



Spain in command of NATO MN BG SVK

(1 July) Spain officially took over command of the NATO Multinational Battlegroup Slovakia from Czechia at MTC Lešť. Simultaneously, ESPCON took on a leading role in the process of expanding the multinational battalion-sized task force to a Combat Brigade.

The official Hand Over-Take Over (HOTO) ceremony took place in the presence of Slovak President and Commander-in-Chief Peter Pellegrini, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Robert Kaliňák, Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Juraj Blanár, and other dignitaries. Spanish Ambassador to Slovakia Ms Lorea Arribalzaga Ceballos and Spanish Chief of Defence Admiral Teodoro Esteban López Calderón attended the ceremony on behalf of Spain.

"I am convinced that the wide array of capabilities that the Spanish Armed Forces bring will benefit the entire transformation of the Battlegroup and will be of help not only to us, but also to the Combat Brigade as a whole," Minister Kaliňák said. Among those capabilities are C2, manoeuvre, CS and CSS. He went on to extend a special thanks to Czechia for being the first to assume the Framework Nation role for the NATO Battlegroup in Slovakia, saying: "Our neighbour, brother and friend was first to step in with leadership, and has, in a matter of two years, shown us what cooperation of several Allied countries should look like."

NATO MN BG SVK is a multinational task force comprised of service personnel from CZE, DEU, PRT, ROU, SVK, SVN, ESP, TUR, and USA.

Gov't approves hospital construction

(3 July) On a regional trip to Zákamenné, the Gov't approved the MOD's intention to build a new hospital in Prešov. Based on the original project 'Smart Green Hospital Prešov', the Gov't's first major strategic investment this election period will align with both military and civilian health requirements.

"The hospital will cover the needs of the entire Prešov region as well as those of the SVK Armed Forces," DPM and MINDEF Robert Kaliňák said, noting that the goal is for the hospital to meet the conditions of a ROLE 4 Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) as a provider of the highest level of healthcare according to NATO standards and to take on a key role in managing infectious diseases requiring Biosafety Level 3 (BSL-3).

It is envisaged that the Role 4 MTF will deliver education and training programmes to medical professionals to support the needs of the SVK Armed Forces.

Czaková secures place at Paris OG

(3 July) Race walker Mária Katerinka Czaková (SVK) of the Dukla Military Sports Centre secured a place at the Paris Olympic Games. On 1 August, she will be on the Olympic starting line in the women's 20km race walk in Trocadero.



With a time of 1:32:44.3, another Dukla athlete Hana Burzalová won the 20km race walk title at the Athletics Championships in Banská Bystrica and set a new national record. She also achieved the best Slovak performances at 15km and in the time trial in history, breaking the records set by Mária Gáliková 15 years ago and Mária Katerinka Czaková 4 years ago.

Armed Forces Academy Class of 2024 Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony

(4 July) Officer Cadets (OCs) of the Magister (Mgr) and Master of Engineering (MEng) degree programmes in military sciences successfully completed their studies and attended the General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Class of 2024 Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony. In attendance were invited guests. The MOD and the DS were represented by Director of the MOD Personnel and Social Affairs Dept Martin Rimeš and DCHOD Lt Gen Lubomír Svoboda.

62 OCs, seven of whom were women, received their diplomas and commissioning as Lieutenant in four programmes: Security and the Defence of the State; Electronic Weapons Systems; Military Signals and Information Systems; and Weapons Systems, Weapons and their Components.

The best OCs were awarded the Armed Forces Academy Commemorative Medal and special scholarships by AOS Commandant Brig Gen Aurel Sabó.

Two OCs earned special recognition for their achievements – OC Oliver Minka received a gift from the Defence Minister for his excellent results, and OC Juraj Jánošík was recognised by the SVK CHOD for his exceptional performance of State Service duties. OC Katarína Baliková, the best female graduate, received the Commandant's Award for excelling during her entire time at the Military Academy.



- The **Presidential Guard of Honour** hosted a ceremony in Bratislava's Dukla Barracks, where they read out Parliamentary Vice-Chair Peter Ziga's Letter of Thank You for their professionalism during the inauguration of SVK President Peter Pellegrini. Chief of the Presidential Office Maj Gen Ladislav Dovhun recognised selected soldiers for their ceremonial duties at the inauguration and their results in the first half of the year.

- Artillerymen of 21 Sp Arty Bn helped to **clean up in the aftermath of flooding** in the village of Ubl'a in County Snina. They assisted with removing deposits of mud and debris, cleaning the roads, and restoring the landscape.

- The Commander of the Slovak Army has announced a **selection process** for the positions in the ranks of OF-1, OR-8, OR-7, OR-6, and OR-5 in the Intelligence Support Company, part of 65 Recce Bn Prešov. By way of exception to the provisions regulating the positions in a higher rank than the rank one holds, OR-2s are now allowed to apply for the MOS H10.

- The Reconnaissance Platoon and the Tactical Air Control Party (TACP), part of CS Coy of 13 Mech Bn, underwent **concentrated training** in the High Tatras. Cdr Recce Pl Lt Jindřich Stehlik was in charge of the training, with the focus on the march to the starting point for reconnaissance, monitoring targets, calling in artillery fire, reconnoitering the axis of march, and life in the field.

- A two-week pilot **Comprehensive Operations Planning Course** took place at the International Courses Section of the Military Academy Liptovský Mikuláš. 33 officers from Italy, Ukraine, Slovakia, and NFIU SVK took part in the course, overseen by officers from Romania, Germany, Slovenia, and NATO SHAPE as the course leaders.

- UNFICYP organised a **sectors-wide Sports Day event** in Cyprus's capital city of Nicosia on 2 July, with the participation of Force Commander Maj Gen Erdenebat Batsuri. The SVK team emerged victorious in the football tournament, took 2nd place in the tug-of-war race, and finished third in the volleyball competition. Overall, the SVK peacekeepers took third place.

- The construction of the first **museum building to house large size exhibits** in Slovakia since 1989 – the Large Exhibits Hall of the Military History Museum Piešťany – is entering its final stage. On completion of construction works, the building will get its final building approval and will house a gallery with military exhibits, theme texts, documentaries and photos from 1945 to present. The new hall will officially open in a ceremony in May 2025 to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2.

- Lt Col Zdenko Baranec, national advisor on gender equality in the SVK Armed Forces, attended a course on the **Gender Equality and Women, Peace and Security** agenda and its implementation in the Armed Forces in Madrid, organised under the auspices of the European Security & Defence College (ESDC) in Brussels by the ESP and NLD MODs.

- The winner of the Tipos **June 2024 Athlete of the Month** is Gabriela Gajanová of the Dukla Military Sports Centre for her silver medal in the women's 800m run at the European Championships in Rome.

- Karate athlete Roman Hřrka (Dukla) **took gold in the U21 Kata Male category** after winning seven karate matches at the K1 Youth League in the Croatian city of Poreč.

- With a time of 1:57.62, swimmer Samuel Košťál (Dukla) won a **silver medal in the 200m butterfly** at the European Junior Swimming Championships in Vilnius. He was only 0.36sec behind his Slovak junior record he set at the 2024 Mare Nostrum Swim Tour in May in Sant Andreu, Spain.

Military Police take over a refurbished firing range and off-road vehicles

(4 July) The keys to 13 new Toyota Land Cruisers were handed over to SVK MP soldiers by Secretary General of the MOD Service Office Peter Krajčovič during a handover ceremony at the Training and Military Working Dog Centre Vlkánová-Hronsek. Also in attendance was SVK Military Police Director Col Róbert Beták.

After extensive renovations worth €1.5m, SVK MP soldiers also saw the reopening of the Centre's firing range in Vlkánová-Hronsek, where they can now perfect their live firing skills. This marks a huge step forward in improving training in the firing range facility, which has been upgraded to the highest 21st century standards. Speaking at the handover event, Mr Peter Krajčovič said: "Most importantly, we need to create adequate service conditions for our Security Forces. Only then can we expect better results from them. If we succeed in doing this,

we will greatly enhance the SVK MP's reputation and will attract more candidates to the Security Forces."

Of the 13 off-road SUVs, 12 will go to the MP Operations Branches in Hronsek, Prešov and Topoľčany and one to the T&MWD Centre in Vlkánová.

As well as putting the safety and comfort of soldiers first, improving the availability of new service vehicles leads to faster intervention and better performance of duties.

In his remarks, Col Róbert Beták said: "The replacement of our vehicle fleet is another step towards improving the conditions for SVK MP personnel. And what about the firing range? It is a unique, top-notch, state-of-the-art facility that others can envy us. Thanks to it, we will make training more effective, gain new experience and skills, and forge ties with our foreign partners."

