



Scar named Hejce

(19 January) The victims of the largest air disaster in the history of the independent Slovak Republic – of the Antonov AN-24 military aircraft crash near the Hungarian village of Hejce –, were paid tribute during a remembrance ceremony attended by representatives of the Slovak and Hungarian Ministries of Defence.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš emphasised that the loss of lives of the 42 soldiers has left a permanent scar on the soul of the Armed Forces, which will forever be affected by the tragedy. "We will never forget our fellow warriors and will always keep their memory alive because they deserve it."

The Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko, too, came to pay his tribute to the memory of the Slovak soldiers. "I used to know and cooperate with many of them. Therefore, I felt a need to come here and pay them the respects they deserve," he emphasised.

According to Gen Milan Maxim, Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, the remembrance ceremony has testified to the fact that we cherish the memory of the soldiers who died in our biggest air disaster: "The soldiers were committed to carrying out missions on behalf of the Slovak Republic and its citizens."

During his address on Hill Borsó, Minister Gajdoš took the opportunity to thank Hungarian Minister of Defence István Simicskó, Mayor of Hejce István Lévy, and local residents for their assistance in taking care of the remembrance sites on the scene of the tragedy and at the memorial in the village. "I value your help and consider it to be an expression of humanity and sincere partnership between our countries," said the head of the MOD.

In his speech, Hungarian Minister of Defence István Simicskó expressed support to Slovakia. "The soldiers who laid down their lives here were in the service of peace. Their memory is honoured by both Hungarians and Slovaks. The tragedy connects us and inspires us to bring our nations to closer cooperation. We need to help each other and rely on each other," he said.

Initial planning conference on Exercise Slovak Shield

(19 January) An initial planning conference on Exercise Slovak Shield 2017 took place on 18-19 Jan. In attendance at the conference were military authorities from across the participating SVK Armed Forces components and a representative of the Indiana National Guard. The Commander SVK Land Forces (COM SVK LF), Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad, emphasised that the exercise will be a milestone in the preparations of a mechanised brigade as a National Commitment (NC) 2013 to NATO's Forces of Lower Readiness (FLR) before it undergoes certification. The 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Pavel Macko, acquainted the conference participants with the premises and requirements for planning the exercise. The Chief of the Combat Training Branch (SVK LF HQ), Col Ivan Balog, then provided basic data about the exercise and briefed on its operational design, preparation timeline and specifications. Having defined the tasks, the participants split up for discussions in syndicates focusing on the exercise's organisation, scenario and its starting point, communications and information systems, logistics support, and support to troops' living conditions in the field. Slovak Shield is a series of activities which will culminate in October with a two-level command post exercise, with troops partially deploying to a training area, supported by simulation technologies. This will be preceded by the exercise planning process, complex command staff rehearsals at different levels of command, a series of small-sized exercises, and a command post exercise with the partial deployment of 1st Mech Brig and CSS Brig units to a training area. While the responsibility for the exercise planning process rests with the Chief of the General Staff, the COM SVK LF will oversee the conduct of the exercise, and the DCOM SVK LF will act as the Officer Commanding the Exercise. The primary exercising troops will be the 1st Mech Brig HQ and Staff as NC 2013 to NATO FLR, while the secondary exercising troops will be Bn HQs and Staffs, selected units assignable to the mechanised brigade, a small-sized unit from the Army of the Czech Republic, and members of the Indiana National Guard.

- On 18 Jan, members of the Maj Gen Alexander Korda Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment Michalovce formed up for a remembrance ceremony to honour the **memory of Pte Tomáš Kardoš**, their former colleague, who died tragically near the Hungarian village of Hejce as Slovak soldiers were returning home from KFOR in Kosovo. The Detachment DCOM, Maj Stanislav Šraga, was pleased to welcome the parents of the deceased soldier at the ceremony. The ceremony continued at the Tomáš Kardoš Memorial.

- On 10 Jan, the Chief of the Logistics Branch at the SVK AF's HQ Air Command, Col Slavomír Milde, welcomed the participants of a 4-day initial planning conference on a bilateral training exercise involving SVK and CZE military firefighting units. Dubbed **FIRE RESCUE 2017**, the training activity will be held at the Training Centre Lešť between 24-28 Apr 2017.

- On 15 Jan, the village of Hostie near Zlaté Moravce hosted a remembrance ceremony – **72nd Michal Jurka and Michal Olejár Memorial Event** – organised in honour of the two partisans who died during the Slovak National Uprising (SNU). Held at the SNU Victims' Memorial, the remembrance ceremony was attended by Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, DCOM SVK AF, and Col Miroslav Fázik, DCOM 1st Mech Brig Topoľčany. The ceremony was supported organisationally by 13th Mech Bn personnel. The event also featured a memorial run. The village of Hostie has organised it regularly ever since 1946.

- On 17 Jan, members of the Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment Michalovce commemorated the 12th anniversary of the Detachment's foundation and **Artillery Day**. Looking back in history, the engagement of the Czechoslovak artillerymen of 15 Jan 1944 at the Battle of Jasle was highlighted at the ceremony. To mark this occasion, Maj Stanislav Šraga, DCOM SFP Arty Det, handed out Letters of Remembrance to 11 service personnel and 1 civilian employee.

- The Commander 2nd Mech Brig Prešov, Brig Gen Martin Stoklasa, delivered a presentation on the **Training Year (TY) 2017 Priorities** and ways to achieve them. He elaborated on the 2nd Mech Bn's readiness for use in defence of the SVK REP and for NATO's collective defence, as well as on the tasks relating to the preparation and full operating capability (FOC) of the units declared to NATO as NC 2013. Additionally, he briefed on the 2nd Mech Bn's readiness to undertake missions in favour of the Police Corps of the SVK REP and domestic crisis management tasks across the territory of the SVK REP.

- The Peace Support Operations (PSO) Training Unit, based at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin, went ahead with training the **key personnel** for the SVK LF's declared contributions to the NRF/JTF 2017 and 2018. Phase I of the national training covered theory, including rules of engagement, graduated use of force on military operations, protection of civilian populations, types of incident responses, and indicators of IED presence. The participants translated the theory into practice during an exercise on Garrison Sučany training area. Finally, all exercising troops concluded their initial national training phase, being assigned to the VJTF, by taking a knowledge-based test.

Slovak-Hungarian commission

(17 January) A combined Slovak-Hungarian commission, chaired by the State Secretaries of both MODs, convened in Bratislava to debate security and political issues and affairs of current relevance relating to a wide spectrum of SVK-HUN defence engagement. Topics included NATO-related events, operations in the Baltics, and national positions on the situation in the Alliance's eastern and southern flanks. On bilateral projects, the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Róbert Ondrejcsák, appreciated the long-term cooperation between both countries on the UNFICYP peace-keeping mission in Cyprus. At the meeting, both sides were in agreement on the significance of joint training and showed interest in its continuity. One area of discussions was devoted to the current status of the Agreement on Joint Airspace Protection. They expressed their conviction that it could be signed by the end of the year. As the Hungarian side had requested the issue of war graves to appear on the agenda, representatives of the SVK Interior Ministry were present at the meeting as well.



Meeting of NATO Military Committee

(17 January) Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim partook in a regular January NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session in Brussels. A key theme was the Alliance's long-term military adaptation and measures to beef up the defence potential on NATO's eastern and southern flanks. Consistent with the decisions as adopted at the Warsaw Summit, the participants deliberated on the conclusions of the NATO Command Structure Functional Assessment. They also met with their colleagues from Ukraine, Georgia, Algiers, Israel, Japan and the Republic of Korea. During a session on Ukraine, special attention was devoted to the developments in Ukraine. On the margins of the meeting, Gen Maxim held bilateral talks with Gen Mieczysław Gocul, Chief of the General Staff of the Polish Armed Forces, whom he thanked for his personal role in furthering long-term cooperation between the SVK and POL Armed Forces, and presented him with the SVK Chief of Defence Memorial Cross, 1st Grade.

Military pilots training to continue at the Technical University in Košice



(17 January) The M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy (AFA) will continue to cooperate with the Aviation Faculty at the Technical University in Košice in the academic year 2017-2018. For those interested, i.e. prospective professional soldiers, Bachelor of Science (BSc) and Master of Science

occupational specialties," explained the Minister of Defence. The cadets' education will be delivered by the AFA in Liptovský Mikuláš in collaboration with the Aviation Faculty at the Technical University in Košice. In the academic year 2017-2018, this type of university education will be available in the full-time mode of study in the following study programmes: Air Transport Control and Professional Pilot as part of the Transport field of study; Sensors and Avionic Systems as part of the Electronics field of study; and Operation of Aircraft as part of the Motor Vehicles, Rail Vehicles, Ships and Aircraft field of study.

Cadets will follow training for performance of temporary state service in the Officer Corps in the A20 MOS – Aviation (pilots and ATCs) and in the A50 MOS – Engineering Air Service (aircraft maintenance and operation). In parallel with their university studies, they will also undertake the Military Training Programme. Apart from all arms training, specialist military training, military training, internships with military units, this will also include flight training for those cadets training as pilots. Upon successful completion of their studies, cadets will be promoted to Lieutenant and

assigned to positions across selected SVK Air Force units.

The studies, including flight training, will be financed from the defence budget. Cadets will be entitled to free accommodation, full board, military clothing and equipment, and monthly pay in the amount of the national minimum wage (€435 in 2017).

The deadline for submitting applications by those interested in the undergraduate university programmes is 28 Feb 2017, while the applications to participate in the selection process for Regular soldiers' state service must be submitted no later than 16 Mar 2017. For the graduate university programmes, the deadline for submitting applications is 31 Mar 2017, while the applications for the selection process to enter Regular soldiers' state service must be submitted no later than 21 Apr 2017.

For more information on Bachelor's and Master's degree university programmes, please go to www.aos.sk and www.tuke.sk/lf. Information on the selection process for acceptance into professional soldiers' state service is publicly available on the website of the SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office at www.vojak.mil.sk or www.personal.mil.sk.