



## Strength, unity and commitment

(26 June) Defence Minister Sklenár paid a visit to the TC Lešt', where he was given a tour of NATO MN BG SVK and spoke with soldiers who have brought new capabilities to the BG as part of the latest rotation of forces. He took a real interest in the performance of the BG's tasks and training activities and the state of infrastructure and accommodation. "Throughout June, we have welcomed a new rotation of soldiers along with equipment. They have brought with them capabilities that complement the range of weapons used by our armed forces, thereby increasing our readiness and defence responsiveness, for which we are extremely grateful. Together, we form collective defence and we are determined and ready to defend every inch of Allied territory," Sklenár said.

He underlined the fact that the countries contributing to the battalion-sized force have helped SVK soldiers become better prepared, gaining valuable experience in C2 and communications. According to him, the Leopard 2A6s that have replaced DEUCON's Boxer IFVs are the BG's most significant reinforcement.

Some 1,000 military personnel are currently serving with NATO MN BG SVK, with Czechia as a FN and with Slovakia, Slovenia, Germany and the U.S. as PNs. Other Allies have also shown interest in joining the BG. The mandate of the SVK Parliament allows for up to 3,000 soldiers to be stationed in Slovakia.

### Defence Minister in Prešov

(26 June) Defence Minister Sklenár visited Prešov AB, home to 51 SVK AF WG. He was interested in the WG's personnel fill rates, the current needs of airmen, and the progress made in the performance of their tasks. He was updated on the current status of refurbishment works to the base and local defence infrastructure. "There are several investment projects planned both for this and next year, most notably, the construction of a new hangar for the storage and servicing of six UH-60M Black Hawks under a contract worth €3.2m," Sklenár said.

In addition to defending SVK airspace and providing CAS to Army units, 51 SVK AF WG has an irreplaceable place in domestic disaster relief operations. The WG's Air Combat Squadron operates Mil Mi-17s and UH-60M Black Hawks. "Our airmen are real professionals who deserve the most adequate conditions to complete their assigned tasks as required," Sklenár concluded.

### Remembering legionaries in Darney

(30 June) The Defence Minister led a SVK MOD and Armed Forces delegation to France, where in the French municipality of Darney they commemorated the historical events which ultimately led to the recognition of Czechoslovakia's independence. Back on 30 June 1918 at Camp Kléber, President of the French Republic Raymond Poincaré presented a Guidon to Czechoslovak commanders as 6,000 Czechoslovak legionaries stood in formation. This made France the first power to recognise the Czechoslovak Army and to acknowledge the right of Slovaks and Czechs to their own state. Shortly afterwards, the first official Czechoslovak Government was formed. "It was here exactly 105 years ago that members of the Czechoslovak Rifle Brigade swore the Oath of Allegiance, to fight side by side with French troops for the French Republic's rights and democracy, hoping that one day their nations would gain their own freedom," Sklenár said. Thanks to the Czechoslovak Legion fighting on the fronts of WWI in France, Italy and Russia, Czechoslovakia was counted among the victorious countries.

## Commanders' Convention and 5th CHOD's Commanders Conference

(28 June) After a year the Command Corps of the Slovak Armed Forces gathered for the 5th Chief of Defence's Commanders Conference, with one official event taking place in the presence of Commander-in-Chief and President Zuzana Čaputová in Bratislava's Hall of Mirrors in the Primate's Palace. Speeches were delivered by the President, the Defence Minister, and the head of the Armed Forces. In his speech, Gen Daniel Zemko looked back on the past period and 30 years of the Slovak Armed Forces. Traditionally, selected soldiers and MOD civil servants received medals for their service. On behalf of the Ukrainian people, Ambassador of Ukraine Myroslav Kastran thanked for SVK military assistance and training as well as for humanitarian support to the women and children affected by Russia's aggression. Day 2 was dedicated to the 5th CHOD's Commanders Conference, with topics covering military traditions, military discipline, and the tasks of the Slovak Armed Forces during Russia's aggression against Ukraine, with associated hybrid warfare becoming "one of the neuralgic points of our resilience".



► A SVK Armed Forces member of 52 Abn Bn Trebišov completed the prestigious **Commando Course** in the Czech Republic and was awarded the **Commando Dagger** for the best student of the course.

► With training directed by SOCOM Trenčín's Air Ops Integration Branch and 51 TB Žilina's Airborne Training Group on 27 June, members of **65 Recce Bn Prešov** executed a water jump into the Žilina Reservoir, with the focus on the conduct of an airborne jump from a UH-60M Blackhawk into the water, the practice of the SOPs for a flat circular parachute, and the use of the parachute system and airborne materiel.

► The very best of specialists in explosive threats from across the Armed and Police Forces gathered for the 7th edition of a **joint EOD and pyrotechnics training** activity last week.

► Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area (TA) hosted a **concentrated training event** for BVP-1, BVP-1K and BPsV gunners/operators, with the training audience from 1 Mech Bde and 2 Mech Bde's 21 and 22 Mech Bns, and instructors from Tng & Mob Frc Gen Base Martin.

► SVK Army divers of 901 Engr Bn Sereď took part in **Ex Open Water 2023** in Hungary. They joined HUN Army military divers in delivering dive tasks at different locations, both in a flowing river and in the still waters of a lake with almost zero visibility.

► On 26 June, the MP Depart Bratislava's Crime Detection and Evidence Gathering Section hosted a **workshop on radicalism and extremism** for military policemen and members of the SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office's Psychological and Social Ops Section.

► The MOD's Specialised State Service Branch prepared a briefing on the 'Responsibility of Leaders in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)' for commanders in Trenčín and for the military and civilian staff of Jnt Spt Bde Trenčín.

► Throughout last week, **Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy** is hosting the presentation and defence of theses and final state exams for the Magister (Mgr) and Master of Engineering (MEng) degree programmes. Of the total number of 68 OCs, 13 have passed with distinction and will receive the "red" honours diploma at the graduation and commissioning ceremony.

► Due to the complete refurbishment of the MOD's **Aviation Medical Centre** with an Outpatient Clinic in Sliach, all medical services of the facility will be temporarily halted from July 17 to 4 Aug. However, medical services will run in normal mode in the Centre's detached workplaces.

► Viktória Forster, runner of the **Dukla Military Sports Centre**, broke Slovakia's record with 12.82 sec in the women's 100m hurdles 'B' run at the 62th Golden Spike in Ostrava on 27 June, improving on her national best by six hundredth of a second.

► Alexander Slařkóvský and Marko Mirgorodský, Dukla's canoe slalom paddlers, along with Matej Beňuš **won silver** in the men's canoe team event at the 2023 European Games in Krakow.

### Minister meets Cypriot Ambassador

(28 June) Defence Minister Martin Sklenár received Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to Slovakia His Excellency Nicos P. Nicolaou at the SVK MOD. It was his last meeting with the Defence Minister before his tenure as Ambassador to Slovakia comes to an end. They talked about deepening bilateral cooperation with a particular focus on Defence & Security and the challenges that lie ahead. Minister Sklenár extended his invitation for Cypriot officials to SIAF 2023 and IDEB 2023, taking place in early September and October, respectively.

### On defence cooperation with Spain

(30 June) State Secretary Marian Majer paid a visit to meet his counterpart María Amparo Valcarce García and discuss armaments, Spain's upcoming EU Presidency, the priorities ahead of the NATO Summit in Vilnius, and the political developments before Slovakia and Spain's general elections. He then visited two defence firms – INDRA and Fábrica de Municiones – which are part of Slovakia's MSM Group. He also met Spanish Chief of Joint Staff Lt Gen Fernando García González-Valerio.

### Lookout Tower reopens to public

(26 June) Defence Minister Martin Sklenár and Director of the Institute of Military History Col Miloslav Čaplovič officially opened the Dukla Lookout Tower, following successful completion of Phase 2 refurbishment works to the site. Phase 1 of the refurbishment took place in 2021. With the start date in July 2022, Phase 2 of the refurbishment aimed to reconstruct and upgrade both viewing platforms and the tower's terrace. During the summer months of this year, a second section of the new permanent exhibition titled 'Dukla Battlefield in the Transformations of Time' will be installed in the Lookout Tower, as will an advanced multimedia system in the lower exhibition gallery.

### Tank Days with a Leopard



(1 July) Following a 3-year pause, the "Laugaricio Tank Days - A Day with the SVK Army" event took place in Trenčianske Stankovce. Gen Daniel Zemko, the SVK Armed Forces chief, put

the importance of the event in the spotlight, with the Slovak Armed Forces showing the professionalism of Service personnel as well as demonstrating their state-of-the-art warfighting capabilities.

In his presentation, Maj Gen Ivan Pach, Commander of the Slovak Army, introduced the Leopard 2A4 main battle tank to the public. As part of the public programme, demonstrations were staged by members of 14 Tnk Bn Trebišov, 65 Recce Bn Prešov, 13 Mech Bn Levice, 5 Arty Regt Rožňava, 91 Engr Regt Sereď, 51 WG Prešov with UH-60M Black Hawks, MP, SVK Armed Forces GOH, and the SVK Armed Forces Band.

The event, supported by Jnt Spt Bde Trenčín, attracted military history clubs and fans from home and abroad.

## MOD launches the application process for Active Reserves (AR)

(1 July) The SVK MOD has once again launched the application process for those interested in signing up for the Active Reserves

(AR) for 2024. Among those eligible to apply for the AR are ex-service personnel (reservists), the soldiers who completed compulsory military service or voluntary military training, and ex-security forces. The candidates who meet the legal criteria can apply no later than 29 Sept 2023 by visiting or emailing the Recruitment Teams. It is also possible to apply through 25 newly established first point-of-contact places at military units across Slovakia. All contact information you need is available at <https://www.regrutacia.sk/562-sk/podavanie-ziadosti-do-os-sr/>.

The 2024 Slovak Armed Forces Active Reserves training programme will focus on branch-specialised training for: DS, SVK A HQ, HQ 1 Mech Bde Topoľčany, HQ 2 Mech Bde Prešov, 5 SOF

Rgt Žilina, 91 Engr Bn Sereď, 103 CBRN Bn Rožňava, TMFG Base Martin, 21 Mech Bn Trebišov, and MP.



The benefits of becoming an Active Reserves soldier include developing valuable soldiering and trade skills as well as getting a financial reward of 600 euros per year provided that the soldier has passed through 75% of the training programme and a commensurate amount of rank-based military pay for the training period.

While the AR soldiers are under training or on exercise, their salaries, social payments and health insurance premiums are refunded to their employers by the MOD. Travel expenses for the round trip from their place of permanent residence to the training or exercise location are also reimbursed. Military equipment, meals and standard military accommodation during the training programme are provided for free.