



## Minister in visit to Montenegro

(6 June) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš paid a visit on 5 and 6 June to Montenegro, which officially became a NATO Member Country. On this occasion, Head of the Slovak MOD conveyed his congratulations to President Filip Vujanović of Montenegro at his residence in Cetinje and later also to Chairman of the Montenegrin Parliament Ivan Brajović in Podgorica.

He reassured the country's highest representatives that Slovakia is committed to supporting Montenegro's further integration efforts. He emphasised that now that we are Allies our countries have the opportunity to develop broader cooperation, not just in the field of defence. He reminded that Member Countries have been faced with security challenges – most notably terrorism, extremism and illegal migration. President of Montenegro Filip Vujanović thanked the Minister for the support to Montenegro's NATO integration process and expressed his conviction that Montenegro's entry into the Alliance will mean a new quality of communications and better chances to step up the bilateral cooperation between the two countries.

In his remarks, Minister Gajdoš underscored: "It matters to us that Montenegro becomes a member of the European Union, the enlargement of which we had underscored as a vital policy tool during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. NATO membership may help Montenegro's EU integration efforts."

Peter Gajdoš was the first minister to hold discussions with Predrag Bošković, his Montenegrin counterpart and now NATO Ally upon Montenegro's official accession to the North Atlantic Alliance. He congratulated him on Montenegro acceding to NATO and invited him for an official visit to the Slovak Republic.

Speaking during the meeting, he remarked: "We are ready to share our lessons learned from the Armed Forces reform with Montenegro, to advance cooperation on armaments, defence industry and military education, and to cooperate as part of the NATO Force Integration Unit – NFUI." To the new Ally, we are ready to make available our training facilities, including the CBRN Defence Centre Zemianske Kostofany and the CoE EOD Trenčín.

Within the NATO agenda, the defence engagement between the Slovak Republic and Montenegro is focused on current security challenges, especially the fight against terrorism, extremism, illegal migration, as well as on cyber threats that resonated with leaders at the May meeting of NATO Member Countries in Brussels.

Speaking at the meeting, Minister of Defence of Montenegro Predrag Bošković noted: "I am convinced that the entry into NATO is only the first step and a great deal of work in favour of the Alliance is still awaiting us, because NATO membership means having not only advantages but also commitments." He went on to add that Montenegrin soldiers are already participating in 4 missions abroad. In this connection, Minister Gajdoš stated that to date more than 18,000 service members have rotated in and out of international crisis management operations. Currently, 265 personnel are deployed on operations and missions abroad. And another 149 are stationed in Latvia as part of a training mission.

"We have identified numerous overlapping areas of interest in bilateral cooperation. We agreed that we are not and will not be only consumers of peace but we want to be active contributors to security in the world," concluded Slovak Minister of Defence Gajdoš. He extended his invitation to Montenegrin soldiers to participate in this year's Exercise Slovak Shield.

## P. Gajdoš attends conference on strengthening European security and defence

(9 June) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš participated in the Defence & Security Conference in Prague, organised by the Czech Government Office in collaboration with the European Commission. The main theme was European defence and security against the backdrop of the EU's current self-reflection process. As part of the conference, Minister Gajdoš met with the new Minister for the Armed Services of the French Republic Sylvie Goulard to address current security issues and bilateral cooperation. During the meeting with the French Minister, Peter Gajdoš underscored the defence engagement between the two countries, which is at a very good level, as evidenced by the recent signature of the Bilateral Cooperation Plan between the Slovak Republic and the French Republic for 2017. They also touched on the enduring threats of extremism, terrorism and migration. In connection with the conference theme, Minister Gajdoš remarked that "we decisively support practical, gradual and inclusive steps to boost the Union's rapid response and efficiency in the field of security and defence." In the margins of the conference in Prague, Minister Gajdoš also met with European Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska to discuss, above all, the newly established European Defence Fund (EDF) and ways how Slovakia might get involved in it. The conference saw ministers of foreign affairs, including SVK Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák, and defence ministers in the presence of EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker discussing the strengthening of the European Union's position as a global actor.



- A working meeting between SVK Armed Forces CBRN Specialists and the Permanent Staff of the Framework Nation Concept (FNC) CBRN Protection Cluster took place on 8 June. The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the offer by a FNC CBRN Protection Cluster delegate to the SVK side to take over the Lead Nation role in the Subcluster Exercises and to discuss staffing positions on the Permanent Staff of the FNC CBRN Protection Cluster in Bruchsal (Germany).

- The SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen, working in collaboration with the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAMB) Nitra, organised the SVK Air Force Championships in Mini-Football on 5-6 June. 5 teams battled it out during the competition. The home team of AAMB Nitra won the highest score ahead of last year's team of Tactical Wing Sliac defending the title, and the team of C2S Wing Zvolen placed 3rd. Cpl Jakub Lopatka, of AAMB Nitra, was named the best goalkeeper and PV2 Ludovít Jamnický, of C2S Wing Zvolen, was named the best scorer.

- The Slovak soldiers who are currently deployed as part of the joint V4 training mission initiative in Latvia have joined a NATO international exercise, dubbed **Saber Strike 2017**. For the duration of the exercise, SVK Mech Coy has passed under the operational command of the Norwegian Foot Battalion. Among its partners are a UK Royal Marines Mech Coy, a US Fire Support (FS) Coy and a NOR Foot Coy (2nd Foot Bn).

- An **OPCW Inspector Training Course**, organised in cooperation with the SVK REP National Authority for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (SVK Ministry of Economy), the Technical Secretariat of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), members of the Mobile Identification Laboratory of CBRN Def Bn Rožňava, was held on the premises of the CBRN Defence Training and Testing Centre and the Referential Chemical Laboratory Zemianske Kostofany on 5-16 June.

- Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA) in Kabul hosted an **official operational task handover ceremony** on 3 June for the incoming 6th rotation of the Slovak Contingent (SLOVCON) in Resolute Support (RS), Afghanistan. In the presence of Col Marián Kurilla, Chief of Operations Control and Planning Branch at SVK GS, Lt Col Oliver Todeňška, the outgoing COM SLOVCON, handed over command to Lt Col Ladislav Kisel, the incoming COM SLOVCON. The ceremony incorporated the awarding of NATO Non-Article 5 Medals to SVK soldiers by Brig Gen Ľuboš Čol, HKIA Commander, and Col Stone, HKIA Deputy Commander, in the presence of other guests. In his remarks, the HKIA Commander underscored the efforts and professionalism with which SVK personnel carry out their tasks within RS.

- Trebišov Barracks hosted the **3rd SVK Armed Forces Summer Biathlon Championships** on 2 June. For the participants, a new element – the firing of laser rifles used by biathletes – was added to the race. Cadet Jakub Nyéki, of Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Liptovský Mikuláš, was best at tackling the challenges of the biathlon track and shooting rounds. The team of AOS – 1st Lt Roman Markovič, Cadet Jakub Nyéki and Cadet Dávid Slatkovský – triumphed in the category of teams.

## Away-day meeting of Military Council

(8 June) The June meeting of the Military Council of the SVK Chief of Defence was held at the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen on 8 June. The away-day meeting, chaired by CHOD Gen Milan Maxim, was attended by the Council's permanent members. They were welcomed by Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, DCOM SVK AF. During the meeting, the CHOD recognised six members of the Command, Control and Surveillance Wing Zvolen for their responsible actions in running and executing a mission to rescue service personnel during an emergency after their military Tatra 815 truck had been involved in a road traffic accident on 18 May 2017. Also, he presented the SVK Armed Forces Honorary Badges, Grade III, to four members of the Radar Surveillance Company (RS Coy) Močiar for their pro-active approach to carrying out the rescue works and rendering first aid to the personnel involved in the road traffic accident, while Capt Katarína Lehotská, RS Coy Commander, and 1st Lt Martina Szlamová, Chief of First Aid Station at Zvolen-based C2S Wing, were presented with material gifts as well.

## Air Force Chiefs of Chaplains Conference

(9 June) Slovakia hosted for the first time the NATO Air Force Chiefs of Chaplains Consultative Committee (NAFCCC) Conference on 5-9 June. The organisation, which was established in 1952 and has belonged to the longest existing ones in the NATO Alliance, convened its annual meeting for the 66th time. Col Menachem Sebbag, General Secretary of the NAFCCC and Chief

Rabbi of the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces, emphasised that the priority is to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge among the NATO Air Force Chaplaincy Services. The conference, held on the renovated premises of Chateaux Víglaš, centred on the key theme of Family as Support to Service Personnel. It was organised by the Military Chaplaincy Service of the SVK Air Force's HQ Air Command Zvolen in collaboration with the SVK Armed Forces Vicariate and the Office of SVK Armed Forces Ecumenical Pastoral Service. In attendance were representatives of Air Force Chiefs of Chaplains from 12 NATO countries. The programme incorporated visits to the Tactical Wing Sliac, Training Centre Lešň and Banská Bystrica-based SNP Memorial. Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, DCOM SVK AF, presented the General Secretary of the NAFCCC with the Memorial Cross of the SVK Chief of Defence, Grade III. Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim and Chaplain General of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Ecumenical Pastoral Service Office Col Marian Bodólló visited the conference participants at the conclusion of the event.



## MOD completes a series of defence games in Malacky



(9 June) A series of defence competitions, through which the MOD wanted to raise young people's awareness of Homeland Defence as well as to increase their interest in Voluntary Military Training and Homeland Defence issues across Slovakia's 8 self-governing regions, were successfully brought to an end at Grammar School Malacky. As part of the series, 3rd and 4th

grade students from 10 secondary schools tested their knowledge and skills of airsoft weapon marksmanship, topography, and medical preparation, and were assessed via a knowledge test and on a CBRN obstacle course. The best performance was achieved by the students of the privately-run Secondary Automobile Specialist School, J. Jonáš Dual Academy Bratislava. Since the end of March 2017 "Defence Duels" have taken place in Malacky, Bardejov, Martin, Rimavská Sobota, Trenčín, Levice, Trnava and Trebišov. Made up of three members and two replacements, each competition involved 7 to 11 teams and attracted approx. 400 – 500 students. At the events, tents of Army regional recruitment teams were set up to brief students on how to join the SVK Armed Forces and Voluntary Military Training. Students could see static displays of military equipment, close combat demonstrations, the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour show programme, and military policemen and Military Working Dogs (MWDs) in action. Through activities like this, the MOD seeks to prevent paramilitary organisations of extremist nature from strengthening their grip on young people and to provide young candidates with defence skills by legal means.