



Gen Maxim attends NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session

(21 January) The Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces attended a NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session in Brussels on 21 January 2016, the key themes of which were the current security challenges in the Euro-Atlantic region and NATO's support to the countries that have been caught up in conflicts in the long-term.

The Chiefs of Defence expressed the need to strengthen NATO's role in preventing the crises in North Africa and in the Middle East. In a meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, they agreed that the Alliance can accomplish this task by especially intensifying the use of the existing mechanisms of cooperation with partner countries. They also supported the continuation of NATO's efforts to build a security sector in Afghanistan. The final part of the session was dedicated to the issues surrounding NATO's long-term military adaptation to security challenges faced by the Allies on the eastern and southern flanks of the Euro-Atlantic region.

While in Brussels, Gen Maxim held talks with the Chief of the General Staff of the Hungarian Defence Forces Gen Tibor Benkő. He thanked him for his support in organizing the memorial ceremony to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the aviation catastrophe at the village of Hejce and for his personal contributions to the long-term development of cooperation between the Hungarian Defence Forces and the SVK Armed Forces, as well as presenting him with the Remembrance Cross of the Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, 1st Class. Gen Maxim also held discussions with the Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic, exploring the options for possible cooperation under the EU's operations in Mali.



Remembrances at Hill Borsó

(19 January) During remembrance ceremonies in the Hungarian village of Hejce and on top of Hill Borsó, SVK Minister of Defence Martin Giváč paid tribute to the memory of the 42 victims who died in the greatest aviation tragedy in the history of the SVK Armed Forces. On 19 January 2006, a SVK AN-24 military aircraft carrying members of SLOVCON KFOR from Kosovo crashed only a few kilometres off Slovakia's national border. Only one soldier survived the accident – Capt Martin Farkaš (then 1st Lt).

"Time may soften the pain, but the empty space in our hearts will remain forever. I am well aware that no words can possibly express the essence of grief and the depth of loss that you went through. At this site, I applaud your strength and endurance with which you continue to walk through your lives despite the cruel stroke of fate. On 19 January, each and every year, we come together to pay respects to all those who perished on Hill Borsó," said SVK Minister of Defence Martin Giváč.

Speaking at the ceremony, Gen Milan Maxim said: "At the time of the accident ten years ago I was a commander waiting for my subordinates to return but they never did, today I am the Chief of the General Staff who wants to make sure their memory will never fall into oblivion," said Gen Milan Maxim.

Among those extending their deepest sympathy and condolences to the surviving families were the presidents of Slovakia and Hungary, H.E. Mr Andrej Kiska and H.E. Mr János Áder, Marín Giváč's counterpart – Hungarian Minister of Defence István Simicskó, both Chiefs of the General Staffs – Gen Milan Maxim and Gen Tibor Benkő, as well as Assistant NATO Secretary General for Operations Patrick Turner.

Also present at the ceremony at the site of the air disaster was Capt Martin Farkaš. "I come here regularly on the anniversary of the accident, as well as throughout the year. The memories of my colleagues who died here are still fresh and I will never forget them. I still miss them very much," he said.

- On Monday, 18 January, members of Michalovce-based **Self-Propelled Artillery Unit** held a commemorative ceremony on the occasion of the 11th anniversary of the unit's foundation, as well as Artillery Day.

- On 13 January, members of the **SVK President's Honour Guard** visited the Oncology Clinic for Children, Children's Faculty Hospital Bratislava-Kramáre, to hand over the money collected during the unit's traditional voluntary fundraising event. The amount was divided among families with child patients who found themselves in a financially unfavourable situation. Besides financial assistance, the patients received school supplies and didactic materials from an anonymous donor.

- On 15 January, a handover/takeover ceremony was held on the occasion of the change of command in the **Command, Control and Reconnaissance Wing (CCRW)**. During the ceremony held at the SNP Barracks Zvolen, accompanied by the Commander of the SVK AF, Brig Miroslav Korba, Col Miloš Mosný, GS, appointed the current Deputy CCRW Commander, Lt Col Vladimír Jaklovský, to the post of the CCRW Commander.

- On the occasion of welcoming the members of the **DCM-C Unit** who served in Operation Resolute Support (ORS) in Afghanistan and NATO-led Operation Active Force (OAF) in Turkey, a welcoming ceremony took place at Mobile CIS Base Ružomberok on 15 January. The servicemen deployed on ORS were awarded the SVK Minister of Defence Medals for participation in a military mission, as well as Veteran Badges. The soldiers participating in OAF were presented the Chief of the SVK General Staff Honorary Badges.

- On 20 January, members of the Police Operations and Activities Division and the Law Enforcement Support Division improved their **specialized training**, focusing on the changes in Act No 8/2009 Coll. on Road Traffic and on operation of the Military Police motor vehicles in the road traffic, as well as on giving first aid.

- On 23 January, citizens of the town of Levice compared their skills with professional soldiers during an event called **Show What is in You!** organized in the M. R. Štefánik Park to support the concept of voluntary military preparation. The participants tried out the military obstacle course, obtained information about the project, and tested their knowledge on giving first aid. The organizers also prepared a programme for children, static displays of handguns and military vehicles, as well as traditional military goulash.

- Members of the **22nd Mechanized Battalion Michalovce** have focused their current training year on preparation and development of military unit-level capabilities. During the second week of January, the soldiers underwent pre-preparation for military-practical open water swimming. In the swimming pool of the Granit Zemplínska Šírava Hotel, they drilled military swimming techniques – jump into unfamiliar water, swimming on one's side, swimming with a weapon, and water rescue.

Commander-in-Chief visits Rožňava

(20 January) The SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces visited military units of Rožňava Garrison. Accompanied by the Chief of the SVK General Staff, Gen Milan Maxim, and the SVK Land Forces Commander, Brig Ondřej Novosad, he observed static displays of equipment and dynamic demonstrations of activities of members of the CBRN Battalion and the Rocket Launcher Detachment. "It is too late to think of defence when a crisis occurs. Therefore, the command has my full support during the modernization process," briefed the Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed.



Awards for service on Cyprus

(20 January) At UNFICYP HQ in Nicosia, the Force Commander, Maj Gen Kristin Lund, together with the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic, Oxana Tomová, and the Sector 4 Commander, Lt Col Miroslav Belanský, handed over the United Nations Medals to the members of Sector 4, the Engineer Platoon and the Quick Reaction Unit. As the tradition goes, the ceremony was held in the hangars of the old air base. However, for the first time each participating nation prepared a short presentation in the form of a culture programme.

Slovak Shield 2016

(24 January) Slovak soldiers are preparing themselves for a series of exercises dubbed Slovak Shield 2016, which will thoroughly test responses to various kinds of perils from non-military to the need of employment of a multinational task force to protect the territorial integrity of the Allied countries. The basis of the series of exercises Slovak Shield 2016 will consist of two activities – Blue Wave that will be held on 23 – 27 May, and Slovak Shield planned for the period from 29 September to 14 October. The unplanned Exercise New Horizon and the international exercise of anti-missile defence units dubbed Tobruq Legacy 2016 will take place as well.

SVK Armed Forces hold remembrances for air disaster victims at the village of Hejce

(19 January) Brig Gen Martin Stoklasa, Commander of the 2nd Mechanized Brigade, and Service personnel from Prešov, Trebišov and Michalovce Garrisons gathered at a memorial ceremony on Hill Borsó at the Hungarian village of Hejce on 18 January to pay their respects to the 42 victims of the greatest air disaster in the contemporary history of the SVK Armed Forces. By taking a two-hour walk from the village of Hejce up to the top of Hill Borsó, organized for the eighth time, they paid tribute to the memory of those who perished while returning home from the NATO-led peacekeeping force in Kosovo, KFOR, on 19 January 2006.

The ceremonial acts of remembrance in honour of the victims directly at the site of the plane crash on Hill Borsó and at the Memorial in the village of Hejce continued a day later on 19 January and were reinforced by the 90-strong member SVK Armed Forces Honour Guard and Banská Bystrica Army Band.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the Hill Borsó air disaster at the village of Hejce, another memorial ceremony was held at the Kuchyňa Transport Wing, attended by the next of kin of the deceased soldiers. Among those invited to the ceremony by Col Peter Prokop, Commander of the Kuchyňa Transport Wing, were Mons František Rábek, Ordinary of the Armed Forces and Armed Corps of the Slovak Republic, Maj Gen (rtd) Juraj Baránek, the mayor of Malacky and the mayors of the neighbouring villages Kuchyňa, Pernek and Rohožník. Held in front of the Memorial to the Fallen



Members of the Kuchyňa Transport Wing, the ceremony then continued with the Holy Mass being celebrated for the deceased soldiers in a local military chapel.

Col Jozef Ševčík, Combat Support Service (CSS) Brigade, and Col Miroslav Ollé, Deputy Commander of the CSS Brigade, commemorated the 10th anniversary of the air disaster at the final resting places of Cpl Juraj Zubor in the village of Timoradza and of Lt Col Ľuboš Belák in Turčianska Turná. They also paid tribute to the other fallen comrades by observing a moment of silence.

The victims of the air disaster that claimed the lives of 42 Servicemen and women, of whom 4 were members of the Military Police – Lt Col Ľuboš Belák, Capt Igor Scigel, WO3 Róbert Letko and WO1 Vlastimil Čepičan – were also honoured by members of the Military Police on 19 January.

On Tuesday, 19 January, the units of Bratislava Garrison Command gathered for a remembrance ceremony to pay their military respects to the victims of the AN-24 air crash.

The 10th anniversary of the Hill Borsó air disaster at the Hungarian village of Hejce was also commemorated by members of SLOVCON in UNFICYP who, along with their colleagues from HUNCON, UACON, SERBCON, held a remembrance event at Camp M. R. Štefánik, Famagusta. Also remembered during the ceremony was Gfr. Johan Oberberger, a member of AUSCON, who died in the area of operations in UNFICYP on 16 January 1982.