



NATO Ministers in Brussels

(26 October) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš joined the NATO Defence Ministers for talks in Brussels. The main topic was protecting NATO's external borders, which the Ministers consider to be one of the top priorities. Following the July NATO Summit in Warsaw and the September Informal Meeting of the NATO Defence Ministers in Bratislava, this was yet another meeting at the level of Heads of Defence Ministries.

"As part of our joint V4 initiative, our contribution to strengthening NATO's eastern borders will be a training activity in the Baltics. Up to 150 Slovak soldiers will be serving in Latvia in the period from April to June 2017. Also, I informed our Allies of our commitments being fulfilled in terms of increasing our defence expenditures. Next year they should go up by almost 13 per cent," said the head of the SVK MOD.

As to strengthening NATO's eastern borders, Minister Gajdoš discussed the issue with the Canadian Minister of National Defence, Harjit Singh Sajjan. Canada is a NATO Lead Nation for one of the four combat groups, which are to operate in the Baltics. The topic of the discussion was potential lines of cooperation with Slovak troops who will be operationally committed in the Baltics as part of a training mission.

The Ministers also paid attention to the current NATO Command Structure. Several NATO Member States propose making the command structure more reflective of the current security situation in Europe. Among other things, the Alliance addressed providing further assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces in fields of demining and improvised explosive devices disposal.

On NATO-EU cooperation

(27 October) The cooperation between NATO and the European Union should be strong even after December 2016. "The process that was launched on the basis of the Joint NATO-EU Declaration in Warsaw and its intention, which we reconfirmed at the Informal Meeting of the EU Defence Ministers in Bratislava, should not be halted. On the contrary, I believe the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, too, will discuss the continuity of cooperation from their level of perspective in December," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš after the meeting in Brussels. Also in attendance at the meeting were NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini.

In accordance with the mandate for strengthening the bilateral cooperation between NATO and the EU, which arises for the Ministers of Defence from the Warsaw Declaration, the countries have been tasked to work out proposals by December 2016. Towards this end, the head of the SVK MOD pointed to the need to keep the cooperative momentum going in the upcoming period as well. "During the meeting of the EU Defence Ministers in Bratislava we devoted our time, besides the European Union's Global Strategy for Foreign and Security Policy, to discussing NATO-EU cooperation in the field of security and defence. Under the umbrella of our EU Presidency, we held a seminar on NATO-EU cooperation, which was dedicated to measures against hybrid threats," he explained. From Slovakia's perspective, the deployment of Slovak Military Police personnel on Operation SOFIA is a concrete example of NATO-EU cooperation.

Jens Stoltenberg and Federica Mogherini reiterated the continuity of cooperation between NATO and the EU, with emphasis on excluding the duplication in building the capacities which may be used for operations by both NATO and the EU.

Female karatekas claim bronze medals at World Championships

(29 October) Female karate fighters Ingrida Suchánková and Dominika Tatárová, of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (MSC DBB), clinched the bronze medals at the World Karate Championships in Linz, Austria.

"One can clearly see that women are strongly represented at our sports centre and that they are real warriors. I trust this success heralds that we will have a strong team in this new Olympic discipline at the Tokyo Olympics," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, expressing his thanks to the MSC DBB sportswomen for their excellent representation of Slovakia.

Ingrida Suchánková placed 3rd in the Kumite Female – 61kg category after winning a match with Thi Ngao Nguyen, a top Vietnamese karate competitor. Dominika Tatárová picked up bronze in the Kumite Female – 68 kg category after a fight with Katie Hurry, a leading UK karate fighter.



New UNFICYP Force Commander



(26 October) As the new UNFICYP Force Commander, Major General Mohammed Humayun Kabir, of Bangladesh, paid his first official visit to Headquarters Sector 4 at Camp M. R. Štefánik in Famažusta. He was greeted by the Commander of Sector 4, Lt Col Rudolf Eštok, who

introduced the staff to him. The Chief of the Operations Section, Maj Richard Szilasi, briefed the Force Commander on the organisational structure of Sector 4 and its area of responsibility. The visit continued with an inspection of the posts in the 3rd Platoon's area of responsibility. Major General Kabir expressed his satisfaction with the work done by the multinational sector members, as well as his conviction that even after the completed troop rotation they will continue to execute operational tasks at a high standard.

Remembering the deceased



(25 October) A remembrance service in tribute of deceased soldiers was held at the Háj – Nicovô Cemetery in Liptovský Mikuláš. Attended by the city officials, the SVK Armed Forces Academy (AFA) leadership, servicemen and women, female and male AFA cadets, employees of the AFA, and local residents, the remembrance service was led by Capt Tomáš Huda, the Spiritual Dean of the AFA. Ceremonial salutes were fired after the Liturgy of the Word and the homily. The main speakers at the ceremony were the Quaesstor of the AFA, Peter Hopka, and the Deputy Mayor of Liptovský Mikuláš, Ján Bonka. Their speeches were followed by the Academy and City representatives laying a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier. The remembrance service was concluded with a prayer for all deceased soldiers.

Conference on security



(27 October) The General M. R. Štefánik SVK Armed Forces Academy (AFA) organised the 7th International Conference on National and International Security on 27-28 Oct. The conference was held under the auspices of Chief of the General Staff of the

Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic Gen Milan Maxim, who opened the conference at the stately premises of Liptovský Ján Manor House. The co-organisers of the conference were the University of Defence in Brno, National Defence University of Warsaw, Public and Individual Security College APEIRON in Krakow, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, and Academy of the Police Corps of the Slovak Republic in Bratislava.

- On 27 Oct, members of the Honour Guard formed up for a military ceremony to mark the visit of the President of the Slovak Republic to Duklianske Barracks, MOD, Bratislava. There, Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska was greeted by the Commander of the Presidential Honour Guard, Col Miroslav Ištván. In his speech, the President underscored the high standards of professionalism of the Honour Guard members during the state funeral of ex-President Michal Kováč and thanked them for an exemplary representation of the Presidential Office.

- Issued by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, Order No. [Strategic Planning Staff] SPS-12-4/2016 on Effecting Organisational Changes in the SVK Armed Forces in 2016 prescribes that the Training Battalion Martin shall be reorganised to form the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin as of 1 November 2016.

- A joint specialist training of First Aid Stations and H-10 Military Occupational Specialties was conducted by the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General's Office in conjunction with the Integrated Rescue System (IRS) of the Slovak Republic on 17-21 October. The aim of the joint coordination exercise was to deliver preparations for response to non-military threats and for assistance to those injured or endangered by natural catastrophes and accidents. Participating in the exercise were 45 military medics and fire-fighters from military units, 44 members of the state-run Medical Rescue Service (MRS) Bratislava, and 14 simulated casualties played by students from the Slovak Medical University (SMU) Bratislava.

- In the first half of October 2016, Col Lubomír Šebo, the Commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, accompanied by the Regiment's Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL), CSM Martin Boháčik, took part in the 2016 Global SOF Symposium – Europe, held in Vilnius, Lithuania. The theme of the conference was 'The Role of Special Operations in Global Security', with emphasis on hybrid warfare. The guarantor of the symposium was the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Lithuania, Juozas Olekas.

- Sgt 1st Class Roman Cigánik, who serves as Platoon Sergeant with the Transport Company, Logistics Battalion Topoľčany, was named the Best Non-Commissioned Officer of the Battalion. Pte 1st Class Juraj Horňák, Transport Company Senior Driver, placed first as the Best Professional Soldier in the Other Ranks category.

- The SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General's Office organised a meeting of the Steering Group for the Framework Nations Concept – Medical Cluster. The aim of the Initiative, adopted during the NATO Wales Summit, was to identify and eliminate the niche capabilities of NATO countries by voluntarily combining and sharing units from several countries in some fields with the organisational responsibility of a NATO Framework Nation so as to deliver the required capabilities, as planned in the process of the NATO Defence Planning. Among the topics was exploring the possibility to generate international medical units with the ambition of standing up a joint medical coordination centre to facilitate the building of standard modules and capabilities.

- Operating in UNFICYP, the Force Military Police Unit (FMPU) underwent a complex readiness assessment in October to check the ability of the newly rotated personnel to perform assigned tasks. As part of their preparation, Slovak Military Police personnel, supported by the SVK Engineer Platoon, restored the fitness centre premises and furnishings, thereby considerably improving the conditions for spending free time by the current and future unit members.

SVK President and Minister of Defence visit SVK Land Forces Headquarters

(25 October) SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska, joined by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic Gen Milan Maxim, paid a visit to the SVK Land Forces Headquarters Trenčín. Addressing the assembled soldiers, the President noted: "As the President of the Slovak Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces, I am proud of you when I hear the news of your engagement on missions abroad and how you help the citizens of the Slovak Republic during emergency and disaster events."

The head of the MOD appreciated the interest the Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces shows in the events occurring across Defence: "The Land Forces makes up the largest component of the Armed Services, and its role in delivering national defence is irreplaceable and non-substitutable." He went on to emphasise the determination to proceed with the projects to modern-

ise this Service of the SVK Armed Forces. "The vision for this was introduced in the updated White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic, which was approved by both the Security Council and the SVK Government."

After introducing the history of Garrison Trenčín, the Deputy Commander of the Land Forces, Brig Gen Zmeko, informed the President of the location of the subordinate military units and facilities and of the SVK Land Forces' organisational structure, mission and main tasks. The visit continued with an inspection of Garrison Trenčín-based units and facilities at Slovak National Uprising Barracks, where tribute was paid to the Head of State during a military ceremony, led by Lt Col Zuzana Kraushuberová, the Commander of the Land Forces Command Support Battalion, which involved members of the SVK Land Forces Headquarters, Combat Service Support Brigade, Command Support Brigade, Stationary Communications and Information Systems Base, and the Military Police.

