



## Freedom is not for free

(17 November) Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day was commemorated by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš at the Executed and Tortured Communist Era Political Prisoners' Memorial in Bratislava's Vrakúňa Cemetery.

He emphasised that the message of the November days needs to be remembered continually: "There was a time not so long ago when democracy and freedom of expression were not a matter of course in our country. Also for this reason in future I would be glad to see more young people and schoolchildren attending such commemorations as this one, so they come to realise that democracy and freedom are not for free, nor are they guaranteed automatically. They are a fragile issue and should be approached accordingly." He went on to remind that democracy and freedom are not to be taken for granted in the world either.

Another commemoration ceremony was organised at the Freedom Gate in Devín, Bratislava. In attendance were, among other guests, the State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, Marián Saloň, and the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko.

Employees of the SVK Ministry of Defence and members of the SVK Armed Forces were united in remembrance of Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day during a ceremony at the SVK MOD Club on 16 Nov. At the beginning of the ceremony the Order of the Slovak President on Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day was read out in front of the gathered audience.

In his speech, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš recalled the November 1989 events. "Freedom turned into reality, paving the way in slow steps towards long-desired democracy," he said, while underscoring the fact that abidance by democratic principles and security have been inherently interconnected.

The head of the Slovak MOD also pointed to the risks and threats that jeopardise democracy in the world and at home. "Indeed, if things were different from what they are, today we would not have nearly 260 uniformed warriors deployed on operations and missions abroad, protecting freedom and peace in other countries that depend on help from the international community," noted Minister of Defence Gajdoš.

## P. Gajdoš: We support cooperation between the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance on defence issues

(15 November) Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic Peter Gajdoš and the European Union Ministers of Defence convened in Brussels for discussions on closer cooperation between the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, as well as on the operations being conducted under the Common Security and Defence Policy, with a focus on Libya and the Mediterranean Sea region.

Among the topics addressed were the preparations for the European Defence Action Plan, which is being worked out by the European Commission, and the long-term future direction of the European Defence Agency (EDA). The EDA's tasks will be anchored in the EU Global Strategy and the Implementation Plan on Defence and Security, and will be geared towards fostering the development of the EU's key capabilities.

Whilst in the presence of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the Ministers discussed a joint course of actions for implementing the Joint Declaration on EU-NATO Cooperation.

## Ministers meet in Brussels for talks on the security of Europe

(14 November) The European Union Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers met in Brussels to engage in discussions on the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy (EUGS). The adopted conclusions will be submitted at the December meeting of the European Council.

The leaders of the European Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministries devoted their attention to topics of current relevance in the EU defence and security area, especially the implementation of the defence and security initiatives as set out in the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, the preparations of the European Defence Action Plan, the development of EU-NATO strategic cooperation, and the missions and operations under the umbrella of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.

One of the main topics was the Implementation Plan on Defence and Security. In this regard, concrete tasks were defined already at the Bratislava Summit. The aim of the adopted conclusions is to identify a new Level of Ambition by the Council and to further European defence cooperation, including through financial mechanisms.

The meeting's participants reaffirmed their will to deepen EU-NATO cooperation. Also discussed was Operation EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA in the Mediterranean Sea, which is aimed at disrupting smuggling routes and thereby imposing considerable constraints on the illegal migration from across the north of Africa.



- In the period from 31 Oct to 11 Nov, the Non-Commissioned Officers' Academy, located on the grounds of the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base (TMRB) in Martin, hosted the historically first **Battle Staff NCO Course**, aimed at operational planning and directed by instructors from the Indiana National Guard (USA). A total of 12 active duty soldiers, drawn from across the SVK Armed Forces, competed the course. The graduation ceremony took place in the presence of the Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of the SVK Armed Forces and the Indiana National Guard State Command Sergeant Major/Senior Enlisted Leader on 11 Nov.

- The SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General's Office, working in conjunction with the SH-CAPAC Consortium, financed by the European Union, the Public Healthcare Department of the University of Trnava, the Ministry of Healthcare of the Slovak Republic, and the World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Office for Europe, played a role in organising and conducting a **workshop with international attendance**. In terms of its content, the workshop covered solutions to the issues related to health conditions of migrants and informed the participants of the ongoing project's outputs. The workshop was attended, besides subject matter specialists from 4 countries, by experts from selected ministries of the Slovak Republic.

- The annual ceremony to name the Best Soldier from among the Other Ranks and NCOs of the **1st Mechanised Brigade** took place on 14 Nov on the premises of Topoľčany-based Jaselské Barracks. The Best Soldier in the Other Ranks category became Cpl Ľuboš Zemanovič, of Levice-based 13th Mechanised Battalion, and selected by the jury as the Best NCO was Sgt 1st Class Michal Ščepko, of Sereď-based Engineer Battalion.

- On 15 Nov, members of the 2nd Mechanised Brigade underwent their last **skills improvement training** during this training year on Ruská Nová Ves Garrison Training Area and Range. The aim of the assignment was to test the members of the 2nd Mechanised Brigade Command on their ability to fire the Model 58 machine gun and the Model 82 pistol, as well as on their tactical, engineering and medical competence and basic combat skills. Next the exercising troops were tested on the use of the Pi Model 82 pistol for the last time, as they are expected to be rearmed with the new CZ P-09 pistol next training year.

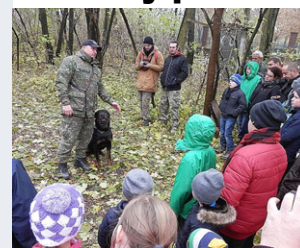
- The Director of the Military Police of the SVK MOD, Col Michal Migát, and the Head of the Military Police Operations Section, Maj Marek Hušek, participated in the regular **NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence Steering Committee Meeting (NATO MP COE SC)**, which convened in Bydgoszcz, Poland. The participants of the meeting approved the 2017 Annual Programme of Work (POW) for the NATO MP COE and the 2017 Spending Plan along with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (2018-2022). The participants familiarised themselves with a proposal to change the organisational structure of the NATO MP COE. Slovakia, now in the final phase of being accepted as a permanent member of the NATO MP COE, is interested in fostering close cooperation in the fields of MP-related Lessons Learned and doctrines processing, as well as in the COE's available education capacities.



## Farewell in Žilina

(16 November) Slovakia is sending its fifth rotational unit of soldiers to the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan. The departing members of the SVK Armed Forces were bidden farewell by the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Marián Saloň, and the 2nd Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, Jindřich Joch, during a predeployment ceremony held on the grounds of the 5th Special Forces Regiment base in Žilina. As part of the Slovak contingent, 32 servicemen and 2 women will be serving with an Advisory, Training and Medical Team in and around Kabul. Previously, Slovak service personnel had been operationally committed to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which had lasted for 13 years in Afghanistan. While over 3,500 members of the SVK Armed Forces had rotated in and out of ISAF, a total of 168 personnel have so far been deployed in support of the new Resolute Support Mission. As of today, 44 SVK Armed Forces members are currently on their tour of duty in the RSM. The 4th rotational unit of troops will return home from the RSM on 2 December.

## Military policemen and kids



(17 November) As part of a commemorative event entitled "Come along with us to the border so that people will not forget", which was organised to mark Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day on 17 Nov in Bratislava's Petržalka, among those who presented themselves to the public were members of the Military Police. Crime investigators and Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers took questions from dozens of children on the grounds of the historical BS-8 Bunker facility. They introduced not only their current missions and tasks, but also explained the differences in the training of patrol dogs and explosives detection dogs. A number of active duty and retired soldiers talked to the public about military history and the ongoing work of SVK Armed Forces members, while highlighting the line-up of activities their Military History Clubs have been committed to.



Also addressed at the meeting was the security situation in the Mediterranean Sea, i.e. the defence of Europe's southern borders. In this regard, the main focus of interest was on Operation EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA, which is aimed at disrupting smuggling routes for migrants in the international waters. In any event, Slovakia is committed to supporting accelerated steps in a bid to make the EU capable of limiting the illegal migration from across Africa and via the Western Balkan route, or at least to get the flows of migrants under control.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Minister Gajdoš thanked the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, her team, and his colleagues – ministers for their support of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. "We have managed to create the conditions for open discussion on current issues in furtherance of the Common Security and Defence Policy," concluded the head of the Slovak MOD.