



Minister hands over vehicles

(13 January) In Nemšová, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš has handed over 29 new vehicles to service personnel for use. The motor pool of the Armed Forces has grown to incorporate 12 Aktis and 17 Tatra trucks. These are currently being phased in a bid to gradually replace the functionally and technically outdated PV3S vehicles and the nearly 50-year-old Tatra trucks. On the handover of the vehicles, the head of the MOD said: "Even this is a way how we are delivering on our commitment to step up our efforts to the maximum so as to make our soldiers properly armed, equipped and trained. Modernisation is clearly among our priorities, and although not everything can be done at once, we are doing our best to provide soldiers with what they need." The modernisation initiative was also highly appreciated by Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim: "Completely new levels of quality and performance are coming with the purchase of the new vehicles." Based on the existing needs, the new vehicles will be reassigned to individual military units. The vehicles are fully employable for the purposes of domestic crisis management and compatible with the hardware of the other NATO member countries. Their advantages are lower fuel consumption, simpler maintenance, easier access to spare components, and enhanced safety.

Deployment of troops approved

(11 January) The Security Council and Government of the Slovak Republic have approved the deployment of up to 152 service personnel for the training mission in the Republic of Latvia in the second quarter of 2017. This is a commitment the Slovak Republic made at the NATO Summit in Warsaw last year as part of the measures to strengthen NATO's collective defence on the Alliance's eastern borders. The deployment of our troops to the Baltics still needs to be endorsed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic. As SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš stated, the aim of such training is to develop collective interoperability among the armed forces of NATO member countries. Contributions to the mission under the Visegrad Four were declared concurrently with that of ours by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. The V4 countries will be engaged in the Baltics in quarterly cycles, one by one throughout the entire year 2017. Slovak troops will operate in Latvia from April through June 2017. The Czech Republic will be operationally committed to the Baltics in the first quarter of 2017, to be followed by Slovakia, Hungary and the Republic of Poland, in the second, third and fourth quarters, respectively.



Pilgrimage trips with the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps in 2017

• 59th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes in France

Date: 17-23 May 2017; Number of participants: still to be specified; Transport: free of charge by MOD and Interior Ministry's coaches, by Prison and Justice Guards Corps (PJGC) coaches – depending on conditions; Participant's fee: €165 payable before entering the coach; Catering: individual catering during the journey to and back and full board during the stay in Lourdes; Deadline for applications: 28 February 2017.

• 12th National Pilgrimage of the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps to Rome and the Vatican in Italy

Date: 17-23 September 2017; Number of participants: still to be specified; Transport: free of charge by MOD and Interior Ministry's coaches, by PJGC coaches – depending on conditions; Participant's fee: €200 payable before entering the coach;

US military community highly appreciates the 5th Regiment's capabilities

(11 January) The 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina was visited by the US Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Adam Sterling. "The aim of the visit was to ensure familiarisation with the Regiment's history, mission, and tasks which are performed by its members in collaborative engagement with the US partners, especially the US Special Operations Forces," said the Commander of the Regiment, Col Lubomír Šebo. Ambassador Adam Sterling was keen to find out more about the deployment of Žilina-based SF operatives within the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. Other topics of discussion touched on the possible areas of cooperation to be developed between the US SOF and the SVK SF with emphasis on joint training. Beyond the official programme, Ambassador Sterling met with 3 members of the 20th Special Forces Group from Indiana in the USA who are now undertaking a familiarisation visit ahead of the upcoming international Joint Combined Education Training in Slovakia. "The cooperation between Slovakia and the United States of America is unfolding from our strong alliance in NATO. The bilateral cooperation between the US SOF and the SVK SF is of a special dimension. The capabilities of the 5th Special Forces Regiment are highly appreciated by the US military community. Members of both elite forces have served shoulder to shoulder in war-torn Afghanistan," said the American guest. The US Ambassador's delegation was accompanied by Col Miroslav Gardlo, the Chief of the Special Forces Branch at the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces.



• On 15 Jan, President of the Slovak Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces **Andrej Kiska** received 15 selected members of the Guard of Honour of the President of the Slovak Republic (Presidential GOH). Also in attendance at the audience were representatives from the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic and members of the Presidential GOH HQ. The president underscored the professionalism and specialisation of the GOH members. In his best wishes for the New Year, he wished them good health, love and luck, and every success in work and personal life.

• On the first working day following Three King's Day, the Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps blessed the offices of General Staff personnel in the MOD. In his Three Kings' blessing, **Mons František Rábek** recalled the need for people to do good things to others. After blessing the office of Gen Milan Maxim and the office of State Secretary Marián Saloň, the bishop went to bless the offices of both DCHODS.

• On Tue, 10 Jan, members of the Bratislava Garrison HQ units participated in a **Three Kings' Mass** at the Chapel of St Martin at the Vajnory military facility. The festive New Year's Mass was celebrated by the Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Mons František Rábek, together with the Vicar General of the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Lt Col Mons Jozef Michalov. Following the Mass, Mons Rábek anointed and blessed the service premises of the barracks. This was followed by a ceremonial lunch with a prayer. In the afternoon, the Ordinary visited the Bratislava Garrison HQ where he performed the Three Kings' blessing ceremony and wished the staff all the best in the New Year.

• Pursuant to Section 76 (1) of Act No. 58/2014 on explosives, explosive objects and munitions and on amendment and supplementation of certain acts, the Minister of Defence announced the appointment of Lt Col Štefan Zreničik, Chief of Support Projects Section, Armaments Projects Division, Modernisation and Infrastructure Department, SVK MOD, as **Ammunition Technician Inspector** of the Ministry of Defence with effect from 1 Jan 2017.

• On 11 Jan, the **CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre (C&PC)**, of 2nd Mechanised Brigade, hosted a working meeting with the US PSYOPS. The Slovak side was represented at the meeting by Lt Col Sebastian Csemez, the guarantor of the CIMIC and PSYOPS military occupational specialties, Lt Col Milan Žilincár, Chief of CIMIC and PSYOPS Section, and by the key officials of the 2nd Mech Brig and the C&PC with responsibilities for PSYOPS. The aim of the meeting was to introduce the C&PC's PSYOPS capabilities and Garrison Martin's training capacities for the new US PSYOPS team who will continue to train the C&PC members in the year 2017.

"Full Field Kit" is back

(12 January) The once popular 'Full Field Kit' radio programme is coming back after a 6-year break, having made it into the radio broadcasting programmes portfolio. Already launched with its first broadcast on 13 January, from 21:05 to 21:35 local time listeners to the Slovak Radio's station Radio Regina were able to receive information on the activities of the SVK Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš is convinced that the radio programme will regain its popularity levels it once enjoyed in the past.

After 6 years, Full Field Kit has an ambition to regain its favour with listeners of different age groups. The public broadcaster Slovak Radio will create a space for channelling information on the wide spectrum of activities undertaken by the Ministry of Defence and the SVK Armed Forces in defence of the Slovak Republic, its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and on adopted domestic crisis management measures. The repeat of Full Field Kit will be aired at 23:30 local time on Saturday.

The radio programme will feature regular sections on training and deployment of troops at home and abroad. Part of the programme's time slot will be assigned to discussions on topical issues, some of which will be dedicated to military history. Additionally, Full Field Kit will inform of Defence personnel's exceptional achievements, seek to promote patriotism, and raise the citizens' awareness of national defence issues. Finally, it will provide up-to-date information for those interested in active duty service or those who want to join the Voluntary Military Training project and the Active Reserves.

Going to serve the country



(9 January) The gates to the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base opened on 9 January for the first time in the year 2017 for 147 'candidates of preparatory state service' (soldier trainees) and 49 cadets and college graduates who will undergo basic military training (BMT). Among the candidates and cadets

are also 36 women. After successfully completing all prescribed in-processing procedures and initial issue of clothing and equipment at the Clothing Regional Centre, Multifunctional Supply Base West Nemšová, the newcomers were assigned to Training Platoons where the training aimed at mastering basic military skills got underway straight away. On successful completion of the BMT training, they will have a passing-out parade in February.

Catering: individual catering during the journey to and back, breakfast and dinner provided during the stay in Rome, individual lunch; Deadline for applications: 31 May 2017.

• Cyrilo-Methodius Meeting of the Slovak and Hungarian Military Ordinariates in Zalavár in Hungary

Date: 3 June 2017; Number of participants: 45 uniformed SVK Armed Forces personnel; Transport: free of charge by MOD coaches; Participant's fee: €5; Catering: individual catering during the journey to and back; Deadline for applications: 31 May 2017.

• 21st National Pilgrimage of the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps to Levoča in Slovakia

Date: 1-2 July 2017; Number of participants: 100; Transport: SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps coaches or individual transport; Participant's fee: €10 payable before checking in (including B&B); Accommodation: J. Vojtaššák Diocesan Seminary in Spišská Kapitula (1 night); Catering: breakfast; Deadline for applications: 31 May 2017.

• Participation in 26th International Military Pilgrimage from Warsaw to Czestochowa in Poland

Date: 4-14 August 2017; Number of participants: 20 (from across SVK Armed Forces, Interior Ministry, PJGC, Firefighting and Rescue Corps, Mountain Rescue Service and Customs Authorities); Transport: depending on conditions; Participant's fee: no fee; Accommodation: free of charge in tents; Catering: free of charge in field conditions; Special requirements: excellent medical condition, high physical fitness levels, 300-km foot march with full kit; Deadline for applications: 31 May 2017.

• Participation of SVK Armed Forces personnel in National Pilgrimage to Šaštín in Slovakia

Date: 15 September 2017.

Those interested in a pilgrimage are invited to forward their applications asap via their chaplains in the service of military, police, prison, firefighting and customs units. Application forms are available on the Internet website of the Ordinariate at <http://www.ordinariat.sk/>.

IN SELECTING PARTICIPANTS, PREFERENCE WILL BE GIVEN TO SLOVAK ARMED FORCES AND ARMED CORPS PERSONNEL.