



Minister of Defence in Brussels

(16 February) At the NATO Defence Ministerial in Brussels, NATO Defence Ministers adopted a series of decisions in a bid to respond to current security challenges. Topics of relevance included the commitment of NATO member countries to follow through on their defence spending pledges and the continuity of NATO's operation in the Aegean Sea.

Allies affirmed that the transatlantic bond remains, even after the change of the US administration, strong. NATO Defence Ministers agreed that the EU must continue to play an important role in this field. Therefore, also in attendance at the meeting was the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP) Federica Mogherini.

Discussions also touched on the developments on NATO's eastern borders. The SVK Minister of Defence underlined that in light of the security reality it is inevitable to be equipped with state-of-the-art capabilities. He informed his colleagues of Slovakia having allocated considerable funding for modernisation and deliveries of military assets, and that this year alone the defence budget in the SVK REP has risen by 12 per cent.

Prior to the North Atlantic Council's meeting in Brussels, the Slovak and Czech Ministers of Defence, Peter Gajdoš and Martin Stropnický, signed the Cooperation Agreement between the Slovak and Czech Republics on Mutual Protection of Airspace. The proposal to conclude the Agreement had been endorsed by the SVK Government as early as December 2016. The Agreement is still to be approved by the SVK Parliament and ratified by the SVK President. Once the Letters of Ratification have been exchanged, the Agreement will come into force on the first day of the following month.

Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš stated that the Defence engagement between both countries in delivering the inviolability of their airspace will be mutually beneficial. He went on to add that the Agreement makes it possible to secure the airspace protection of one or the other Contracting State, if needed, even above and beyond the scope of their mutual cooperation on the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS). On this occasion, Czech Minister of Defence Martin Stropnický underscored, among other things, the outstanding cooperation between the 2 countries.

The SVK Armed Forces' engagement in Latvia in the second quarter of 2017 and the bilateral Slovak-Latvian Defence collaboration topped the agenda of the talks between SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and LVA Minister of Defence Raimonds Bergmanis, which were held in the margins of the NATO Defence Ministerial in Brussels. This year the V4 Group countries are deploying their training units to the Baltic States on a rotational basis. Minister Gajdoš confirmed that the deployment of up to 152 troops for the V4 training mission in Latvia has already received its approval from the SVK Parliament. He further reminded that the opening ceremony for the Slovak NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) took place at Vajnory Barracks earlier in January. The SVK REP has thus delivered on its commitment it made at the NATO Summit in Wales and confirmed when it formally requested the permission to establish the NFIU Slovakia at the NATO Defence Ministerial in February 2015. During the ministerial, the Head of the SVK MOD also participated in a meeting of the NATO-Georgia Commission.

Peter Gajdoš at Munich Security Conference

(17 February) The SVK Minister of Defence attended the Munich Security Conference (MSC) 2017, which is among the world's most prestigious high visibility events in the field of defence and security. At the conference, NATO and EU officials and national representatives of individual countries discussed current security issues. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Topics of common interest included NATO and EU cooperation, terrorism and other existing threats." He went on to add that the MSC's informal atmosphere contributes to the strengthening of multilateral relations. He also expressed his conviction that the MSC will bring proposals for a number of solutions. High on the conference's agenda were the future of NATO and transatlantic relations after the inauguration of the new U.S. President Donald Trump, security cooperation within the EU, the Ukraine and Syria crises, terrorism, information warfare, and the impact of the climate change.



- The Training Centre Lešť hosted a competition for rescue crews, entitled **Threat of Terrorism and Urgent Admissions to Hospitals**, on 17-18 Feb. 8 of the 3 dozen two-member rescue teams came from the Czech Republic. The Armed Forces category was won by a crew of professional fire-fighters, second place finishers were Cpl Peter Grebeň, driver-rescuer, and Sgt 1st Class Milan Čečet, senior medic, both from the 22nd Mechanised Battalion Michalovce.

- On 15-16 Feb, Garrisons Trenčín and Martin held a **SVK Land Forces Commander's gathering of commanders**. Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad gave an assessment of the Training Year (TY) 2016 priorities and main tasks with satisfactory results. This was followed by an awarding of selected Land Forces service personnel, an assessment of 13th Mech Bn's training results, service and working discipline, as well as taking stock of the inspection activity in 2016. Day 2 saw a specialist session of the gathering with the participation of Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim at Garrison Martin.

- On 15 Feb, a military funeral ceremony, attended by Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim, was held in honour of **Col Lubomír Kubek**, Chief of the Planning and Operations Control Branch at the SVK Armed Forces Strategic Crisis Management Centre, who passed away on 9 Feb.

- During Week 2 of February, Lake Guláška at Senec saw the culmination of the international divers' exercise, codenamed **ICE DIVER**, with the training audience drawn from the SVK, HUN and CZE Armed Forces. The divers exchanged their lessons learned from carrying out engineering tasks, conducting search and recovery of sunken equipment under ice cover, and applying winch & rope techniques under ice cover at depths of up to 10 metres.

- The planning conference for **Ex FIRE RESCUE 2017** was held on 14-17 Feb, bringing together the exercise preparation team drawn from across the SVK and CZE Defence Fire Service units. They worked out a proposal for the Technical Agreement, an EXPLAN draft, and an exercise scenario which will unfold at the Training Centre Lešť on 24-28 April, with approx. 170 members of the SVK and CZE Defence Fire Service units and of the Interior Ministry's Integrated Rescue System.

- On 16 Feb, the Land Forces HQ hosted participants of the initial planning conference on the international exercise **CIMIC/PSYOPS COOPERATION IV**. The conference was attended, alongside SVK Land Forces experts, by representatives of the CZE Armed Forces. Ex CIMIC/PSYOPS COOPERATION represents a series of exercises, which are held alternately in the SVK and CZE REPs. This year's exercise will be held in May and June in Slovakia. Among the soldiers taking part will be members of the HUN Armed Forces.

OM for Maj Gen Balciar



(13 February) The President of the Republic of Poland, HE Mr Andrzej Duda, awarded the Director of Military Intelligence, Maj Gen Ján Balciar, with the state honours – Order of Merit (OM) of the Republic of Poland. He praised him for his input to the cooperation between the Military Intelligence Services of both countries. On behalf of the Polish President, the OM was presented, in the presence of SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, to the Director of Military Intelligence by representatives of the Polish Diplomatic Service and Military Counter Intelligence.

Silver from Championships

(14 February) Veronika Velez-Zuzulová and Petra Vihová, skiers of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica, together with Andreas Žampa and Matej Falat, clinched the silver medals in the team event's parallel slalom race at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in St Moritz. "Let me congratulate wholeheartedly our brilliant skiers who have once again proved to be amongst the world's absolute elite. Of course, a massive thanks also to Andreas and Matej with whom they made up an almost unbeatable team," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

Petra Vihová places 4th



(18 February) Petra Vihová, of the MSC Dukla Banská Bystrica, placed 4th in the slalom race at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships in St Moritz, Switzerland. In her last appearance at the world championships, Veronika Velez-Zuzulová was down on her luck and dropped out of the race in the second round. The race was again dominated by Mikaela Shiffrin of the USA.

NFIU certification gets underway

(16 February) Implementation of the operational planning procedures according to NATO standards at the strategic level of SVK Armed Forces command and initiation of the certification process for the NATO Integration Unit (NFIU) Slovakia, based in Vajnory, were the main themes of the joint SVK General Staff and NFIU rehearsal. Members of the General Staff acquainted themselves with the procedures for intelligence sharing, the process and generation of military strategic situation assessment updates, the operational planning procedures according to NATO standards, and the planning process phases in this environment. The staff rehearsal represents one of the first steps in preparation of the Slovak Shield 2017 series, and will result in the setting up of procedures for the NFIU's certification due in May this year.

Slovak Defence Industry at IDEX 2017 in Abu Dhabi

(19 February) Support to the domestic Defence industry and its products to break into foreign markets was the main aim of the visit by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš to the International Defence Exhibition and Conference IDEX 2017 in Abu Dhabi, which is the largest exhibition of its kind. In the United Arab Emirates, the Head of the SVK MOD attended the IDEX 2017 Opening Ceremony and toured, among others, the joint national presentation of the Slovak MOD and Defence manufacturers.

"The Slovak Defence companies take a great interest in advancing cooperation with their partners from the United Arab Emirates and other countries. It is important to help them in this area. Indeed, it is one of our main tasks in line with the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. He underlined that the products of the Slovak manufacturers enjoy a very good reputation and that the SVK MOD has, in the long term, put in maximum efforts to support

them, be it at home or abroad.

In the presence of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, and Peter Gajdoš, SVK Minister of Defence, a joint cooperation project between EVPU of Slovakia and NIMR of the UAE was unveiled during a ceremony, showcasing the integration of the Turra 30 turret onto the JAIS 6x6 platform.



A joint presentation of the SVK MOD and of selected SVK Defence manufacturers was delivered at IDEX 2017. Not to be missed there was a line-up of products by the company DMD GROUP, JSC, of which the SVK MOD is the 100 per cent shareholder. The Slovak Defence industry was also represented by the companies MSM, LLC, EVPU, JSC, and WAY Industries, JSC.