



Secondary Schools Camp 2017

(25 June) The winners of the Defence Challenge series, organised by the MOD for secondary school goers from across all regions of Slovakia, had the opportunity to try out military training over the weekend at the Training Centre Lešť. The top prize for the best students was their slot on Camp 2017.

Descending on the training area, they honed their skills in topography, medical preparation, and signals training. They were instructed by soldiers in the basics of self-defence and tactical deployment. In addition to crossing obstacles and going through basic CBRN training, they enjoyed night training and staying in a tent camp, as well as eating military meals.

From among the competitors, Jakub Janiga, of Secondary Specialised Technical School Hlohovec, clinched first place, Alexandra Tašárová, of Ludovít Štúr Grammar School Trenčín, took second place, and David Lieskovský, of Dual Academy Bratislava, finished third.

The Defence Challenge series has been underway since March, covering all of Slovakia's eight self-governing regions. Students have thus competed in competitions held in Malacky, Bardejov, Martin, Rimavská Sobota, Trenčín, Levice, Trnava and Trebišov. Each event involved 7-11 teams of three members and two replacements and brought together an audience of approx. 400 -500 students.

As part of the events, soldiers of the Regional Recruitment Teams have briefed students on ways to enlist into the Slovak Armed Forces and to sign up for the Voluntary Military Training. The programme for students has incorporated static displays of military hardware, demonstrations of close combat and of a Military Working Dog (MWD) team from Military Police (MP), as well as a Guard of Honour performance. Also through this activity, the MOD seeks to encourage young people to develop an attitude of commitment towards Homeland Defence.

Voluntary soldiers sign up

(23 June) A total of 244 candidates (46 women) have enrolled for the Voluntary Military Training (VMT) project this year. Those interested in VMT were requested to complete and return their application forms no later than 23 June. Statistically, most applicants came from the Košice region (52), while the lowest enrolment levels were in the Trnava region (16). The same number of applications (36) was received in the Banská Bystrica and Prešov regions. The project drew the attention of 29 applicants in the Bratislava region, followed by the regions of Nitra (27), Žilina (25) and Trenčín (23). In terms of age, the youngest voluntary soldier is 19, while the oldest is 43. The total enrolment figures may still rise as applicants could have sent their applications by post.

The VMT Amendment Act, sponsored by the SVK MOD with the inclusion of an amending proposal by the Slovak National Party Parliamentary Club to increase the pay rate to 1,100 euros, has proved to be the right step ahead. Thanks to an uplift to the original training conditions, VMT is now more attractive for people.

The enrolled candidates are now expected to go through the admission process in the coming days. They will undergo medical and psychological screening. Annually, the MOD plans to train up to 150 VMT soldiers, who will, upon successful completion of VMT, move into the SVK Armed Forces Reserves, as well as having the option to join the Active Reserves. Provided that they show interest in enlisting into the SVK Armed Forces, they won't be obliged to serve in the Preparatory State Service before becoming military professionals.

This year's training of VMT members will run from 2 August until 17 October 2017 at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin.

M. Saloň discusses solutions to illegal migration

(19 June) State Secretary Marián Saloň visited Prague to meet with the main representatives of the partner Defence Ministries of the Czech Republic, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. Meeting in the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) format, they discussed solutions on illegal migration to the EU. Thanks to the measures already in place, the current migration influx no longer reaches the 2015 migration levels. The main and most attractive migrant route for migration flows to the EU is the Central Mediterranean Route. The SVK REP is committed to alternative forms of solidarity and rejects relocation of migrants. The key is stabilising Libya through FRONTEX support operations and the provision of financial contributions to the Libyan Coast Guard and Operation EUNAVFOR MED Sophia, with the participation of SVK military policemen as from August 2017. Among the topics of discussion was a shift in implementation of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS), which Slovakia appreciates. Also addressed were the issues related to EU Battle Groups (EU BGs), as enhancements to their deployability, sustainability and common funding still need to be effected. Equally important, there was a briefing on the status of progress achieved in drafting and completing the Joint Action Plan (JAP), which sets forth an action plan for handling crisis situations. The SVK Ministry of Interior is its coordinator for the Slovak side.



- Members of the SVK Parliamentary Committee on Control of Military Intelligence Activities and the Plenum of Parliament reviewed a classified version of the **2016 Military Intelligence Activities Report** on 19 June. In a Committee session, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Director of Military Intelligence Lt Gen Ján Balciar answered all the questions raised by the Committee members. The Minister also appeared in front of Members of Parliament.

- During his away-day to Trenčín on 20 June, **Gen Milan Maxim** participated in a special session analysing road traffic accidents in the SVK Armed Forces. He also met with the Chairwoman of the Slovak Employees' Union in Defence, Mrs Mária Huszlicsková. Both representatives expressed their satisfaction with the activities of the Union and discussed ways to take that cooperation forward.

- The **Military Council of Commander SVK Land Forces** (COM SVK LF) convened at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin on 16 June. The Council was presided over by Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, COM SVK LF, in the presence of the key officials of SVK LF HQ and the commanders of the units directly subordinate to SVK LF HQ. Upon conclusion of the meeting, the Military Council members took part in a homecoming ceremony for SVK military personnel returning from the Resolute Support Mission (RSM).

- On 19-23 June, the Tactical Wing Sliach was the venue for engineer military occupational specialties (MOSs)-specific training in support of the SVK UNFICYP rotation to be deployed in Sept 2017. The aim of the assignment was to test the operators' MOS-specific knowledge and skills in operating engineering machines. The next round of **selection to narrow down the potential peacekeepers** will be held at the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra later this week.

- Lešť Training Area is the core training site for the **12th Mechanised Battalion units** throughout the training year. Their intensive training, which has been ongoing since the end of May, has now culminated with checks on the coordination of squadrons and squadron-level tactical drills combined with live firing. The readiness of the units to conduct a set of combat missions was put to the test under challenging conditions. The training involved, alongside the mechanised squadrons, also mortar, anti-tank, engineer and reconnaissance troops.

The SVK MOD informs the public of the upcoming movements of Allied military troops and vehicles, which will take place from 26 June to 2 July 2017. Over the week, Slovakia will see 1 railway and 41 road moves passing through its territory. SVK military vehicles and personnel, too, will be moving along the roads, particularly in East and Central Slovakia, and there will be a SVK Army convoy heading from the Training Centre Lešť to the Military Unit Sered'. The movements of our Allies will take place in support of different training activities. US Army convoys will go on transiting through Slovak territory in support of Exercise SABER GUARDIAN 2017 and Exercise TOBRUQ LEGACY 2017. And Hungarian troops will depart for Estonia to participate in Exercise TRAINING BRIDGE 2017, making use of the rail route through Slovakia.

Slovak and Hungarian divers rehearse blasting operations



Soldiers' Union meets in convention

(20 June) Trenčín hosted the 9th convention of the largest civic association of ex- and serving military professionals in Slovakia – the Soldiers' Union of the Slovak Republic. Col (Rtd) Tomáš Švec, President of the Union, welcomed Lt Gen Pavel Macko, Deputy Chief of Defence, Brig Gen Juraj Krištofovič, Commander SVK Land Forces, GS Col Radoslav Ivančík, Director General of the SVK MOD's Human Resources Department, Jaroslav Baška, Chairman of the Trenčín Self-Governing Region and former Minister of Defence, Rudolf Rybníček, Mayor of Trenčín, and other guests to the event. In his assessment of the Union, he stated that it has been sustained as a strong and pro-active organisation, recognised both at home and abroad. Lt Gen Macko familiarised the participants with the current status of the SVK Armed Forces and with the tasks and perspectives of their further development, in the presence of former CHOD and 1st Vice President of the Soldiers' Union Lt Gen (Rtd) Peter Vojtek, Lt Gen (Rtd) Pavel Honzek and Maj Gen (Rtd) Emil Vesteňický. At the conclusion of the convention, the delegates chose in a vote the new President of the Union – Lt Col (Rtd) Eugen Bitera, the acting Chairman of the Military Veterans' Club Trenčín.

Chiefs of Defence meet in Poland



(22 June) SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim paid a visit to Krakow for a meeting with his V4 partners. Regular meetings of V4 CHODs take place in the country holding the Presidency of the Visegrad Four. Topics of discussion included reviewing the results of the Polish V4 Presidency before its handover to the Hungarian CHOD, and the training of deployable forces and that of the future V4 EU Battle Group. The CHODs of the Baltic States and Ukraine, too, were present on Day 2 of talks. In the final communiqué, the V4 CHODs expressed their satisfaction with the level of cooperation achieved and agreed on the need to further advance cooperation on issues of common interest. Top of the HUN V4 Presidency agenda will be the launch of the preparation process for the joint V4 EU BG, to be on stand-by in 2019, and the V4 troops' operational engagement in NATO's eFP in the Baltics.

Defence fire crews in the field

(19 June) Defence fire unit climbers of the Helicopter Wing Prešov and rescuers of the Mountain Service BUCE conducted a joint international coordination exercise across the Branisko Mountain Range near Prešov on 19 June. The training package focused on delivering first aid to those injured at hardly accessible places in some of the harshest terrain and on medical evacuation to the pickup point accessible to an ambulance or a SAR helicopter. The training activity in the harsh mountainous conditions, combined with high daytime temperatures, was demanding, yet still successful thanks to everyone involved.