



Old UAZ vehicles replaced by 140 new off-roads

(9 February) In this electoral term, the SVK MOD has launched the most extensive modernization in the history of our armed forces, which started with the publication of the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic. Since 2012, the Defence Department has managed to purchase 140 Land Rovers, which have gradually replaced old Russian UAZ vehicles. The new off-roads are used in military units all over Slovakia for domestic crisis management, such as floods or disasters of various origin. When compared to the old UAZ vehicles, the new vehicles have better utility and performance characteristics, as well as half fuel consumption.

"Within four years, we have spent more than 10 million EUR for the vehicles and we have managed to replace more than a half of the older Russian UAZ vehicles. The purchase made via the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) has been the biggest one in our armed forces, as well as exceptionally transparent," said SVK Minister of Defence Martin Glváč.

Land Rovers are also used by other Allied armed forces, which means achieving absolute compatibility. During the past four years, the SVK MOD has increased spending on modernization almost up to 20 per cent of its budget. Similarly, the Ministry plans to meet Slovakia's commitment to increase defence expenditure up to 1.6 per cent of GDP until 2020.



Talks on migration

(10 February) The Slovak Republic welcomes NATO's initiative to introduce measures for solving the migration crisis in Europe, said SVK Minister of Defence Martin Glváč after the negotiations held by defence ministers of NATO member states in Brussels.

The ministers talked about strengthening the defence measures as well. One of the options is to deploy permanent NATO units to the countries neighbouring Russia. "Military authorities have been tasked with finding an appropriate solution," explained Tomáš Valášek, Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to NATO. He emphasized it is not an offensive but rather defensive step.

The defence ministers also discussed the process of meeting the commitments made at the NATO summit in Wales, where Slovakia declared a year-on-year increase of the defence budget by 0.13 per cent of GDP, as well as investments in purchasing Black Hawk helicopters and Spartan transport aircraft.

During the meeting in Brussels, the expert teams of Minister Martin Glváč and his Polish counterpart Antoni Macierewicz held bilateral talks, building up on the negotiations, which took place on 8 February in Krakow. "At the meeting in Poland, we agreed to continue to develop the 8x8 wheeled vehicles project, as well as the NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence (NATO CI COE), which stagnated after the swearing in of the new Polish government at the end of 2015," stated Minister Glváč. Considering the project to be of good quality, he also emphasized that the negotiations were successful and both countries expressed their interest to speed up the accreditation process of the centre.

- The National Centre EOD and CBRN Nováky in cooperation with the SVK Ministry of Economy hosted the **training of inspectors of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)**. The training with real toxic chemicals was held at the CBRN Training and Testing Centre and Referential Chemical Laboratory Zemianske Kostofany. The aim of the specialized training was to train new OPCW inspectors in the field of detection and decontamination of toxic chemicals in near-real conditions to which chemical weapons inspectors may be exposed.

- The Slovak Red Cross in cooperation with the National Blood Transfusion Service of the Slovak Republic held on 8 February the **21st Valentine's Blood Drop**, a Slovakia-wide blood donation campaign. The first blood donation took place on the representative premises of the Presidential Palace, where a total of 56 members of the Office of the President of the Slovak Republic, the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic, and the SVK Ministry of Defence turned out to donate blood. Of them, 45 blood donors came from the Slovak Presidential Honour Guard. The campaign was also supported by the Chief of the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic, Col Vladimír Šimko, the Commander of the Residence of the President of the Slovak Republic, Col Norbert Kádek, and the Commander of the Honour Guard of the President of the Slovak Republic, Col Miroslav István.

- As part of the deepening cooperation between the SVK Armed Forces and the Bundeswehr in the field of CBRN, **bilateral meetings of CBRN subject matter experts** were held on 2-5 February. German experts expressed their interest in training at the CBRN Training and Testing Centre and the Fixed Chemical Laboratory, both based at Zemianske Kostofany, as well as in participating in Exercise TOXIC VALLEY 2016, an international exercise for sample collection teams.

- The Director of the Military Police, Col Milan Hamar, gave his assessment of the **Military Police's tasks performance in the Training Year 2015**. As part of the programme, the security developments across SVK Defence in 2015 were evaluated, and so was the efficiency of work carried out by the Military Police last year. Col Hamar introduced the main tasks for the short-term period in connection with the planned military exercises within Slovakia's territory, as well as briefing on the participation of the MP units in future exercises and the tasks arising out of Slovakia's presidency of the Council of the European Union.

- On the initiative of Col Adolf Uličný, the Chief of the SVK Air Force Support Division, of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, a **working meeting to work out agreements in the field of cross-border cooperation** between the Slovak and Polish Republics took place at the SVK Air Force Headquarters in Zvolen. Participants of the meeting at the level of expert working groups discussed the latest amendments to the intergovernmental agreement, on the basis of which the expert group had drafted a Technical Agreement (TA) on practical implementation of Cross-Border Operations (CBO) flights. Another meeting of the involved expert groups is scheduled for April in Warsaw.

Liam Wasley in Žilina



(9 February) During his visit to Žilina, U.S. Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Liam Wasley extended his thanks to the 5th Special Forces Regiment and the SVK Armed Forces for their work in Afghanistan. "I would welcome future contributions of the 5th

Special Forces Regiment and the Slovak Republic to provide training capacities with the aim of facilitating the development of Afghan security forces," said L. Wasley, after acquainting himself with the regiment's history, main functions and tasks. The central focus of his visit was a meeting with the U.S. Special Operations Forces soldiers who have been engaged in joint military training with the Žilina-based 5th Regiment. "I would like to emphasize that the command senior enlisted leader of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, Command Sergeant Major Boháčik, will be the senior enlisted leader for the NATO High Readiness Forces," informed Liam Wasley. The commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, Col Lubomír Šebo, added that joint activities involving members of the U.S. Special Operations Forces and the 5th Regiment have been underway since 2011. The ongoing stay of the U.S. Special Operations Forces personnel in Slovakia will last for three weeks: "In Week 1 of training, they will be in Žilina, during Week 2, they will engage in practical assignments at the Lešť Training Area, and Week 3 will be dedicated to training in mountain environments," he said.

Slovak Shield under plan

(10 February) From 9 February on, representatives of the Visegrad Group (V4) countries, Germany, the Netherlands and the United States held talks as part of the initial planning conference for the Slovak Shield 2016 series, which will be a continuation of the training process with a higher ambition to train the Mechanized Brigade Staff in conducting operations in defence of the territory of the Slovak Republic along with Allies according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. Apart from exercises Blue Wave, New Horizon and Slovak Shield, the latter being the culmination of the training programme, the SVK Armed Forces will also focus on international military exercises, such as Tobruq Legacy and Tobruq Arrows, Toxic Valley, and the certification of the Special Operations Land Task Group (SOLTG). Already over the course of March, the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces will be engaged in complex staff drills during which its respective components will be tasked to revise their issued operational plans.

Best modernization year for armed forces in 20 years

(11 February) On the occasion of the Chief of the SVK General Staff's assembly of commanders, SVK Minister of Defence Martin Glváč informed the High Command of the SVK Armed Forces on the ongoing as well as planned modernization projects. The assembly of commanders took place in the presence of H.E. Mr Andrej Kiska, SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces.

"Concerning modernization of the SVK Armed Forces, last year was the most successful in the past 20 years. The approved projects are financially covered and now we concentrate especially on land forces. The assembly of commanders evaluates the past training year, so we have to honestly confess what we are good at, what we are bad at, what to improve, and what we are going to do about it," said Minister Glváč. Commenting on the priority of armed forces modernization as a whole and quality training, he emphasized: "Our soldiers definitely need new armaments and vehicles. One of the reasons is the fact that we have increased the number of exercises to a great extent, which the personnel avidly welcomed. Nonetheless, besides organizing exercises outside barracks, to be able to improve the training process soldiers need modern equipment." The Defence Minister also added that during the past



few years, we have faced such threats that our citizens have never had to confront before. Therefore, in his opinion, defence and security are one of the key issues. "I am glad modernization has already got underway. Moderni-

zation has to continue, since it is one of the fundamental tasks we need to fulfill. I believe that we need stability to improve our armed forces. We need to know that every single citizen and the whole nation as well is aware that we have to talk about defence not only during bad times. Defence cannot be seen as a coat we put on only when we feel cold, we need to talk about defence all the time," said the SVK President.

While evaluating the level of fulfillment of the 2015 Training Year's tasks at the assembly of commanders, Chief of the SVK General Staff Gen Milan Maxim briefed on the goals for 2016: "I perceive prospective training issues very positively. We had favourable conditions for training and presentation of our readiness to respond to current security challenges, which could affect citizens of Slovakia or the performance of our tasks abroad." Simultaneously, speaking highly of unplanned exercises that took place last year in response to the current security situation, Gen Maxim said: "They were very positive from my point of view. The conditions were set well. I think we met the assigned tasks, therefore I expressed my thanks to SVK Armed Forces personnel. This year we also have to face security challenges and pay maximum attention to the principal task, which is defending Slovakia, as well as to assistance tasks in favour of our citizens."