



## Defence Minister visits Kyiv

(30 Sept) Defence Minister Martin Sklenár along with representatives of Slovakia's defence industry travelled to Kyiv for the first meeting of the International Defence Industry Forum (DFNC1). The Defence Minister's delegation was joined by the SVK defence manufacturers seen as holding great potential for the Ukrainian and world markets.

"SVK companies can be a tremendous asset in strengthening Ukraine's defence capabilities. With their unique expertise and know-how, they represent reliability, compatibility, and everything that a product of the 21st century should have to be a decisive element, available when needed. The presence of our companies here in Kyiv opens up space for direct talks with Ukrainian and other foreign partners in strengthening and expanding cooperation not only to the benefit of Ukraine, but also to the benefit of Slovakia's defence industry," Mr Sklenár said.

While in Kyiv, the Defence Minister held bilateral meetings with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his counterpart Rustem Umerov, as well as speaking on a panel discussion at DFNC1.

"Slovakia was among the first countries to express clear support for Ukraine, by taking difficult decisions on the provision of military aid, including supplying vital equipment to Ukraine, which, in the hands of Ukrainian defenders, has the ability to protect lives," Mr Sklenár said.

President Zelenskyy underscored the importance of all forms of assistance to Ukraine, namely the SVK Government's important decision to provide 13 MiG-29s at a time when Ukraine needed them most urgently.

The discussion also covered the opportunities for further defence support, including the possible areas of cooperation with SVK defence firms, especially in the field of demining. "The importance of such assistance to Ukraine is unquestionable, whether be it for Ukraine, Slovakia or the global international community," Mr Sklenár stressed, before adding, "Not just moral, but also vital security and economic factors are sending a clear message that a free and democratic Ukraine is extremely important for our future."

Talks between the defence ministers of Slovakia and Ukraine in Kyiv were mainly dedicated to the current situation on the battlefield and Ukraine's needs, including military aid, training and other forms of support.



## First F-16 with Slovakia's national emblem makes first successful flight

(30 Sept) The first of 14 F-16 Block 70 aircraft to be delivered to the Slovak Air Force made a successful first flight out of Lockheed Martin's production facility in Greenville. The aircraft's test flights are expected to be completed in the next several weeks, and this jet will then be used to support on-the-job maintenance training for Slovaks in the U.S., before arriving in Slovakia next year.

"The aircraft is highly sophisticated with a suite of intelligent systems and components, which must function reliably under all conditions. The smooth completion of the first test flight is great news. I believe that with this one and all the other aircraft, our pilots will see extensive and successful service in protecting Slovakia, with as many safe landings as take-offs," Mr Sklenár said.

Slovakia is the first European country to receive the latest version of the Fighting Falcon. According to the current agreement, deliveries of F-16s to Slovakia will commence in the second quarter of 2024.



► **NFIU SVK** has been joined by Spain, represented by Lt Col Adolfo Leña Pajares, with effect from 1 Sept 2023. The Spanish national flag was raised at the NFIU HQ's building during the flag raising ceremony on 29 Sept. Participants in attendance included Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer, Spanish Ambassador Lorea Arribalzaga Ceballos, ambassadors and members of the Diplomatic Corps, COM HQ MND-C Brig Gen Tibor Králik (SVK A), COM NFIU SVK Col Marián Kurilla (SVK A), and other guests.

► Due to refurbishment works to No 12 Firing Range at Military Police Dept Vikanová - Hronsek's TRNG and K9 Branch, the 27th Military Police Director's Shooting Competition and the 17th 'Lt Col Luboš Belák' Memorial Shooting Competition took place only to a limited extent. 20 competitors from the SVK and CZE Military Police, Prison & Justice Guard, Institute of Crime Investigation and Expertise, and Office of Border and Foreign Police. Sgt 1C Miloš Halecký (MP) triumphed in the 'Master of Combat Shooting' and 'Best Military Police Shooter' categories. Sgt 1C Miloš Halecký and Sgt 1C Jaroslav Folta won the 'Best Shooting Team' category, and Sgt 1C Folta claimed the 'Fastest Shooter' title.

► **Armed Forces Academy (AOS)** Liptovský Mikuláš opened up its doors to new Officer Cadets (OCs) for the 50th time in its history. On completion of their Initial Military Training (IMT), 164 first-year cadets picked up their Certificate of Matriculation Registration. In the 2023-24 academic year at AOS, there are 355 OCs studying for a Bachelor of Sciences (BSc) degree, 160 OCs for Magister (Mgr) and Master of Engineering (MEng) degrees. 60 OCs are following doctoral studies, with three of them on a full-time PhD programme, plus another two who have joined this year.

► The Low Fatra Mountains hosted a counter-terrorism exercise dubbed **Ex Fox 23** on 29 Sept, with the training audience from 5 SOF Regt Žilina, 51 Heli Wng Prešov, Police Flying Squad Žilina, Low Fatra Mountain Rescue Service, and Polish SOF units.

► Based on the organisational changes as of 1 Oct, the Defence Staff's Strategic Crisis Management Centre in the Ministry of Defence was renamed the **Staff for Operations (G3)**.

► A road traffic incident occurred between Athienou and Lympia in Cyprus on 20 Sept. SSGT Miloš Inhat and PFC Roman Rapavý, members of **SLOVCON UNFICYP**, rendered first aid to the injured driver and regulated the traffic until the ambulance arrived at the scene.

► Fourth- and fifth-year AOS OCs following the Security and Defence of the State Programme undertook **engineer training** with 901 Engr Bn, part of 91 Engr Regt. While the fourth-year OCs continued their training in removing obstacles, the fifth-year OCs participated in THE training of the Rescue and Recovery Group at TC Lešť.

► As part of their **Physical Training (PT)** programme, fifth-year OCs of AOS have been working hard to put into practice what they have learned over the past four years. They have practised rock climbing techniques, hand-to-hand combat with a weapon, and small boat crossings. The end of the two-day training was dedicated to foot marches in high mountains with a tactical theme.

► Competing at the Prague European Open, judokas Mária Fizeľ and Peter Žilka, members of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, won the silver and bronze medals, respectively.

► **Kickboxer Alexandra Filipová**, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, placed 2nd in the K1 +70kg category at the World Cup in Italy's Lido di Jesolo.

## FULL FIELD KIT

**Radio Regina's Full Field Kit programme presents newcomers in initial military training live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat.**

## First of 76 Patria 8x8 AMV XP is already in Slovakia

(26 Sept) The first of 76 Patria 8x8 AMV XPs, which has been delivered to Slovakia to be finalised by SVK defence firms, was introduced at the First Slovak Armed Forces Patria 8x8 AMV XP Presentation Event, in the presence of Defence Minister Martin Sklenár, Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko. Also in attendance at the event presenting the Patria Ambulance (AMB) variant were Finnish Ambassador Pasi Tuominen and representatives of Patria Land Ltd and KONŠTRUKTA-Defence JSC. Following its finalisation and trials, the Patria AMB vehicle will be the first to be accepted into service with the SVK Army in 2024. The new vehicle has been produced in the past 13 months since the signing of the contract in Aug 2022, Mr Sklenár pointed out. A total of 76 Patria 8x8 AMV XP vehicles are expected to be delivered by 2027 as follows: 60 IFVs, 10 AMBs, and 6 CPs. The finalisation of all Patria 8x8 AMV XPs, including the one presented at the MOD today, will be carried out in Slovakia, given that Patria is

## NATO MN BG SVK's CERTEX at Lešť



(29 Sept) During the last week of September, NATO MN BG SVK completed a certification exercise (CERTEX) dubbed Ex Strong Cohesion 2023 at TC Lešť.

The importance of the exercise was highlighted in the statements of Comdr 2 Mech Bde Brig Gen Róbert Kecső (SVK A) and Comdr Ops Com HQ Brig Gen Václav Vlček (CZE A). COM NATO MN BG SVK Col Miroslav Vybihal showed his satisfaction with the successful certification of the battlegroup, which tested its ability to plan, control and conduct operations.

## Ex Tatra Freedom



(29 Sept) Ex Tatra Freedom, designed to test the defence and security of the State with a focus on meeting Slovakia's commitments arising out of international treaties, was hosted in Zvolen from 25 to 29 Sept. The exercise saw

SVK AF units practising the tasks of conducting air operations, delivering logistics support, providing force protection, and protecting and defending the command post (CP). This year international troops, including from Denmark, Italy and Poland, attended the exercise for the first time. The national certification of the Aviation - Helicopter Transport Medium (AVN - HTM) unit, Slovakia's declared contribution to the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI), took place at Sliach AB as part of the exercise. The helicopter unit will undertake NRI tasks, starting from 1 Jan 2024.

## New ATVs and drones for MP



(25 Sept) To prevent and combat environmental crime, the Slovak Military Police has started operating new ATVs and drones after using €150,000 in grant funding on the equipment from the Ministry of Environment-

administered Environmental Fund. The money has gone towards the purchase of three all-terrain four-wheelers (including accessories such as helmets, windscreens, etc.) and four surveillance drones. The assets will significantly increase the mobility and operability of MP personnel on patrol duties, whilst preventing or detecting illegal environmental activity across MDs and MTAs, according to Director of the Slovak Military Police Col Valentin Cebo.

