



Children's Day with soldiers

(3 June) Children's Day with SVK Armed Forces in Lučenec was launched with a fly-past of a military helicopter and a Mikoyan MiG-29 fighter aircraft. As part of the programme, children could see parachute jumps by military parachutists, actions by military policemen in response to an incident, soldiers abseiling from the roof of a building, a demonstration by canine specialists, and musical performances by a military band and the singer Katka Knechtová. Hundreds of visitors were also keen to see a static display of military equipment and weaponry at first hand.

In his remarks in front of the gathered children, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš underscored that service personnel deliver the defence of the State on a 24/7 basis and are always here for Slovak citizens. He called on parents and teachers to help kids develop their relationship towards homeland defence and guide them in the right direction. "I will be happy if I can, also here today, capture your attention to the extent that one day some of you will decide to join the ranks of our service members or Voluntary Military Training soldiers," noted the Minister. Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, too, attended the celebrations of Children's Day, and Radovan Baláž, MP for the Slovak National Party, supported the event by being present as well.

Alexandra Pivková, mayor of Lučenec, thanked the Minister of Defence and SVK Armed Forces for organising this year's event in their town. Minister Gajdoš and Gen Maxim, joined by the mayor and other distinguished guests, paid their tribute at the General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Memorial.

Originally announced by the Minister of Defence, the Chief of Defence and the Editorial Board of Defence Journal, the 16th Painting and Drawing Competition, titled Soldiers through the Eyes of Children, saw its winners take over their prizes during a prize-giving ceremony.

Commemoration at Polomka

(1 June) The State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Róbert Ondrejcsák, together with the US and UK Ambassadors to Slovakia, HE Mr Adam Sterling and HE Mr Andrew Garth, respectively, paid their respects at the US and UK Victims' Memorial, located in the village of Polomka, which is dedicated to the memory of the American and British service members who were killed during the Slovak National Uprising (SNP), and unveiled a memorial plaque. The US Ambassador presented a member of the 5th Special Forces with the Joint Services Commendation Medal with "V" (Valour) Device. His citation reads: "On the night of 7-8 August 2015 his prompt actions in response to a complex attack on Camp Infinity directly resulted in the protection and safety of hundreds of personnel assigned to Camp." In his remarks, US Ambassador Adam Sterling said: "The timing of this award at this particular event underscores the alliance between the United States of America and Slovakia."

Under UN flag

(29 May) More than 7,300 Slovak service personnel have assisted in upholding peace and security as part of 19 United Nations peacekeeping missions since 1993. On the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, the SVK MOD and General Staff paid tribute to the memory of the 6 colleagues who died in the course of performing their duties on UN missions. Just a few months following the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic, members of the Army of the Slovak Republic for the first time deployed to UNPROFOR in Croatia and later to Bosnia and Herzegovina during the civil war in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. Back then Slovak soldiers were tasked with restoring the war-torn infrastructure, carrying out mine clearance operations, and providing humanitarian aid to local populations. Operating under the umbrella of the United Nations today, SVK Armed Forces personnel are serving with UNFICYP in Cyprus and with UNTSO at the Golan Heights.

Deadline for applications for Voluntary Military Training set at 23 June

(1 June) The SVK Armed Forces will extend the deadline for candidate to sign up for Voluntary Military Training (VMT) until 23 June 2017. Thus, more young people will have a better chance to get to know their limits and do something meaningful for themselves and the Slovak Republic. Although VMT soldiers will receive an increased financial reward throughout the training, patriotism and commitment to the defence of Slovakia, under the leadership of service personnel, should be the main motivation factors for the young people to join. The MOD has upgraded the VMT project this year by introducing the VMT Amendment Act. Thanks to an amending proposal by the Slovak National Party, the VMT soldier's pay will be considerably increased by almost €730. That means it now amounts to more than €1,100. An 11-week long training, to be held at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin, is awaiting new VMT candidates between 2 Aug and 17 Oct 2017. As part of the project, they will undergo military training under the guidance of experienced military instructors and will acquire basic knowledge and skills that are needed in performance of SVK Armed Forces missions.



- Representatives of the MOD, SVK General Staff, Armed Forces Academy, SVK Land Forces and SVK Air Force came together on 30 May for designing a new 5-year-long **military programme for future pilots**. The original pilot project for training of military pilots consisted in incorporating the Military Training Programme into Level II of their university studies. To optimise their preparation, the current candidates for the new academic year will begin their studies at the Aviation Faculty of Technical University Košice as Armed Forces Academy (AOS) cadets from the very 1st year of their 5-year-long Master of Science ("Ing.") study.

- From 31 May to 9 June, 29 members of the Tactical Wing Sliáč are participating in a multinational air-to-air/air-to-ground exercise, **LOAD DIFFUSER 2017**, at Kecskemét Air Base, Hungary. It is aimed at practising combat tactics against air targets and air strikes on ground targets. L-39 aircrews have joined combined air operations. Troops are being exercised in search and rescue (SAR) missions and air assault insertions into an area of operations. Also taking part in the exercise are the Czech Republic, Austria, Croatia, USA and Serbia.

- 22 members of 1st Mech Bde, 2nd Mech Bde and CSS Bde (SVK Land Forces), led by Lt Col Norbert Hrib, took part in **Exercise Saber Knight 2017** at the Võru Training Base in southern Estonia, running from 26 May until 4 June. The aim of the exercise was to test the Mech Bde staffs in planning offensive operations on the territory of another state. The exercise assembled more than 800 troops from Estonia, Denmark, Latvia, Lithuania, Germany, the USA and Norway.

- On 24-26 May, a 3-day military march event, entitled **Following in the Footsteps of SNP Heroes in Spirit**, covered an 87-km-long path from Zvolen via Banská Štiavnica and Kremnica to Banská Bystrica. The Main Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps cooperated with local mayors and committees of the Slovak Union of Anti-Nazi Combatants in preparations for the event. Along the way the participants of the march paid their respects at the SNP Memorials in Zvolen and in Banská Bystrica, as well as at commemoration sites, including the Tomb of the Unknown Romanian Soldier at the SNP Memorial at the village of Dubové.

- On 31 May, delegations of the UK and US Embassies, led by Deputy Head of Mission Kimberly Gillingham and US Defence Attaché Lt Col Jonathan Dunn, paid tribute to the memory of the British and American service members who operated during the SNP in Slovakia during a wreath-laying ceremony held at the **SNP Allied Missions Memorial** at Tactical Wing Sliáč.

- With the participation of the HQ Bratislava Garrison staff, 2 June saw a **commemorative ceremony in tribute to the Bulgarian soldiers** who died during the SNP. Among those who came to pay tribute by laying wreaths were the Bulgarian Ambassador to Slovakia, HE Ms Jordanka Čobanova, DCHOD – COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian, as well as representatives of foreign embassies, the Slovak Presidential Office, the City of Bratislava Regional and Local Self-Governing Authorities, the Slovak Anti-Nazi Combatants' Union, and other guests.

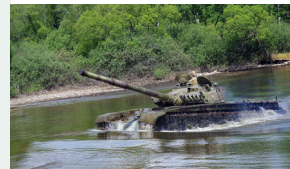
- On 27-28 May, Latvia hosted **Strong Race**, an international competition featuring a cross-country run, combined with natural and artificial obstacle courses. 4 Slovak service personnel participated in the run for the first time. The Slovak team, made up of Sgt Michal Javorický, Cpl Martin Biliý, Pvt Lenka Palicová and Pvt Matúš Fargáč, of 13th Mech Bn Levice, competed with 383 teams and finished 30th.

- On 29 May, the **Military Parish of Liptovský Mikuláš** celebrated its Patron Saint Day and a forgiveness ceremony in tribute to St Joan of Arc. To mark this occasion, the parish was visited by the Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Mons František Rábek. He was welcomed to the General M.R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy by Academy officials – Col Lubomír Matta and doc. Marcel Harakal, Vice-Rectors. The Holy Mass was celebrated by the Military Ordinary and the Parish Dean, Tomáš Huďa, in the presence of worshippers from the Medical Warehouses of the Office of the Surgeon General in Liptovský Mikuláš – Ondrašová. Historically, this is the first time the Military Ordinary has visited the MOD facility.

International IDET fair

(31 May) Representing the SVK MOD at the 14th International Defence and Security Exhibition (IDET) 2017 in Brno were the dynamic demonstrations of CBRN units on combat equipment decontamination, EOD units in the field of unexploded ordnance disposal, as well as static displays of assets currently in service with the SVK Armed Forces. State Secretary Marián Saloň and CHOD Gen Milan Maxim supported the Slovak presentation. Over 500 companies from 31 countries participated in the exhibition of defence and security technologies in Central Europe. Besides the main fair, they also showcased their products and services as part of the 18th International Fire Fighting Equipment and Service Fair – PYROS 2017 and as part of the 9th International Security Technology and Services Fair – ISET 2017.

Crossing a water obstacle



(1 June) After a two-year break, T-72 M1 tank drivers, of the Combined Mechanised Battalion Trebišov, and specialised vehicles drivers, of other SVK Land Forces units, practised crossing a water obstacle on the last

day of May and the first day of June. The main objectives of the assignment on the water obstacle range at Lešť were: to prepare tanks for crossing a water obstacle and to test the crews' knowledge of how to prepare the tank for driving under the water surface and of the principles of driving tanks across water obstacles. In practice, the water obstacle was cleared by fording by 17 tank drivers, among whom was also Cpl Marián Vörös, of Sereď-based Engineer Battalion, who completed the assignment for the first time. The best results were achieved by Cpl Marek Kučma, Cpl Milan Kovač and Cpl Marián Kováč. Before the tank drivers, 157 IFV drivers and 15 BRDM drivers, from across SVK Land Forces units, had tested the vehicles' swimming capabilities on the range. The Rescue and Recovery Group, of Sereď-based Engineer Battalion, were in charge of security during the swimming and fording tasks. The exercising troops were visited by CHOD Gen Milan Maxim and Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, Commander SVK Land Forces.

Sľafkovský defends title

(4 June) Alexander Sľafkovský, of the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica, defended his last year's European Champion title in the C1 category at the 2017 European Canoe Slalom Championships in Tacen, Slovenia. The bronze medal in the same category went to Michal Marták. "It is amazing to see two Slovaks, in particular the sportsman of Dukla, standing on the winners' podium. I offer my heartfelt congratulations to both of them and on behalf of the MOD I want to thank them for their brilliant representation," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. In 2016, Alexander Sľafkovský won the European Champion title at the Championships in Liptovský Mikuláš.

Exercise and humanity



(2 June) Specialists from Slovakia, Czechia and Hungary deployed to Garrison Martin for an international CIMIC/PSYOPS exercise, dubbed Co-operation IV, which ran from 29 May to 2 June. The Officer Commanding the Exercise was the Commander of the CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre, Maj Branislav Krajčík. The exercise was visited by representatives of the US Army and the NATO Force Integration Unit – Slovakia. The theme of the exercise was focused on CIMIC cooperation issues and psychological ops in support of the commander in the course of performing assistance tasks. One of the objectives was to demonstrate interoperability among SVK, CZE, HUN CIMIC/PSYOPS units. As part of the exercise organised in collaboration with the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps' Ecumenical Pastoral Service Main Office was the handover of humanitarian aid to Roma families at the Community Centre Martin – Bambusky.