



## Defence Minister makes visit to BiH

(14 Dec) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Robert Kaliňák met with the SVK soldiers deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina in support of EUFOR Op Althea. He also held a bilateral meeting with BiH Minister of Defence Zukan Helez. Symbolically, the visit fell on 14 Dec – the day the Dayton Agreement was signed, ending the inter-ethnic conflict in the country.

The main reason for the Defence Minister's visit to SLOVCON on Op Althea was to thank 52 SVK servicemen and women for their service. In his remarks, Mr Kaliňák emphasised that the SVK deployment to BiH is a vital task rather than a symbolic mission. "We are a serious partner who is highly rated. I want to thank you all very much for your exemplary work, and I appreciate that you can handle the stress and pressure of the job," he said. By far the greatest gift of all from the Minister was bringing the family members of the soldiers to BiH.

An important part of the Defence Minister's trip to BiH was the bilateral with his counterpart Zukan Helez, who thanked Slovakia for supporting BiH's integration into the EU. The Ministers also breached the topic of opportunities for defence industrial cooperation, e.g. on the development of Slovakia's high-calibre artillery systems.

## Thank you to troops in Cyprus

(16 Dec) Robert Kaliňák, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic, headed off for Cyprus to meet with our men and women of the Armed Forces serving with UNFICYP on the island. Slovakia's current uniformed contribution to UNFICYP is 240 soldiers, which makes it its largest contingent on operations abroad. Mr Kaliňák brought them gifts – Christmas trees, wafers, ingredients for the Slovak Christmas sauerkraut soup, and mountain bikes.

In separate meetings, Mr Kaliňák also met with SRSG and Head of UNFICYP Colin Stewart and Cypriot Defence Minister Michalis Giorgallas. In the latter meeting, both leaders voiced their appreciation for the special SVK-CYP relationship that has existed for the past 30 years, and they want to make sure it continues to grow from strength to strength.

One area of our potential cooperation is the defence industry. In the past, Slovakia sold Zuzana 2000 SPHs and TATRAPAN CPVs to the Republic of Cyprus. With a debate on the modernisation of the CYP Armed Forces underway in Cyprus, Slovakia has offered up options for SVK military equipment and munitions to the CYP Government.



## 27th Military Deed of the Year Awards

(14 Dec) Defence Minister Robert Kaliňák has declared the 27th Military Deed of the Year Awards open for nominations.

The Awards recognise the extraordinary deeds and acts of service by those inside and outside the ranks of the Slovak Armed Forces in 2023. Members of the public, too, are invited to send in their nominations by email to [cinroka@mod.gov.sk](mailto:cinroka@mod.gov.sk) or regular mail to our address (Marketing Section, Defence Minister's Office, Námestie generála Viesta 2, 832 47 Bratislava) no later than 29 Feb 2024. All information on the Awards is available on the [internet](http://internet).

The Awards fall into four categories: Rescue of Life, Assistance to the Public, A Friend of the Armed Forces, and Service to the Country. The nominations commission will meet to select the three best nominees in each category after 29 Feb 2024. The winners will be decided by top Defence officials and the President of the Slovak Republic as Commander-in-Chief (CinC) of the Slovak Armed Forces.

► The 3rd iteration of the **Leopard 2A4 MBT conversion training course** for tank crews of 4 Tk Sqn, part of 14 Tk Bn Trebišov, has culminated on the firing ranges at TC Lešť. The course, attended by 21 SVK tankmen, was delivered by SSgt Peter Fecenko, an instructor of the Training and Mobilisation Force Generation Base Martin in charge of the course, with support from instructors of the Bundeswehr's 93 Tk Bn. During day and night firings, the tank crews fired full calibre shells from a stationary position, on the move forward, and while reversing – with the gun system fully stabilised, with a simulated failure in the gun stabilisation system, and with the tank commander taking over from the gunner.

► The 7th **Peace Support Operations Cooperation Course (PSOCC)** took place at the Peace Support Training Centre (PSTC) Szolnok in Hungary, with the training audience from 14 countries – Albania, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Kazakhstan, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Serbia, the UK, the USA and Turkey. On the basis of long-term HUN-SVK defence cooperation, Sgt 1C Karol Tomáš was a visiting instructor (VI) on the course for the second time.

► On 11-12 Dec, 12 MP personnel from the Police Enforcement Divisions Bratislava and Prešov completed the **4x4 All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Driver Course** at the Training & MWD Branch, MP Dept Vlkánová – Hronek. The course focused on the operation and basic maintenance of the four-wheeler, the use of additional equipment, and on-road and off-road driving.

► From 13 Nov to 8 Dec, the Military Academy Liptovský Mikuláš delivered three **short-term courses** – Peculiarities of Artillery Fires, Fire Support Level 1, and All-Arms Observer – for artillery fire support specialists. The Peculiarities of Artillery Fires Course dealt with fire support targets (geographical points or objects as aiming points) and delivery of fires. For the first time, the Fire Support Level 1 Course, covering lectures on company - and battalion-level artillery fire planning, field training, and the final test exercise, took two weeks to complete. The All-Arms Observer Course instructed trainees in how to direct ground fire support in line with NATO standards.

► On 11-15 Dec, the SVK Army's Stationary Identification Laboratory conducted training in the **interpretation of the mass spectra of the chemical substances**, as specified in Lists 1, 2 and 3 of the Chemical Weapons Prohibition Act, with participation from specialists of CBRND Bn Rožňava and technicians from the chemical lab. Their knowledge was tested in written tests to prove their ability to evaluate and interpret the results of gas chromatography - mass spectrometry (GC-MS).

► On 3-10 Dec, MP personnel of the NATO MNMPBAT participating countries attended the **Georgian Military Police Capabilities Instructor Course**, with NATO standards as its baseline, at the East Battalion Base in Tbilisi and on Vaziani Training Area. The Slovak Military Police was represented by Lt Kamil Kaščák and MSgt Marián Lenčes, both from the Specialised MP Ops Section Prešov.

► Military Forests and Estates (VLM), which falls under the MOD's remit, has once again donated **Christmas trees and gifts** to the Centres for Children and Families across Slovakia.

► With Slovakia's new record time of 3:11:17, race walkers Dominik Černý and Hana Burzalová, members of the **Dukla Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica**, won the marathon race walk mixed relay at the World Race Walking Tour in Dublin (IRL). With her time of 1:31:42, race walker Mária Katerinka Czaková triumphed in the women's 20 km race walk in Dublin, attacking the qualification time for the 2024 European Championships.

► Powerboat racer **Marián Jung (Dukla)** was recognised by the Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee in the field of fair play. He received the **Ján Popluhár Award** for rescuing his fellow racer from under a sunken powerboat.

## Winter Sniping and Winter Wardens – troops are not afraid of cold

(13 Dec) A joint sniper training event, dubbed Winter Sniping 2023, brought together snipers from the SVK MP, the CZE MP Flying Squad Prostějov, and a soldier of the Training Centre Lešť under guidance from the Specialist Training Section, Training & Military Working Dog Branch, MP Dept Vlkánová - Hronek.

Phase 1 of the sniper training programme took place at the Military Technical and Testing Institute Záhorie, where the sharpshooters shot at medium distances out to 700m. Phase 2 focused on shooting in the built-up areas of TC Lešť, both in daytime conditions and under reduced visibility at night. A variety of shooting tasks tested the snipers' ability to identify targets quickly and deliver precision fire at fixed and moving targets. Night shootings saw the snipers establishing positive



## Indiana Guard chief in Slovakia

(11 Dec) Indiana Adjutant General Maj Gen R. Dale Lyles paid a visit to the SVK MOD. The aim of his five-day visit to Slovakia was to deepen the INNG's long-standing bond with the Slovak Armed Forces. In discussions with Maj Gen Dale Lyles, SVK CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko praised the benefits of this cooperation. The current security situation and the programme of INND-SVK activities for 2024 were high on the agenda. Maj Gen Dale Lyles also had an office call with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Robert Kaliňák.

## MOD Writing Competition winners

(11 Dec) This is the 19th time the MOD has given secondary school and college students the chance to unleash their literary talent through the 2023 MOD Creative Writing Competition. This year's theme – The Defence of our Country is a Duty and a Matter of Honour (Article 25 (1) of the SVK Constitution) – was tackled in the writers' essays and short stories. 118 students entered the competition, which is traditionally opened by the Defence Minister and the Defence Magazine editorial staff. The winners were selected by a panel of judges, drawn from Armed Forces personnel, the Minister's Office staff, and military journalists, who picked the three best pieces of writing out of 84 secondary school and 17 college entries. The Secondary School and College Students categories were won by Rebeka Motýľ (17)'s short story 'One of Many' and Tomáš Chovančák (23)'s essay 'The Defence of our Country is a Duty and a Matter of Honour'. The public could read the finalists' entries on the SVK MOD Facebook page and vote for the Readers' Prize. This went to our first place winner Rebeka Motýľ. The winners, whose winning entries are posted on the [SVK MOD website](http://SVK MOD website), will receive cash prizes and gifts.

## Christmas Gala Concert

(12 Dec) Organised by the service chiefs under the auspices of the SVK CHOD at Andrej Bagar Theatre in Nitra, a Christmas Gala Concert was performed as a sign of gratitude to soldiers and their families by the Armed Forces Band under the direction of Maj Jozef Hepner, with Ivana Regešová and Peter Cmorik appearing as guest singers. The WWI Fallen Soldiers' Database was launched as part of the programme. The evening continued with a military awards ceremony and Peter Cmorik's beautiful rendition of the new Armed Forces song "For All Loves", now available on YouTube with English subtitles.



identification (PID) of enemy combatants. They improved on multiple target identification and engagement, sometimes coupled with the dense snowfall that challenged visibility and shooting ability.

Close quarters battle (CQB) wherein individual snipers operated as one team to complete an assigned mission within a certain time limit was part of the training. WS23 confirmed the professionalism and readiness of all exercising snipers. In addition, 21 Mech Bn Trebišov defied harsh winter conditions on Ex Winter Wardens at TC Lešť, with its Mech Coy, ATK PI and CS Engr PI training in frost and snow. Week 1 of the exercise was filled with defensive scenarios and coordinated ops, supported by ATK and Engr units. Ex WW23 culminated with a tactical live fire exercise (LFX).

