



Humenné residents show what is in them

(20 February) The residents of Humenné compared their skills with professional soldiers during the *Show What is in You!* event, organized to support the SVK MOD's concept of voluntary military training. The 1st Mechanized Brigade Topoľčany Commander, Brig Vladimír Kubáň remarked that the goal of the events held over the past few weeks in Levice, Nové Mesto nad Váhom and on Saturday in Humenné was to familiarize the citizens with the voluntary military training project. "Today we are in Humenné, a town with a rich military history. Since a tank regiment used to be based here in the past, in the eyes of the citizens, the town is still connected to the military. As well as in the other three towns, we prepared a military obstacle course and static displays of arms and military vehicles, which the participants will come across during the voluntary military training," he said. As part of the programme in Humenné, there were also activities for children who could get the Young Military Paramedic Card. The visitors to the event viewed static displays of handguns and military vehicles used by professional soldiers and those interested in creative workshops could try out camouflage techniques, using special camouflage colours. The organizers also prepared a traditional military goulash.



First applicants sign up

(18 February) Slovak citizens have started to register for voluntary military training (VMT), informed SVK Minister of Defence Martin Giváč during a press briefing organized on Thursday at Bratislava-based Recruitment Group. "The selection procedure was commenced on Monday, and there is already one woman applicant from the Košice region," said the Minister.

Col Tomáš Szalai, of the SVK MOD Human Resources Department, reminded that candidates for VMT can apply with local recruitment groups, if they are subject to military conscription or if they have voluntarily accepted it. Applicants have to be of Slovak nationality, be legally competent, unimpeachable and reliable, speak the official language of the Slovak Republic, have at least secondary professional education, be physically and mentally fit, and successfully pass the selection procedure. The citizens who cannot be accepted for VMT are those who are employed in the state service as part of the active duty service or entered into the SVK Armed Forces reserves, with an exception of those who were declared fit for military service by conscription ward in the past but did not actually undergo the service.

During the selection procedure, the applicants are obliged to hand in a filled-in personal questionnaire, medical records excerpts, CV, criminal record excerpt, ID card, documents on achieved education, completed courses and acquired certificates, official decision on accepting military conscription, and written declarations that they are reliable in compliance with respective legal regulations, speak the official language of the SR, have Slovak nationality in compliance with respective legal regulations, no criminal charges have been brought against them, and that they have been informed about the terms and conditions of VMT.

The 12-week voluntary military training is due in July 2016.

- An international workshop, entitled Biological Protection of Airports, was held under the auspices of the SVK Minister of Defence between 15-16 February. The topics discussed included applying new technologies in scaring birds away from airports, the monitoring of bird activity, the use of predators in dispersing birds, and capture and transfer of animals. Col Vladimír Lisý, GS, Commander of the Tactical Wing Sliac, arranged for a demonstration and presentation of the Tactical Wing activities, mainly aimed at the biological protection of its airfield and the measures to prevent collisions between aircraft and birds.

- Lt Gen **Manfred Hofmann**, Commander of Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), headquartered in Szczecin, Poland, paid a visit to Slovakia on 17 February. He was received by the 1st Vice Chief of the SVK General Staff, Lt Gen Peter Gajdoš. Lt Gen Hofmann acquainted himself with the status of the construction and premises assigned to the newly emerging NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Slovakia, which is, upon achieving full operational readiness, to be re-subordinated to HQ MNC NE.

- Chief of the SVK General Staff Gen Milan Maxim received Col (ret) **Gejza Videczi** on 15 February to present him with the Memorial Cross of the Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, 1st Class, to mark the 10th anniversary of the An-24 military aircraft crash at the village of Hejce, Hungary.

- A Reconnaissance-Diving Unit, of the Engineer Battalion Sereď, conducted **joint divers' training** together with divers of the SVK and HUN Armed Forces at the 2nd Special Forces Regiment Szolnok. Participants exchanged their experience from military divers' training in underwater search and recovery missions; practised a variety of diving techniques in a swimming pool and open water conditions. They also jumped from a training tower into the water and tried out the pneumatic rescue system on the ground and under the water.

- On 15-19 February, the **National Centre EOD and CBRN** provided organizational and specialized support to French CBRN specialists undergoing training at the Training and Testing CBRN Centre Zemianske Kostoľany in the field of detection, sample collection, packaging and marking samples for safe transportation to an analysis laboratory, and decontamination drills.

- On 16 February, Topoľčany Barracks hosted a **working session** involving the top commanders of the Headquarters 1st Mechanized Brigade Topoľčany; members of the SVK Land Forces Headquarters and the Combat Support Brigade; and personnel from the CBRN Defence Battalion, of the 1st Mech Brig. Lt Col Slavomír Verčimák, Deputy Chief of the Strategic Planning Section, of the Strategic Planning Staff at the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, clarified the strategic intent, concept and philosophy of the NATO Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) rotations. The meeting set the planning foundations for getting the CBRN unit ready for performance of the tasks arising out of its assignment to the NATO Response Force.

Chief of SVK General Staff in visit to Afghanistan

(18 February) Chief of the SVK General Staff Gen Milan Maxim has returned from a 3-day visit to Afghanistan where he held talks with Gen John F. Campbell (NATO-led Resolute Support Mission Commander), met with other coalition partners, and visited Slovak soldiers serving on the spot.

"Gen Campbell expressed an expectation that Slovak personnel would serve in Resolute Support until the assigned tasks have been performed, and asked the Slovak side for support," said Gen Maxim after negotiations held at the Resolute Support central hub in Kabul and added that the RS Commander appreciated professionalism of the Slovak soldiers. In his opinion, the situation in Afghanistan needs a higher level of advisory assistance and mentoring, which are the main tasks of the Slovak contingent.

At Hamid Karzai International Airport – the largest RS base and seat of the SLOVCON HQ, Gen Maxim talked to Brig Bismullah Waziri (Afghan National Army Special Forces Division Commander), Brig Tony D. Bauernfeind (NATO Special Operations Forces Deputy Commander) and Col Joseph Duncan (Commander of the American-Slovak

Advisory Group for Special Operations in Afghanistan).

Gen Maxim also met with the Slovak soldiers serving in RS Mission. They talked about the influence the new acts would have on military service, as well as about other options of improving the RS personnel's gear and quality of service.



MOD completes remediation

(17 February) The SVK Ministry of Defence has completed the remediation of environmental burdens following the withdrawal of the Soviet Army. Thus, it has brought a successful end to the remediation projects financed from EU funds. For the remediation works worth 11,350,000 euros, which the SVK MOD has carried out in compliance with the SVK Government's manifesto, the MOD bears no costs whatsoever. To remediate environmental burdens at different sites, including those at Sliac, Ivachnová, Nemšová, Rimavská Sobota and Lešť, the MOD had filed six requests for non-repayable financial contributions through the operational programme "Living Environment". Under the scheme, the works were divided into 2 parts: the remediation of underground waters and the remediation of soils. Upon completion of the remediation works, the geological drills system was disassembled, and the terrain was returned to its original condition. At present, the sites still have deep hole drills to allow for the post-remediation monitoring of the projects.

State Secretary in Germany

(18 February) The State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Mr Miloš Koterec has completed a reciprocal working visit to Germany. The purpose of the visit was to meet with the Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Defence, Dr Ralf Brauksiepe. The partners discussed the status of defence cooperation and other topical issues. Mr Koterec appreciated the intensification of bilateral activities, which has led to a broader military cooperation, to include, among others, military training, as well as resulting in the restart of specialized meetings between representatives of the Land Forces and Armaments Departments. During his visit to Germany, the State Secretary also met with representatives of the Bundeswehr and the Federal Parliament. He then visited the Army Command in Strausberg, where he met with the Inspector of the Army, Lt Gen Jörg Vollmer, to discuss options for joint training and the Bundeswehr's participation in Exercise Slovak Shield 2016. At the Bundeswehr Joint Forces Operations Command (Bundeswehr JFOC), tasked with executing command and control of all Bundeswehr operations abroad, he met with Lt Gen Erich Pfeffer, Commander Bundeswehr JFOC, to discuss deployments of Slovak and German troops on international crisis management missions and operations. Finally, Mr Koterec met the ex-Chairman of the Defence Committee of the German Federal Parliament, Mr Hans-Peter Bartels, for talks on the current security challenges, the EU's common security and defence policy (CSDP), and the migration crisis.

Divers at Black Water

(19 February) The largest divers' unit of the SVK Armed Forces from Sereď-based Engineer Battalion has completed a series of practical underwater drills in winter conditions. In the area of former dredging lake Black Water, the Reconnaissance-Diving Section carried out tasks of searching for, recovering and transferring sunken vehicles. The assignment had been preceded by theoretical instruction and practical training back at the Engineer Battalion, as well as rehearsals in a swimming pool. "As part of the preparatory training, emphasis was placed on safety and speed in executing missions, because when it comes to lifting objects from the bottom of a water obstacle, coordination and synchronization do matter very much," noted SSGT Michal Ščepko, NCO in command of the exercise, who serves in the capacity of Platoon Sergeant of the Reconnaissance-Diving Platoon and Military Diving Instructor.

Preparations for Little Shield

(16 February) Preparations for Exercise Little Shield 2016 have been commenced by an introductory planning conference held at Jaselské Barracks and participated by members of the 1st Mechanized Brigade Command and its subordinated military units, members of the SVK Land Forces HQ, the Combat Support Brigade, the 2nd Mechanized Brigade, the Stationary CIS Base and the Mobile CIS Base. The participants familiarized themselves with the specifications and organizational structure of the command-and-staff exercise, using the Computer Assisted eExercises (CAX). The exercise to be conducted in May and themed "Mechanized Battalion Group Defence Operation Conduct in Case of Violation of the Slovak Republic's State Sovereignty by Aggressor" will put to the test the Command and Staff of the 11th Mechanized Battalion Group in conducting operations to maintain security and to protect the territorial integrity of Slovakia in a high intensity conflict. The exercise will have four phases and create conditions for the exercise's planning, preparation, execution and overall assessment. Simultaneously, it will test the Brigade Command in conducting a military exercise through the Distributed Training and Exercises (DTE) system, using the mobile CIS and simulation technologies in service with the Armed Forces Academy Simulation Centre based in Liptovský Mikuláš.