



# Enhancing security together

(8 Dec) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Robert Kaliňák met his fellow Visegrad Four (V4) Defence Ministers for a two-day meeting in Prague, Czech Republic. The official programme commenced with the Ministers placing bouquets of flowers at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the National Monument on top of Vítkov Hill. Following this, the Ministers departed for the recently refurbished Army Museum Žižkov, where they held the V4 Defence Ministerial. On Day 2, they were joined by representatives of the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) and Western Balkan (WB) countries. Together, they tackled EU defence cooperation and the impact of the Ukraine and Middle East conflicts on our region.

## Minister receives Ambassador



(7 Dec) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Robert Kaliňák received the SVK Ambassador to Germany, HE Marián Jakubócy, at MOD Main Building. They addressed the current and most fundamental issues relating to

SVK-DEU defence cooperation. Slovakia wants to develop defence industrial cooperation with Germany, to explore more closely the cooperation possibilities under the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI) with the aim of building up its own AD capabilities, and to continue the Battle Damage Repair (BDR) Centre's operations in Michalovce.

## CHODs meet close to border

(7 Dec) As part of their bilateral engagements, the SVK and HUN Chiefs of Defence met in the village of Tomášov, Slovakia. Gen Daniel Zmeko and Gen Gábor Böröndi discussed the security situation in Europe and the two nations' defence engagement. The talks centred on exchanging information on the current status and development of the armed forces, regional security challenges, military training, and deployments abroad. To keep the tradition going, the generals will meet in Hungary in 2024.



## Central Military Hospital named Slovakia's best hospital

(4 Dec) The Central Military Hospital - Teaching Hospital Ružomberok has been named Hospital of the Year in the State University and Teaching Hospitals category in Slovakia's 2023 Best Hospitals ranking by INEKO (Institute for Social and Economic Reforms), defending its first place title from last year. In the annual survey, the hospitals were evaluated on the quality of healthcare, the doctors' levels of expertise and experience, the complexity of diagnoses, patient satisfaction, financial management, and transparency. The hospital, excelling at the quality of hospital services and patients' satisfaction, stands out among all the comparable hospitals on the lowest reoperation and rehospitalisation rates as well as on the lowest postoperative and acute stroke mortality rates. With its fastest Accident & Emergency (A&E) Department, it has outperformed the Martin-based University Hospital's A&E Department this year. "I want to express my gratitude to each and every one of the hospital team here. Our first place in the hospitals ranking, which our hospital has defended, is the result of our teamwork. I hugely appreciate the support of our founder – the SVK MOD – without which it would have been impossible to make important investments and see vital projects through to completion," Hospital Director Assoc Prof Robert Rusnák MD PhD said.



► On St Barbara (Patron Saint of Artillery) Day, a ceremony was held on 4 Dec at the Military Academy (AOS) Liptovský Mikuláš to officially accept officer cadets into the Artillery Military Occupational Specialities (MOSS) and admit them as apprentices to the SVK Artillery Guild. On this occasion, Col Stefan Acsai and Maj Milan Turaj received the Order of the Artillery Knights and the Knight of Artillery Cross, respectively.

► 2 Arty Bty, part of 21 Sp Arty Bn Michalovce, has taken delivery of two new ZUZANA 2 self-propelled howitzers (SPHs) from its manufacturer Konštruktúra - Defence.

► Director of the Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service (EPS) in the Forces Simon Czup and Chaplain Marian Bodolík visited the SVK military personnel deployed to BiH in support of EUFOR Op Althea on 1-8 Dec, bringing Christmas gifts and offering a worship service at Camp Butmir's Military Chapel.

► On 4 Dec, while 511 Mountain Team, part of 5 SOF Regt Žilina, were undergoing skills improvement training on tactical movement in mountainous and high mountainous terrain, they came across an injured Polish skier. They gave the man first aid and alerted the Mountain Rescue Service.

► Supported by fourth-year OCs as instructors, the Military Academy (AOS)'s Simulation Centre has started phased marksmanship training for first-year OCs, beginning with elementary weapon handling before moving on to more complicated shooting techniques.

► Nitra Garrison's Koliňanský Vrch training ground hosted refresher training for the Log Spt Coy assigned to NATO's force pool under NATO CT 2021, with the theme of "Logistical support to 11 Hvy Mech Bn Grp deployed on military ops outside of the Slovak Republic". The aim of the training was to exercise and verify the capabilities and readiness status of the unit. This has been on stand-by since 1 Jan 2023.

► The annual NATO MNMPBAT Summary Conference took place on 4-8 Dec at Croatia's Military Academy Zagreb, with representatives of all MNMPBAT member states and observers from Hungary, Bulgaria, SNGP and NATO MP COE in attendance. The Slovak Military Police was represented by Lt Col Marek Hušek, Director of the Operations Planning and Preparation Branch, MP Dept Trenčín.

► To mark the 79th anniversary of Maj Gen Otto Smík's tragic death, a commemorative service was held at 81 Wng Sliac. Wreaths were laid at the base of the Otto Smík Memorial Bust by UK Ambassador Nigel Baker, UK Defence Attaché Col Jonathan Kitson, DCOM SVK AF Brig Gen Martin Kuterka, CSM SVK AF HQ Spt Maj Stefan Patassy, Cdr 81 Wng Sliac Col František Pytlík, and Director of the SNP Museum Marian Uhrin. Among the distinguished guests was the family of Maj Gen Smík.

► 3 Mech Coy along with its Atk Pl and Engr Pl, part of 21 Mech Bn Trebišov's CS Coy, has begun its move to TC Lešt to conclude the final phase of its training – Ex Winter Wardens – a tactical company-level live exercise (LIVEX) on 12-13 Dec.

► BVP-2, BVP-1K and BPSV 1 gunners/operators of 1 Mech Bde Topoľčany underwent intensive training on Levice Garrison's Devčany live firing range, as did members of 11 Mech Bn Martin, 12 Mech Bn Nitra and 13 Mech Bn Levice.

► To mark St Nicolas Day, 11 SVK UNFICYP peacekeepers joined the Ayia Napa Half Marathon 2023 in Cyprus, with Capt Matúš Vozár placing first in the men's race and Plt Martina Borgulová and Cpl Barbora Šebáňová placing 2nd and 3rd in the women's race.

► 27 airmen of 51 Wng Prešov participated in a blood donation event named St Nicolas's Drop of Blood, held under the auspices of Cdr 51 Wng Prešov Col Stefan Okoš.

► Jakub Borghula, biathlete of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, secured his victory in the men's sprint race at the IBU Junior Cup in Pokljuka, Slovenia.

## FULL FIELD KIT

Radio Regina's Full Field Kit programme presents the SVK Armed Forces Band's Christmas Concert in Nitra live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat.

## Recce scouts conduct winter survival skills training

(4 Dec) A recce platoon was deployed to the border, tasked with a mission to monitor the enemy paramilitary and SOF units' infiltrations into Slovakia. After coming into contact with a stronger enemy, they operated dispersed in small teams and had to survive in winter mountainous terrain before being extracted from the area.

According to 1Lt Ivan Andrašovič, the leader of the Intelligence Group (IG) at 12 Mech Bn Nitra, the intensive training on Turkish Hill Training Area was the culmination of the platoon's two-year preparation, he said: "This is no easy task at any other time of year. But at the end of November, the situation was a bit more complicated with snow, cold and wind. No excuses! These are all part of the winter season. Indeed, this kind of weather can best test everything the recce platoon have learned over the previous period. This was initially severely limited due to



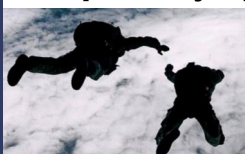
COVID restrictions and, later, due to the performance of other assistance tasks though."

He stressed that the platoon members must be able to operate independently on the training area for at least 18 hrs, including at night, without additional supplies and logistical support. For the new platoon commander, Lt Peter Balla, this was his first winter survival skills test, as was for some in the platoon. "I am pleased that despite the bad weather when my fellow soldiers encountered cold, snow and nasty winds, they performed the tasks actively and responsibly. I haven't heard any complaints from them. They know that a scout earns his living the hard way. Yet, thanks to this, they take forward the good name of the Recce Pl, the entire CS Coy, and the Unit into the future," 1Lt Andrašovič said with satisfaction.

## MOD hosts NATO Senior Course

(8 Dec) 82 participants of the NATO Defence College (NDC) Senior Course, designed for OF/54 level officers and equivalent level civilian officials, were welcomed to the Slovak Defence Ministry. While at the MOD, they were briefed on the national defence planning process and the ongoing and future modernisation programmes.

## SOF operators jump from 4,000m



(5 Dec) 20 Red Berets completed the Military Free Fall (MFF) Course, led by experienced Military Free Fall Instructors (MFFIs). The course, covering both theory and practice including

25 jumps, culminated with a military free fall high-altitude, high-opening (MFF HAHO) jump from a CASA CN-235 at an altitude exceeding 4,000m. The SOF operators jumped with the oxygen mask and bottle, and the front-mounted weapon and rucksack. The two-month effort concluded with a tactical night jump. Thanks to their night vision goggles (NVGs), they were able to locate and land safely in a designated 200m×200m square on the drop zone in pitch dark.

## Inter-ministerial tournament

(5 Dec) After last year's debut Inter-ministerial Football Tournament, organised by MSC Dukla for the sports centres under the SVK ministries' remit, the baton was passed to the Police Sports Centre (PSC). This hosted teams from MSC Dukla, National Sports Centre (NSC), PSC, SVK Olympic and Sports Committee and media representatives at its new sports facility on Junácka Street, Bratislava. Gold Olympians – the Škantár brothers, Elena Kaliská, Matej Tóth and others – were on the teams as well. The NSC team won the tournament, with the journalists' team and the Dukla team placing 2nd and 3rd. On behalf of the MOD, Sec Gen Peter Krajčirovič presented the prizes to the winners.

## Another triumph by Viktória Forster



(6 Dec) The SVK University Sports Association announced the 2023 Sports Person, Team and University of the Year Award results at the Technical University's Hall, Bratislava. Viktória Forster (Dukla) won the University Sportsperson of the Year award, with Hana

Burzalová, Alžbeta Ragasová and Ema Hačundová (Dukla Women's 20km Race Walk Team who gained the second silver medal at the World University Games for Slovakia) and Daniela Ledecká (Dukla) in 2nd and 5th places. Matej Bel University Banská Bystrica was crowned the Sports University of the Year.