



Military Deed of the Year

(13 June) The MOD announced the laureates of the 2016 Military Deed of the Year Award in the following categories: A Rescue of Life, Assistance to the Public, and A Friend of the Armed Forces. Just as in the past so also in this 20th jubilee series, those who had, throughout last year, helped to save lives, assisted in uneasy life situations, or participated in earning a good reputation for the Armed Forces – they all received recognition. Also in attendance at the ceremony was the SVK Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, Gabriela Matečná, and the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko.

"I offer my sincere thanks to all professional servicemen and women for being able to show, despite the challenges of their profession, their human faces to our citizens in crisis situations," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. He underscored that the dimensions of a good deed cannot be measured and that a notional victory goes to all nominees. According to SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, through acts like these soldiers demonstrate that they have been prepared well for their job.

The laureate of the **Rescue of Life** category was Cpl Marek Hano, of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra, who, together with his wife, rendered first aid to people injured in a road traffic accident. The **Assistance to the Public** category was won by members of the Engineer Company Michalovce. Over a long period of time, they have provided assistance to the wife of their former colleague who died tragically in 2012. The winner of the **Friend of the Armed Forces** category was the main organiser of the Tank Days Laugaricio event, Marián Simeon. In the long term, he has worked alongside the Armed Forces to strengthen the public's awareness of military history.

A Special MOD Award went to Bernard Roštecký for his role in the creation of the Military Deed of the Year Award, Children's Day with Slovak Armed Forces, and other traditional events. Moreover, he was actively involved in preparing military radio broadcasts and has remained a loyal friend of soldiers even after leaving the MOD. Together with Miroslav Minár and Petra Repková – Biháry, Bernard Roštecký took over the Special MOD Award as founders of the accolade on the occasion of its 20th anniversary.

SVK unit in Latvia is performing its tasks in a responsible manner

(12 June) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Slovak soldiers currently deployed with Task Group Štefánik in Latvia. The SVK Armed Forces service personnel have been engaged in the Baltics for the third month already and are now participating in NATO-led Exercise Saber Strike 2017.

On Task Group Štefánik, Head of the MOD said: "Our unit in Latvia is performing its tasks in a responsible manner. Exercise Saber Strike is focused particularly on cooperation among NATO countries in a combat situation. Our soldiers have gained an invaluable amount of experience from their engagement in this international environment also as part of other training activities in the country."

Maj Vladimír Moško, Commander Task Group Štefánik, added that the soldiers in Latvia are now practising the activities they were trained for on home soil. "Now we have the opportunity to try it out "live", so to speak, on unfamiliar terrain and with foreign partners," he said, while further explaining that this training activity differs from a regular exercise in that they navigate their way through terrains outside of a military training area. The training grounds were



temporarily leased for this purpose from civilian land owners.

As part of his visit to Latvia, Minister Gajdoš met with his counterpart Raimonds Bergmanis, who highly appreciated the hitherto engagement of the Slovak soldiers in the Baltics and the possibility of deploying SVK Armed Forces service personnel to Latvia as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). At the same time, Head of the SVK MOD briefed the Latvian Minister on the availability of our training grounds, facilities and Armed Forces Academy for use by the Latvian military. They also discussed the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIUs) established and operating in Slovakia and

Latvia. The Slovak soldiers are currently serving in the Baltics as part of the joint V4 training initiative, which the V4 Group committed itself to during the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Under the V4 initiative arrangements, the first to deploy were Czech soldiers to Lithuania, they are now succeeded by SVK service members serving in Latvia, and from July on Hungarian troops will be deployed to Estonia, whereupon Polish troops will go to Latvia.

SVK Parliament gives "yes" to agreement with CZE REP on airspace defence cooperation

(14 June) SVK Members of Parliament approved a Proposal Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic regarding Cooperation on Mutual Protection of Airspace. They also expressed their agreement with deployments of SVK Armed Forces personnel to the Czech Republic and with the presence of Czech Armed Forces personnel in the Slovak Republic to advance cooperation on mutual defence of airspace. Both countries protect their airspace through the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS), as part of which they have been engaged in cooperation as well. However, the new interstate agreement extends this cooperation by ensuring airspace defence in the event of one party temporarily losing its capability to defend its own airspace. This means that if either the Slovak Republic or the Czech Republic fails to secure its airspace, based on the agreement and at the request of one party, the other party will do so with its own assets. The Agreement will be supported by an Implementation Agreement. A potential incident response in the common airspace will be dealt with in line with the internal regulatory laws of the state where the incident response will occur. Under normal conditions, Slovakia and Czechia will continue to defend their airspace independently.



- SVK CHOD Gen Milan Maxim paid a visit to Hungary on 14-15 June at the invitation of HUN CHOD Gen Tibor Benkő. Both CHODs expressed satisfaction with the status of bilateral cooperation as well as the need to continue developing it in light of current security challenges. At the conclusion of his visit to Budapest, the Gen Maxim was received by HUN Minister of Defence István Simicskó, who awarded him with the Medal for Merits.

- On 13-14 June, the Tactical Wing Sliach hosted a **competitive selection process for military candidates** to staff positions in UNFICYP, in support of the March 2018 rotation. Those selected will undertake a 4-week exercise at the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra base in Nov 2017. In parallel, a complex staff rehearsal, aimed at practising the activities of a unit staff as a whole, will take place over the same period.

- A blood donation activity was held on **World Blood Donor Day** at Air Base Sliach on 14 June. The blood was collected by the medical staff of the Office of Clinical Hematology and Transfusiology, Central Military Hospital SNP Ružomberok.

- To mark the 8th consecration anniversary of the Cathedral Temple of St Sebastian in Bratislava on 11 June, the military chaplains of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Ordinariate came together for a ceremonial meeting with **Bishop – Ordinary Mons František Rábek**. The exceptionality of the occasion was underlined by the visit of a delegation of believers from the Catacombs of St Sebastian in Rome, who have declared their will to bring their relationship with the Roman Catholic Parish of St Sebastian and SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Ordinariate up to a higher level, whether that be through a friendship or partnership programme.

- Air Base Sliach delivered **Host Nation Support (HNS)** for the movement of Polish Armed Forces units across the territory of the SVK REP from 30 May to 9 June, as the Polish troops moved from their homeland to Romania. The HNS consisted in providing accommodation facilities for the troops, parking lots for the vehicles on the move, and force protection. Members of the air base stood ready to deliver the technical support to the convoys, to recover unroadworthy vehicles, and to assist in doing minor repairs.

- The Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of the SVK Armed Forces, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Vladimír Beluš, participated in a **NATO CSEL Seminar**, including for NCOs from other invited countries, at the George C. Marshall European Centre for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany on 4-9 June. The aim of the seminar was to take forward the education of the Other Ranks and NCOs with the aim of formulating a strategy for the unification of the NCO command structure and its transformation within NATO. Also in attendance at the seminar was the CSEL of the NATO School Oberammergau (NSO), CSM Miroslav Dulaj.

- The Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin was the venue for the **graduation ceremony of the NCO OR-5 course graduates** on 9 June. Originally, 40 soldiers who had been selected from across the SVK Armed Forces units for promotion to the 1st NCO rank of Sergeant joined the course earlier on 14 May. The Commander of the NCO Academy, MSgt Richard Fabricius, concluded that 39 course participants qualify for promotion. Cpl Kamil Dulovič, of Military Unit 2790 Žilina, was named the best NCO of the course.

Back from Afghanistan



(15 June) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Commander SVK Land Forces Maj Gen Jinič Joch welcomed 34 SVK military personnel upon their return from the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan at a homecoming ceremony on 15 June. "This rotation, too, demonstrated the readiness, professionalism

and commitment of our military professionals. We are a NATO Ally who has a lot to offer and a trustworthy and reliable partner," said the Minister. Maj Gen Jinič Joch reminded that this is already the third mission SVK Armed Forces personnel have been deployed on in Afghanistan. In his remarks, Lt Col Oliver Toderiška, Contingent Commander, said that he felt truly honoured to have served with real military professionals and that, from his foreign partners, he had heard only superlatives about Slovak soldiers. Currently, 38 SVK Armed Force members are deployed in support of RSM. A total of 252 Slovak troops have rotated in and out of RSM to date.

State Secretary in the Baltics

(18 June) State Secretary Róbert Ondrejcsák paid a visit to the Baltics on 12-16 June. He met with the SVK soldiers at the Ādaži training base and praised their commitment to executing tasks in the international environment. In his meeting with State Secretary of the Latvian Defence Ministry Jānis Garisons, both leaders focused on the threats coming from Russia and on NATO's engagement in the Baltics. They also toured the NATO Force Integration Unit Latvia (NFIU LVA). In his office call with Jānis Sārts, Director of the NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (NATO StratCom COE), both officials addressed the threats of spreading propaganda and manipulating the public opinion. During the Estonian leg of his visit, he was received by the Deputy Commandant and Chief of Staff of the Baltic Defence College, Col Alex Pfaffenroth. In Lithuania, Róbert Ondrejcsák met with Vice-Minister of the Ministry of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania Vytautas Umbrasas.

Garrison commanders' conference

(15 June) Budapest hosted an international conference for garrison commanders of major cities in the Central European region on 13-15 June. In attendance at the conference were the Garrison Commanders of Berlin, Bratislava, Ljubljana, Prague, Warsaw, Vienna and Budapest. The Kiev Garrison Commander was invited as a special guest. The aim of the conference was to brief the participants on the progress made in performance of tasks with emphasis on fostering cooperation with the civilian sector. In addition, there was also a discussion on the reorganisation changes in a response to the recent terrorist attacks. The programme saw the Garrison Commanders meeting with the HUN CHOD, attending a gathering at the Budapest Town Hall to discuss domestic crisis management, and participating in an act of commemoration in Heroes' Square. In parallel with the conference, an international mini-football tournament, MILTROPA CUP 2017, was organised as a side event, and so was a competition for military patrols in the village of Püspökszilagy.

MiG-29 scramble takeoff

(15 June) On the night of 15 June, two MiG-29 fighter aircraft on Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) were scrambled in response to an air incident as part of the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS), after air traffic controllers (ATCs) had lost communications with a Boeing 737-8 airliner, operated by SunExpress Deutschland GmbH, over the Slovak territory. The QRA pilots of Air Base Sliach, received orders for a scramble takeoff from the Multinational Air Operations Centre. The two-ship formation of the MiG-29 fighters intercepted and safely escorted it to the Czech Republic, where the airliner pilots succeeded in restoring radio communications and established communications with the local Air Operations Centre. One of the reasons most often cited for launching SVK AF QRA aircraft to intercept planes is "loss of communications". This is the fourth such scramble this year.