Minister of Defence Memorial Medal**. Medals were also presented to the **Institute of Military History Bratislava** and its servicemen and employees for conducting long-time research on military history, developing historical traditions, and overseeing the maintenance of war and service graves.