



Paying respects to Romanian soldiers

(24 February) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš paid his tribute to the memory of the Romanian soldiers who were involved in liberating our homeland 72 years ago during commemoration ceremonies held at the WWII Victims Memorial Plaque in the village of Senohrad and at the renovated Romanian Army Memorial at the Training Centre Lešť – Oremov Laz. In this way the Ministry of Defence wishes to annually commemorate the heroism of the Romanian soldiers who fought for our freedom side-by-side with the Red Army in World War II. The commemoration ceremonies were also attended by the Romanian Ambassador to Slovakia, Her Excellency Mrs Steluta Arhire, and the State Secretary at the SVK MOD, Marián Saloň.

Speaking at Oremov Laz, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš noted that the MOD is establishing a new tradition by holding commemoration ceremonies at these sites. "It is a tradition of commemorating the heroism of the Romanian Army who fought alongside the Soviet and Czechoslovak Army units to liberate our country during World War II," said Minister of Defence Gajdoš. The Head of the MOD went on to emphasise that freedom has never come for free. "Literally speaking, it is our obligation to raise awareness among children and young people and explain to them why we should never allow the horrors of history to repeat themselves again," he added.

In her statement at the ceremony, the Romanian Ambassador to Slovakia, HE Mrs Steluta Arhire, thanked the Minister of Defence, the SVK Government and the nearby villages for paying tribute to and honouring the memory of the fallen Romanian heroes. "There is no greater honour for a Romanian citizen than to pay his respects to the memory of the Romanian military – the brave soldiers and officers who paid with their lives for upholding the values of freedom and liberty," she stated.

In her speech in Senohrad, the mayor of Senohrad, Mrs Oľga Bartková said: "The citizens of Senohrad and our country as a whole owe immense gratitude to the glorious Soviet Army and its Allies who contributed to restoring our freedom and peace by committing their lives to the cause."

During the liberation battles in WWII, a total of 10,435 Romanian Army soldiers died across our territory, most of whom rest in peace at the Romanian Army Cemetery in Zvolen.

Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visits MP canine specialists

(23 February) The Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic familiarised himself with the work of Military Police (MP) Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers in Hronsek. He was briefed on the past and contemporary history of military cynology within Defence. As part of practical demonstrations, the Minister witnessed an incident response to detain a perpetrator and had a tour of the local firing range. The Minister was accompanied on his trip by the State Secretary at the SVK MOD, Marián Saloň. Peter Gajdoš highlighted the importance of the MP MWD handlers in supporting a variety of activities, including international crisis management operations. In the past, Slovak dog handlers and MWDs served in Afghanistan too. Minister Gajdoš also recalled the significant role the Military Police have played, among others, in cooperation with the Police Corps, which was best evidenced by canine operations in support of SK PRES. On deployments, the Minister said: "MWD handlers and MWDs have demonstrated their skills during their deployments beyond Slovakia's borders, including to an exercise of



sational component for exercising methodological guidance and control in delivering canine operations across Defence. The Chief of the Cynology Section concurrently serves as Chief Canine Specialist of the Ministry of Defence. As part of their duties, MP MWD handlers also conduct patrolling and specialised operations aimed at detecting explosives and drugs.

SVK President in visit to Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš

(23 February) The President of the Slovak Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska, accompanied by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, paid a visit to the "General Milan Rastislav Štefánik" Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš (AOS). The Academy leaders familiarised the President with the school's organisational structure, admissions requirements and forms of education. They filled him in on the accredited study programmes, including Electronic Weapons Systems, Military Signal and Information Systems, National Security and Defence, and Weapon Systems, Weaponry and its Components. The SVK President also received a tour of the AOS Simulation Centre. In his speech, Minister Gajdoš underlined the significance of this military education establishment: "The Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš is the only education institution in Slovakia to educate future officers for our Armed Forces, while providing a variety of courses for enhancing one's qualifications in different military occupational specialities for national and international students alike." According to the Minister, there is a need to make investments in education, not only in military assets and equipment. At the same time, he underscored the preparedness of the future officers to deal with new threats. President Kiska visited AOS as part of his working trip to the Liptov region. Speaking in front of the gathered cadets at the Academy, President Kiska said: "Life at the Armed Forces Academy is different from that at other universities and colleges. It is a life that teaches you how to take responsibility." He went on to remind that being a serviceman or woman is not a job but a mission.



Talks in Abu Dhabi



(20 February) During the International Defence Exhibition and Conference IDEX 2017, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš held talks with His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council, who concurrently acts as Deputy Supreme Commander of the United Arab Emirates

Armed Forces, and His Excellency Mohammed Al Bawardi, Minister of State for Defence Affairs, UAE.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential areas of cooperation between the SVK REP and the UAE in the field of security and defence. Minister Gajdoš underlined that the SVK REP considers the United Arab Emirates to be a prominent geopolitical actor in the Persian Gulf region who considerably contributes to the stability of the region in the European neighbourhood through its foreign policy leverage. He offered his partners to consider using a number of training facilities in Slovakia, such as the Training Centre Lešť and the National Centre EOD Nováky.

To explore options for cooperation in the field of training and education as well as those in the defence industry, Peter Gajdoš met with Mr Subhash Bhamre, India's Union Minister of State for Defence. He specifically welcomed the fact that India has assigned a new Defence Attaché to be accredited to the SVK REP. While still in Abu Dhabi, the Head of the SVK MOD met his Sri Lankan counterpart, Mr Ruwan Wijewardene, to address the potential areas of bilateral cooperation in the field of the defence industry.

Military training to be more attractive

(22 February) The SVK Government approved the Voluntary Military Training Amendment Act, thereby making the VMT project more attractive. According to the new arrangements, the financial reward for voluntary soldiers will be increased by approx. €200, the training period will be shortened from 12 to 11 weeks, and successful VMT graduates will have easier access to join the Slovak Armed Forces, Police Corps, and Firefighting and Rescue Services. These changes follow from the pilot project's analysis report, which also incorporates the assessment feedback from the perspective of the first successful VMT graduates. The Amendment Act is still to be approved by the SVK Parliament. The MOD seeks to enhance the quality of the project and train its next group of voluntary soldiers under already improved conditions, adding that the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Martin is fully prepared for this purpose. The training of additional voluntary soldiers will be effected as soon as the Amendment Act enters into force, with the estimated effective date of 1 July 2017. The MOD wants to train up to 150 voluntary soldiers annually.

SVK Air Force assesses TY16



(21 February) The Slovak Air Force's HQ Air Command hosted, in the presence of the key HQ officials, subordinate units representatives and invited guests, a commanders' meeting, chaired by the SVK Air Force Commander, where Maj Gen Miroslav Korba evaluated the performance of the SVK AF's Training Year

(TY) 2016 tasks. Also in attendance at the commanders' meeting were the Chief of the General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, Gen Milan Maxim, the Director of the Military Aviation State Administration Branch, Lubomír Žák, the Chief Inspector of Flight Safety, Col Ján Salaj, the Chief of the SVK AF Support Division, Col Adolf Uličný, and the SVK Armed Forces Command Senior Enlisted Leader, CSM Vladimír Beluš. In a follow-on ceremony, the SVK Air Force Commander handed over a present to the best SVK AF NCO of TY16, SSGT Marek Kovalík, and to the Best Soldier of TY16 in the SVK AF Other Ranks, Cpl Martin Uramkin. Selected professional soldiers were awarded with the Commander SVK AF Memorial Medal and the Distinguished GBAD and AF Specialist Badge. After concluding the official part, the meeting was followed with lectures on military specialised matters.