



## Armed Forces Day

(22 September) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, joined by Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Andrej Danko, Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim, and other distinguished guests, attended the celebrations of SVK Armed Forces Day in Brezová pod Bradlom. For the past 18 years already, SVK Armed Forces Day, which falls on 22 September, has been celebrated as a holiday dedicated to all servicemen and women. Still before the official celebrations, the head of the MOD and the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security, of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko, laid a wreath at the General M. R. Štefánik Burial Mound Monument. It was for the ceremony in Brezová pod Bradlom that the voluntary soldier trainees who are finishing their 12-week voluntary military training formed up for the first time alongside professional soldiers.

The celebrations continued with a wreath-laying ceremony at the Battle of Hurbanovo Memorial at Prietržská cesta (Breakthrough Road). Speaking about the 1848-49 Slovak Uprising, the Minister of Defence said: "It was here on 22 September 1848 that the Slovak volunteers, who fought for their right to freedom, achieved their first battle success." At the occasion of SVK Armed Forces Day, he extended his gratitude to all servicemen and women for their high quality work and exemplary representation, both at home and abroad. Also, a minute of silence was observed in tribute to those who lost their lives in the line of duty. The celebrations of SVK Armed Forces Day were accompanied by a flypast of aircraft, a gun salute, a military band concert, a parachute drop with flags by paratroopers of 5th Special Forces Regiment.

While in Myjava as early as 19 September, Minister Gajdoš and Parliamentary Chairman Andrej Danko, along with other guests, commemorated the 168th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak National Council, which formed the bedrock of Slovak parliamentarism and contributed to the emancipation of the Slovak nation. Also, the head of the MOD visited the memorial located above a nearby village of Poriadie which as well pays homage to the battles waged by the Slovak volunteers.

### Anniversary of the 1938 mobilisation

(24 September) Working in collaboration with military history clubs, the Petržalka Fortification Museum Civic Association held a commemorative happening over the weekend to mark the 78th anniversary of the 1938 general mobilisation. It was held under the auspices of Anton Hrnko, the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security, of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Representing the MOD at the event was the Chief of the Service Office at the MOD, Ján Holko. Aside a series of battle reenactments, visitors had the opportunity to see a static line-up of military hardware, historic military camps, a trench system with a combined wooden and earthen bunker, as well as a heavily fortified B-S4 Lány-type bunker. The MOD, being the event's partner, has supported the event financially under its subsidies programme, with the backing of the Military History Institute, the owner of the fortified B-S4 Lány bunker.

## Minister of Defence awards Olympians from MSC Dukla

(19 September) Minister of Defence received the successful Olympics representatives from the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (MSC DBB) on 19 Sept. Matej Tóth, Juraj Tužinský, Jakub Grigar, Marcel Lomnický and Peter Gelle and their coaches paid a visit to the MOD, where the Minister thanked them for their successful representation at the Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro and awarded them for their performances. The Olympic gold champion Matej Tóth was conferred upon the rank of 1st Lieutenant. The head of the MOD presented him with a Segway car. Peter Gajdoš extended his thanks to the successful Olympians, their coaches, support team, and the director of the MSC DBB, Richard Galovič. He presented them with commemorative plaquettes and financial rewards, assured them that they can continue to count on the MOD's support, and wished them much success. The director of the MSC DBB, Richard Galovič, underscored the continuing support by the MOD and Minister Gajdoš himself. "Matej's gold medal means that the dream of an entire generation of our sportsmen and women has come true. At the same time, it is the 22nd medal in Dukla's history, which testifies to the fact we are the load-bearing pillar of Slovakia's sports representation," added the Dukla director.



- Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš changed his official state limousine for a push scooter on 20 Sept. By doing so, he joined the **European Mobility Week**. He turned up for a government meeting while wearing the sports jersey of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (MSC DBB).

- Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad, Commander of SVK Land Forces, welcomed **basic military training (BMT) graduates** to the ranks of the SVK Armed Forces. On 23 Sept, they took the SVK Armed Forces Oath of Allegiance and had their pass-off parade at Martin Barracks. Also in attendance at the ceremony was the Command Senior Enlisted Leader of the SVK Armed Forces, Command Sergeant Major Vladimir Beluš, the Deputy Commandant for Military Affairs at the Armed Forces Academy Liptovský Mikuláš, Col Lubomir Matta, and others. A total of 192 soldiers underwent the BMT training, of whom 54 were soldier trainees, 40 were cadets from the officers' course for college graduates, and 98 were cadets of the Armed Forces Academy, with the number of servicewomen amounting to 40. Private 1st Class Dávid Belej became the best BMT graduate. He received the highest recognition for morale from the Commander of the Training Battalion Martin, who had his name entered into the Chronicle of the Training Battalion.

- UNFICYP** has marked the September rotation of troops. The outgoing Commander of Sector 4, Lt Col Jozef Paňko, handed over command for the next year to the incoming commander, Lt Col Rudolf Eštok, during a change of command ceremony on 16 Sept. The last 53 SVK troops touched down at Sliach Airbase on 21 Sept, having been rotated by new personnel. They were greeted by Stanislav Hurčík, Chief of Staff at Headquarters SVK Air Force. On Friday, 23 Sept, they took part in a homecoming ceremony, attended by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, at the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra.

- Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim has initiated a **meeting with representatives of non-governmental organisations** for the second time this year. The latest meeting was held on 20 Sept at the Garrison Club Trenčín, where the participants familiarised themselves with the planning process for next year, and received an assessment of this year's results and an update on the White Book on Defence. As an expression of gratitude for assistance in organising the Mount Kriváň hiking event, the Slovak Soldiers' Union awarded Gen Maxim with a commemorative plaquette.

- Romania's Satu Mare hosted the exercise **Blonde Avalanche 2016** on 19-22 Sept. The exercise followed up on the training activities of the Tisa project as the pinnacle of training for the assigned engineer units drawn from Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine. Under the Tisa project, the Slovak Republic will take over from Romania as the host nation next year. A Romanian officer was in charge of the exercise, with the commander of the Engineer Battalion Sereď, Lt Col Ladislav Kisel, as Second-in-Command.

- A coordination exercise involving personnel from the Ministry of the Interior, the MOD, the Ministry of Economy, and the oil pipeline operator was held on 22 Sept at the lower section of the River Horn where the oil pipeline runs under the riverbed. The **Pipeline Transport Centre**, of Supply Base III Zemianske Kostolany, practised their capabilities to contain an ecological disaster. The exercise has confirmed that the representatives of the participating ministries are capable of cooperating together very well in response to crisis situations.

- Another OR-6 (Staff Sergeant) specialist course culminated on 21 Sept by a **passing-out parade** on the NCO Club premises at the Training Battalion Martin. The training in Military Occupational Speciality (MOS) G-10, MOS G-40 and MOS L-10 was completed by 31 trainees. Sergeant Monika Kaščáková, of Mobile Communications and Information Systems (CIS) Base Ružomberok, became the best graduate of the OR-6 course.

## Visit by Ambassador



(20 September) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Romanian Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, HE Mrs Steluțu Arhire. Topics of discussion included bilateral co-operation, contemporary security issues, migration, and the Bratislava Summit. Peter Gajdoš highly appreciated the recent visit of the Romanian Minister of National Defence to Slovakia for the 72nd anniversary commemorations of the SNU. Slovakia and Romania have maintained successful co-operation as part of the Multinational Engineer Battalion Tisa, and another example of co-operation is the Slovak and Romanian experts' exchange postings at the NATO Centres of Excellence. Also, the deployment of the V4 units to the Baltics and the options for action to reinforce the Alliance's southern flank were echoed at the meeting.

**NATO Military Committee**

(18 September) Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim attended the NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session, held in Split from 16-18 Sept. The agenda was conducted in the spirit of elaborating on the conclusions of the Warsaw Summit. The NATO Chiefs of Defence analysed the need for threats to be correctly identified and subsequently classified within the global context. They gave their consent to the basic strategic document for implementing the Alliance's military strategy concept – MC 400/2 – to be reviewed, and reiterated the need to analyse and to re-calibrate NATO's command and military structures. The Turkish CHOD informed of the situation on the Alliance's southern flank in Syria, while the SACEUR updated on the Resolute Support Mission, KFOR and the NATO Training Mission – Iraq.

## SNU exhibition in Berlin



(20 September) The State Secretary at the SVK MOD, Róbert Ondrejčák, visited Berlin on 19-20 Sept to open, in the presence of Ralf Brauksiepe, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Defence, Johannes Tüchel, Director of the German Resistance Memorial Centre, and Col Miloslav Čaplovič, Director of the Military History Institute, a Slovak National Uprising (SNU) exhibition on the premises of the German Resistance Memorial. Ralf Brauksiepe underscored that this has been their first exhibition on the SNU ever and pointed out that the excellent bilateral relations are not burdened by the period of WWII. The State Secretaries also met on the Slovak Embassy premises to discuss the current security issues, the activities of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and assessed the status of bilateral co-operation.

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## Exercise Tobruq Legacy 2016 gets underway in Slovakia



(20 September) The international exercise Tobruq Legacy 2016, aimed at synchronising the interoperability of the Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) systems of the NATO Member States, kicked off in the Slovak Republic. The exercise is being attended by 8 countries, with observers coming from another 8 countries. Approx. 1,250 troops joined the exercise to train shoulder-to-shoulder with 450 members of the SVK Armed Forces. Tobruq Legacy 2016 is one of this year's largest exercises to be held in Slovakia and one of the activities planned in the long-term by the SVK Armed Forces. The theme of the exercise is to practise operations in compliance with Article 5 of the Washington Treaty and the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS) concept. "I give my full support to such exercises and consider the fact they are held in Slovakia on such a scale to be of exceptional importance. At the same time, our components will practise executing road moves, escorting vehicles, and the entire logistics which goes hand in hand with them," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. The exercise is being attended by soldiers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, and the United States of America. Observers come from Germany, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Bulgaria, Italy, Norway, Portugal and France. The exercise will be concluded on 30 September 2016.

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