



## Meeting by Defence Ministers

(27 September) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš welcomed the EU Defence Ministers to Bratislava for an informal meeting, guided under the leadership of the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Federica Mogherini.

The Defence Ministers followed up on the conclusions of the recent Bratislava Summit. They agreed on the necessity to respond to today's threats. "We must jointly build and extend capabilities so as to be able to adequately respond and protect our countries in every operational domain," said Peter Gajdoš. He went on to add that we need to take such decisions that will make the European Union strong, both economically and militarily. On the future of NATO-EU relations, co-operation and no duplication of effort is important.

As part of the first panel, the participants focused on the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) and the European Defence Action Plan (EDAP), with the latter to be finalised at the end of 2016. The second panel engaged in discussions on EU-NATO co-operation. The significance of this theme was confirmed by the presence of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the session. The Secretary General and the Ministers discussed implementing the Joint EU-NATO Declaration from Warsaw. There was general consensus on the necessity to follow through with joint action against the hybrid threats and in the field of cyber security. During the working lunch, the Ministers reflected on the issues relating to the EU's operations and missions in the Sahel region and Libya.

The participants of the meeting expressed their common agreement to reinforce the EU in the field of security and defence policy and the need to take the necessary steps towards delivering effective safeguards against all of today's and future security threats and risks.

## Governments in joint session

(26 September) During the meeting of the SVK-CZE governments, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and CZE Minister of Defence Martin Stropnický assessed the progress of bilateral co-operation and the relations between the countries. High on the agenda of the Bratislava meeting was joint airspace protection, with emphasis on NATINAMDS, RENEGAT, and cross-border operation, SVK and CZE Land Forces exercises, as well as co-operation with the EU and NATO. The idea of organising inter-governmental meetings originated in 2012, with the previous meeting being held in Valtice in May 2015. "I am pleased that the 4th joint session of our governments testifies to the exceptional relationship between our countries that goes well above and beyond the standard scope of relations. I appreciate the excellent long-term co-operation between Slovakia and Czechia in the field of defence, especially in the field of joint exercises and training," said the head of the MOD, Peter Gajdoš. The relevance of his words was confirmed with the recent Exercise Engineer Rescuer 2016, which is an example of the outstanding practical co-operation. Also, the Army of the Czech Republic (ACR) joined the recent Exercise Tobruq Legacy 2016. The Ministers highlighted the fact that this enhances the interoperability between the SVK Armed Forces and the ACR, which considerably adds to the success of any potential deployment of SVK and CZE troops abroad. Towards this end, the Concept on Co-operation between the SVK Armed Forces and the ACR was approved in May 2016. Both Ministers spoke in favour of further strengthening bilateral co-operation, which forms a solid bedrock for the Visegrad 4 as well.

## Government approves the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic

(28 September) The Security Council of the Slovak Republic and the SVK Government adopted the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic, providing a political-strategic and resourceful framework for a long-term development of the State's defence. It sets out a strategic vision and initial comprehensive measures for increasing the defence capabilities of the Slovak Republic, while concurrently being an important driver in implementing the SVK GOV Manifesto Commitments. The White Paper accumulates the implementation outcomes of its previous 2013 version and is updated to include the development intents in line with the priorities of the SVK GOV Manifesto Commitments. It takes account of the latest decisive change in the security environment and the related measures adopted by the SVK Government, as well as those by NATO and the EU. The document was finalised after a broad public debate. In it, the MOD had involved the MPs from the Committee on Defence and Security of the SVK National Council, former Defence Ministers, State Secretaries, CHODs, representatives of NGOs, including the civic associations with professional links to Armed Forces, as well as officials from selected specialist organisations and the Slovak Security and Defence Industry Association. The White Paper contains initial postulates for preparation of other strategic, conceptual and planning documents and draft proposals to shape the legal framework of the State's defence. Last but not least, it has an ambition to promote the wider public awareness of the State's defence and to provide our international partners with a basic picture of Slovakia's readiness and determination to deliver on Allied and other international commitments. The White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic is available in an electronic format online at: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=25762>.



- A total of 80 people have showed their interest in joining the **pilot Active Reserves project**. The deadline for submitting applications was 30 Sept. However, it cannot be ruled out that the final number of candidates will be a little bit higher, as applications could be sent via post offices. While the highest number of applicants (19) for inclusion into the Active Reserves came from the Košice region, the lowest number of applicants (4) came from the Banská Bystrica region. No woman was among the applicants.

- Members of 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov held a commemorative ceremony on 26 Sept to mark 23 years of the unit's existence and the 126th **birthday anniversary of General Rudolf Viest**. It is his name that the brigade bears in its honorary title. After the Order of the SVK President was read out to mark SVK Armed Forces Day, the Chief of Staff at 2nd Mech Bde, Col Jozef Ivan, handed out the SVK Armed Forces Honorary Badges and the Military Double Crosses for Loyalty to SVK Armed Forces to the nominated Brigade members.

- Col PhDr Michal Migát was appointed **Director of the Military Police** as of 1 Oct 2016.

- On 27-29 Sept, the SVK Armed Forces Academy (SVK AFA) in Liptovský Mikuláš hosted the **10th International Sports Competition for Cadets** from war colleges, military academic departments, and professional soldiers – all-rounders. The competition was joined by cadets from DEU, CZE, HUN, HRV and SVK. 7 six-member teams battled it out among themselves, putting their physical condition, strength, agility and perseverance to the test by negotiating an obstacle course, throwing grenades at targets, firing an air rifle, doing a 6-km run, and rafting down a river. The first to finish the competition was the team from the PT&S Faculty at Charles University in Prague, followed by a team from the SVK AFA. Members of the Public Administration National University Budapest placed 3rd.

- 1st Deputy CHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko received Maj Gen John L. Gronski, Deputy Commanding General for Army National Guard, **USAREUR**, and Brig Gen Kenneth L. Kamper, Deputy Commander, 4th Infantry Division, on 28 Sept. They came to inspect the USAREUR units deployed on Ex Tobruq Legacy 2016. Approx. 350 US servicemen and women participated in the exercise.

- In a short span of time, two rotating units from among the ranks of the SVK Armed Forces flew in to join the **Resolute Support Mission** in Afghanistan – on 16 Sept, 4 servicemen from the Deployable Communication Module (DCM-C), MCIS Base; on 23 Sept, 4 servicemen of the SVK Surgeon General's Office (SGO), who will be embedded with the 18th Field Surgical Team (FST), ACR. This is the second rotation of medical experts from the SGO in favour of the CZE Surgical Team and a second deployment for the DCM-C members. The FST Operational Task handover/takeover ceremony took place on 29 Sept.

- On 23 Sept, 15 members of the **SVK Soldiers' Union** visited the Training Centre Lešt (TC Lešt), where Ex Tobruq Legacy 2016, an international SBAD exercise was in progress. They familiarised themselves with the history, mission, intentions of the TC Lešt, and had a tour of the participating contingents' national posts, the Command Post, and the water obstacle. They paid special attention to US troops and their SBAD assets deployed near Camp Riečky.

## First voluntary soldiers



(30 September) The voluntary military training (VMT) programme was concluded by 22 men and 9 women during a ceremony where they swore the SVK Armed Forces Oath of Allegiance and were promoted into the

rank of 2nd Degree Pte. During the 12-week training they acquired basic military skills in the following specialties: marksman, engineer, decontaminator, and signaller. According to the assessment of their commanders, they improved on physical fitness and psychological resistance, as well as achieving higher self-discipline levels. For their determination, perseverance, and the will never to give up the demanding training programme, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš paid a visit to the Training Battalion Martin to show his support to the first VMT graduates. "Despite the fact that many have doomed the voluntary military training to failure, it continues to be among the priorities of the SVK MOD, which we also committed ourselves to in the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments, because we are well aware of how important it is to awaken a sense of patriotism and responsibility for protecting our country among young people," emphasised Minister Gajdoš. "I am pleasantly surprised at the voluntary soldiers' attitude, which they demonstrated on training through their great commitment and strong will to prove to themselves to be up for the demands of the training. And the result is just excellent," concluded Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim. Named as the best graduate, Ján Bodorik wants to enlist in the military and become an active duty soldier.

## Minister opens conference

(28 September) Under the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Bratislava hosted the Conference on the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS) – Defence Policy Aspects. On Tuesday, 27 Sept, the conference was opened by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, along with the EU's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the Vice-President of the European Commission, Mrs Federica Mogherini, and the Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies, Mr Antonio Missiroli. At the top of the agenda were the defence policy aspects of the EUGS. The conference was attended by European defence and security representatives, including the State Secretary at the SVK Ministry of Defence, Róbert Ondrejcsák, and 1st Deputy Chief of Defence Lt Gen Pavel Macko. The presenters addressed security and defence issues in the EUGS, military capabilities in European defence, the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), and civil-military operations. At the conclusion, they assessed the EUGS's potential impact on the CSDP and the EU's external engagement.

## International exercises contribute to better force readiness

(29 September) International exercises organised in Slovakia enable SVK troops to practise, besides the exercise's intent, carrying out road moves, escorting vehicles, as well as the logistics that goes hand in hand with that. "The exercises where we have the Host Nation status contribute to our Armed Forces getting ready to protect the Slovak Republic much better," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, after inspecting Exercise Tobruq Legacy 2016, which was held from 20-30 Sept at the Training Centre Lešt.

"The exercise scenario is designed to allow troops to test their assets and tactical interoperability under conditions as realistic as possible, and to synchronise their SOPs within NATO," explained the Minister. "We create a space for troops to communicate in English as the military oper-

ational language, which is, for this type of exercise, very specific," added CHOD Gen Milan Maxim. The Deputy Commander of the SVK Air Force, Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, who was the commanding officer for the exercise, noted that the preparations for the exercise had started last year. The Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Czech Republic, Gen Josef Bečvář, added that the exercise is among the largest ones even for the Czech Air Force. It is aimed at achieving the synergy and interoperability of the Surface Based Air Defence (SBAD) systems in service with NATO Member State militaries. Approx. 1,250 international and 450 SVK soldiers have assembled for the exercise. Among the troops taking part are servicemen and women from 8 NATO countries, while another nine countries have sent their observers.

