



Ministers hold talks

(18 May) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and his partners from the EU Member States met in Brussels to hold discussions at the Council of the EU. Building on the Malta informal meeting, the Council adopted the conclusions on security and defence in the context of the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The conclusions provide guidance on the way forward on implementing the EUGS in the field of establishing a Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC) for military missions in a non-executive mandate; strengthening cooperation and support for partners; stepping up the efficiency of Rapid Response (RR); Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO); the projects of the European Defence Agency (e.g. the establishment of a Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD)) and those of the European Commission (especially in the context of implementing the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), aimed at improving the EU's capabilities building to deliver a more effective and complex RR to crises in the world.

Replacement of vehicles approved

(17 May) The Security Council and Government of the Slovak Republic approved a document on supporting the projects to procure 8x8 combat armoured vehicles and 4x4 multi role tactical vehicles. The overall value of the modernisation programme, which will run up to 2029, is estimated at nearly €1.2 billion.

"Recently, the modernisation programme was mainly focused on SVK Air Force assets, however, we are convinced that the modernisation programme must be in balance. Admittedly, the assets in service with the SVK Land Forces call for a substantial replacement too," said the Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. He reassured that the entire process will go ahead with maximum transparency and that the MOD will keep the public updated continuously. "Now it is our task to prepare the procurement projects in a way that we get our domestic defence industry involved to the maximum extent possible," as laid down in the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments."

According to the approved document, the procurement costs for the 8x8 vehicles are estimated at €417 million and for the 4x4 vehicles at €782.7 million. The purchases are to be made gradually between 2018 and 2029.

Gratitude March at Muráň

(20 May) The Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, joined by Radovan Baláž, Member of Parliament for the Slovak National Party, paid his respects to the memory of WWII victims in a commemorative ceremony held at the ruins of Muráň Castle in the Revúca District. They also participated in the 6th Gratitude March to mark the 72nd anniversary of the end of WWII. Apart from the commemorative ceremony and the march, the participants had the opportunity to enjoy side events. As part of them, SVK Armed Forces members staged close combat demonstrations.



Slovakia has met its commitment, NFIU SVK marks Full Capability

(19 May) The Slovak Republic has fulfilled yet another of its commitments pledged at the Wales Summit. After the conclusion of its certification, the NATO FORCE INTEGRATION UNIT SLOVAKIA has now reached Full Capability (FC). Complying with the Implementation Plan, the unit, based at Vajnory Barracks, was required to reach the status of a NATO certified unit no later than 1 June 2017. In his speech at the ceremony on the NFIU's premises, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš underscored that the establishment of the NFIU has strengthened our security considerably. He went on to emphasise that no way is the NFIU a NATO military base, as is often misinterpreted. Speaking at the ceremony, SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim noted that our collective defence is our utmost goal. In his remarks, Col Jozef Zekucia, Commander NFIU SVK, said: "Following its successful evaluation and certification exercise by the national authorities, the Slovak NFIU was declared as fully capable of performing the set tasks in support and coordination of rapid deployments of Allied forces and of supporting collective defence with the aim of securing NATO's required response – capability." The NFIU in Slovakia was officially activated on 1 September 2016 under the command of the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Szczecin. It reached Initial Capability (IC) on 1 January 2017.



- This year's largest logistics exercise **LOGEX 2017** culminated with a Demonstration Day showcasing the military capabilities on Garrison Sučany's training grounds on 17 May. The event was attended by Brig Gen Juraj Krištofovič, Deputy Commander SVK Land Forces for Support, and other guests.

- For the first time in the history of the **NATO School Oberammergau** (NSO), based in Germany, a serviceman from the former Eastern Bloc became its Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) on 17 May. During a Change of Responsibility ceremony, CSM Miroslav Dulaj, SVK Armed Forces, took over as CSEL from Chief Warrant Officer John Linnenbank, Royal Netherlands Army. Concurrently, Col Timothy Dreifke, US Air Force, took over responsibility as Commandant of the NSO from Capt Scott Butler, US Navy.

- The SVK MOD and the **Slovak Commercial and Industrial Chamber** signed a framework agreement on partner cooperation on 16 May. The aim of the agreement is to boost the Slovak defence industry in the field of armaments research, development, manufacturing, purchase and sales as well as to promote standardisation of military equipment, technologies and investments in this field.

- **Museum and Gallery Night** attracted thousands of visitors to the exposition premises of the Military History Museum at Piešťany and Svidník and to the Lookout Tower at Dukla on 20 May. The Military History Museum presented, among other things, a line-up of its new additions to their museum collections, including an L-39 ZA Albatros aircraft and a 120mm self-propelled PRAM mortar. The 13th edition of the event was organized under the auspices of the Minister of Defence.

- The Security Council of the SVK REP and the SVK GOV endorsed a proposal of the SVK REP's contribution to the **fight against terrorism – ISIL**, which the Slovak delegation is planning to offer to the NATO Allies. Also, the SVK MOD and Foreign and European Affairs Ministry have received the mandate to hold talks with their foreign partners on the proposed SVK contribution to the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the B3 countries.

- Lešt' Training Area hosted the 5th Inter-Departmental **Rock Climbing Competition** on 16-17 May. The winners were the two-member team of 1st Lt Martin Kamas, Firefighting and Rescue Corps Training Centre, and Capt Zuzana Vivodíková, Training Centre Lešt'. The best two-member team of the MOD, Capt Milan Jurik, HQ SVK Land Forces Trenčín, and Sgt Marek Pöbiš, SVK Presidential GoH, finished 4th.

- After successfully undergoing a 4-phase training scheme for 2K12 KUB Anti-Aircraft Missile crews, members of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra formed up for a ceremony on 18 May before deploying on **Exercise Missile II 2017** in the Republic of Poland.

- The Commander 5th Special Forces Regiment announced a competitive selection of service personnel for the **5th Special Forces Regiment**. The selection process will be carried out in the form of unit-level concentrated training for the combat arms branch on 14-23 Aug and for the combat service support branch on 14-17 Aug on the grounds of the 5th Special Forces Regiment base.

- More than 3 dozen service personnel will deploy on **Resolute Support (RS) to Afghanistan**. The soldiers were bidden farewell on 18 May during a pre-deployment ceremony by State Secretary Róbert Ondrejčák, CHOD Gen Milan Maxim, and SVK LF Commander Maj Gen Jindřich Joch. At the same time, the senior leaders welcomed the DCM-C unit soldiers returning from their tour of duty.

Training of AR becomes a reality, first soldiers are now training in Sered'

(16 May) The Active Reserves (AR) training scheme has become a reality. The first AR soldiers are now undergoing training at the Engineer Battalion Sered'. The opening ceremony was attended by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko. As part of this pilot project, 37 people will have graduated from the Active Reserves training, of whom 8 are ex-service personnel, 24 are former Compulsory Basic Military Service (CBMS) soldiers, and 5 are Voluntary Military Training (VMT) graduates.

"This is a historic moment because the soldiers in the Reserves have not been involved in any sort of training well since 1993, nor has the Active Reserves system been functional over the period. Thanks to this move, we are delivering on the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments, the tasks set out in the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic, as well as on the Slovak National Party Manifesto Commitments," said the Head of the SVK MOD. Adding

Visit to the MOD by GEO Minister

(15 May) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Georgian State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Mr Viktor Dolidze. They addressed current topics of common interest in security developments and also paid attention to exploring the potential areas of the SVK-GEO defence engagement. The meeting provided a follow-up to the dialogue on cooperation with and support to Georgia in its pro-European and pro-Atlantic integration efforts. As confirmed by Minister Gajdoš, one of the goals for Slovakia is to sustain the stable security situation in the Alliance's neighbourhood.

MCs in CHOD session



(17 May) SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim participated in the EU and NATO Military Committees (MC) in Chiefs of Defence Session on 16-17 May in Brussels.

Federica Mogherini informed of the status of implementing the EU Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The Chief Executive of the European Defence Agency (EDA), Jorge Domecq, and the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), US Army General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, briefed on the EU-NATO cooperation on capabilities development in line with the Implementation Plan of the Joint EU-NATO Declaration of July 2016.

SVK Army Tatra truck crashes

(19 May) A SVK Army Tatra 815 truck was moving along a field road near the village of Jalná on its way from the Military Unit Močiar back to its home base when it became involved in a road traffic accident in the afternoon of 18 May, which resulted in the injuries of 17 service personnel, of the SVK Air Force's Command and Control (C2) Surveillance Wing. Six of them sustained serious injuries, including 1 servicewoman. The vehicle, which ran off the road and rolled over, was carrying 20 SVK Armed Forces personnel returning from a specialised training activity. The SVK Interior Ministry's Firefighting and Rescue Corps and medics were called in to assist. The accident is being investigated by the Police District Directorate Žiar nad Hronom in conjunction with the MOD Military Police as a criminal act of causing general threat to people's lives. The Minister of Defence, who was at the time of the accident at a meeting in Brussels, tasked State Secretary Marián Saloň to oversee the coordination efforts. The SVK Chief of Defence Committee convened to look into the accident as well. The serious injuries suffered by 6 service personnel no longer pose a risk to their lives. Another three soldiers still remain hospitalised. The rest of them have been released from hospital and are under home treatment.

that the pilot project will see soldiers training with engineering capabilities and, if required, they will be deployed to respond to a



variety of natural disasters and calamities. Once concluded, the pilot project will be thoroughly analysed and the MOD will adopt measures to improve it accordingly. As Lt Gen Macko added, the soldiers in the Active Reserves may be called up by the SVK Armed Forces whenever needed to perform exceptional (emergency) service. "The training the soldiers in the Active Reserves will undertake is aimed at restoring their basic combat skills and the military occupational specialty they have been assigned to," he explained. The training of the soldiers in the Active Reserves began on 15 May and will run until 26 May. The reservists will train not only on the barracks' grounds but also on Sered' Garrison's Váh combat engineer training grounds, where they will practise incident response missions to intervene in emergencies, such as floods and other calamities.