MINISTRY
OF DEFENCE
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

No. 31 ● Vol. VI ● www.mosr.sk/ebulletin/

A Czechoslovak Legion train brings the legion closer to the public

(1 August) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, joined by State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Transport and Construction Peter Ďurček, opened a presentation at a passenger railway station in Žilina of a Czechoslovak Legion train, known as "Legiotrain", a genuine replica of the period train used by Czech and Slovak legionaries. A total of thirteen railway carriages will call in at 9 railway stations across Slovakia until 28 September. The Czechoslovak Legion train will be open to the public for free. Speaking at the train's presentation ceremony, Head of the MOD said: "In view of our history, next year will be of exceptional importance. We will mark the 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic and the end of the First World War. These historical anniversaries are associated with the activity of the Czechoslovak Legion. I believe this is a way for Slovaks to find out more about it." He expressed his wish to see many families with children come for a tour of the train this summer and students in September. The Czechoslovak Legion Train is a project of the Czechoslovak Legionary Community. The project wants to bring closer to the public the personalities who played a role in establishing the first common state of Czechs and Slovaks. The train is a genuine replica of the authentic period train that rolled along the Trans-Siberian Railway across Russia, carrying Czech and Slovak legionaries.

Minister hands over helicopters

(3 August) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš handed over two UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters to SVK Air Force personnel for use during a handover ceremony in Prešov. They will be stationed at Lt Col Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing Prešov.

Speaking at the handover ceremony, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I am pleased to say that the modernisation of our Air Force has become a reality and that a further 7 helicopters will be added to the first two helicopters in a phased delivery." As he explained, the rotary aircraft are designed for delivering flight training, support to Land Forces (LF) and Special Operations Forces (SOF) operations, and last but not least the tasks of domestic crisis management. "I trust this is not the end of the Slovak Armed Forces' modernisation. On the contrary, we will continue to modernise the Land Forces in conformity with the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces, for which I am going to request a mandate from the SVK Government and Parliament."

Speaking to media in a joint press conference, Deputy Parliamentary Chairman Martin Glváč said: "I would like to thank Mr Minister for inviting me to this event. I am pleased that the first two Black Hawks can already serve our soldiers and that they are the first outcome of our Slovak Air Force Development Concept. I believe that continuity will be ensured and I wish to see the Minister of Defence savour the results of his work as much as I wish to see his successors build on his successful projects." Under the leadership of Martin Glváč, the MOD had entered into a contractual relationship with the supplier for the purchase of the helicopters as per the mandate given by the then SVK Government.

In his remarks, Deputy Chief of Defence Lt Gen Pavel Macko said that the SVK Armed Forces welcomes that the day has finally come when "substantial modernisation is translating concepts into reality." He further emphasised: "Our soldiers are taking delivery of most technologically advanced [utility helicopter] platforms that are available at the moment. I trust they will make the best of them to the benefit of Slovak citizens."

The MOD has purchased the helicopters through the United States Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme and the total purchase price of all 9 helicopters adds up to US$ 261 million. The contract also covers their transportation to the point of delivery. Currently, four fully trained aircrews are available to the SVK Air Force, while others are under training. Within the SVK Armed Forces, six aircrews will have been trained to fly the new helicopters by the end of 2017.

- Airmen of Helicopter Wing Prešov were called in to **assist with fire suppression** as woody debris caught fire in a forest near the village of Betliar. A Mil Mi-17 helicopter, equipped with a Bumbi bucket, took off at the request of the Fire and Rescue Corps. In this aerial firefighting response, a pond, distant some 10km away from the fire location, was used as a dip site. The SVK Armed Forces are ready to intervene on domestic crisis management ops in favour of SVK citizens on a 24/7/365 basis.

- A **temporary ban on entry into parts of military forests** due to a high fire risk has been in place from 3 August until further notification at Military District Záhorie. Also in force across the forests is a ban on starting a fire and working with an open fire, as well as a ban on smoking. Warning signs are set up at the access roads leading to the forests. The public is also notified of the ban at www.vlm.sk and www.mosr.sk, and via the village Public Address (PA) system in the affected villages.

- On Wednesday (2 August), Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, Trenčín Garrison Commander, organised **Army Day** as part of the 4th Inovec Camp event for children from socially disadvantaged families and for oncological patients, which is held annually at Inovec Wood Lodge. The programme saw medics of Engineer Battalion Sereď instructing children on basic first aid, soldiers of National Centre EOD and CBRN Nováky putting on a demonstration of robotic devices used in disposal of IEDs, while military policemen showed personal check and suspect detention techniques. Soldiers of Command Support Battalion Trenčín demonstrated military combatives, including basic grappling and clinch fighting self-defence techniques.

- UNFICYP Headquarters Sector 4, based in Famagusta, presented soldiers with the **UN Peacekeeping Force Medals** in the presence of UN Special Representative and Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar and Force Commander Maj Gen Mohammad Humayun Kabir. In his remarks at the medal award ceremony, Lt Col Rudolf Eštók, Sector 4 Commander, underscored the high level of cooperation among the four nations serving in Sector 4 and thanked everyone for the job well done. A total of 109 members of Sector 4, including Engineer Platoon and Mobile Force Reserve personnel based at UNFICYP HQ in Nicosia, received the medals. The ceremony concluded with the units of Sector 4, led by Maj Smolej, marching off the parade square.

- During a Holy Mass at the Chapel of St George (SVK MOD), Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Mons František Rábek thanked the Chief of the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Vicariate, Col Róbert Kováč, who is retiring, for his service. During the Holy Mass, Milan Jozek was ordained by Mons Rábek as an **acolyte**. He is now preparing for the service of a permanent deacon.

Beautiful age and entire life

(4 August) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited the Chief Nurse of the Central Military Hospital in Ružomberok, 102-year-old Sidónia Zdenka Vicenová, to congratulate her on her birthday in person. She worked in the hospital for 36 years during her 42 years of service in health care. Throughout the Slovak National Uprising she was the Head Nurse of the 1st Field Hospital in Korytnica. Later on, she was tasked with setting up the 2nd Field Hospital in Tisovec. Today she lives in Ružomberok. Despite her advanced age, she still enjoys reading books. And so she appreciated the gift from the Defence Minister – a book on the life of General Štefánik.

Voluntary training in progress

(4 August) 94 candidates (73 men and 21 women) joined voluntary military training (VMT). They were greeted in a ceremony by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin. In addition, 217 soldier trainees entered basic military training (BMT). In his opening speech on the parade square, the Minister underscored that the VMT project is among the priorities of both the MOD and the Slovak National Party, of which he is a party nominee. The Minister said: "I am pleased to see there are more than twice as many candidates standing here today than last year during the pilot project. Yet still I think we need to seriously consider ways in which we can stimulate young people's interest in Homeland Defence. Because this time the motivational factors were really strong." As part of the second edition of the VMT project, the more attractive VMT package attracted nearly 250 candidates, but only 108 met the demanding entry requirements. Alongside the VMT soldiers, soldier trainees, cadets of the Officers Course for College Graduates and cadets of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Armed Forces Academy officially began with BMT too. Their training will run until 22 September 2017.

Gen Maxim in visit to Fort Polk

(4 August) SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, accompanied by a delegation of the SVK Armed Forces, concluded his visit to the USA at the invitation of the Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard, Maj Gen Courtney Carr. In addition to familiarising himself with the current activities of the National Guard in Indiana and discussing areas of cooperation in the field of training and lessons learned, Gen Maxim observed a training event of the 38th Infantry Division and the 76th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, which also incorporate Indiana National Guard elements, at JRTC in Fort Polk, Louisiana. There, US National Guardsmen were rehearsing their main task – to deliver the defence of the United States of America.

Military policemen depart to protect EU's southern border

(3 August) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited the Military Police Training and Cynology Department Vlkanová to attend a predeployment ceremony for the MP personnel deploying on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. In his remarks, he reiterated the significance of the Slovak Republic's contribution to the collective defence and protection of the EU's southern border. The first 10 MP members departed for the Mediterranean Sea crisis regions on Saturday (5 August).

On EU security and defence, the Minister said: "The deployment of the first Slovak personnel on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean is our clear answer that testifies to the fact that the security and defence of the European Union definitely concern us and influence our country as well." He added that the MOD is, for the first time in its history, deploying its personnel on a maritime operation, and reminded that our participation in ENFM Op Sophia had already been announced during the SVK Presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016. The Slovak Republic is the 25th country to join the operation.

Speaking at the predeployment ceremony, Military Police Director Col Michal Migát said: "Our soldiers are deploying for the first six-month rotation. Preparations for the deployment took over 1 year." He went on to remind that the personnel will operate in an environment we don't have in Slovakia. MSgt Ladislav Kováč, the SVK Boarding Team Commander, admitted that this is a new challenge for him and his colleagues. The military policemen, who make up two 5-member boarding teams, will be serving in the role of a visit, board, search, and seizure (VBSS) team on a German Navy ship. They will contribute to cutting back on human smuggling from the African countries to Europe and the spread of global terrorism.

In addition to undergoing training at home, the members of the SVK Military Police were trained in Germany. They will return from the Mediterranean at the end of January 2018, only to be replaced by another troop rotation.

Full emergency call-out at Sliač

(2 August) During the landing manoeuvre of a BOEING 737-500 airliner, which was bringing in holidaymakers from the Egyptian summer resort of Hurghada, the pilot reported a landing gear leg overheating. As a result, the ATC officers on duty, from the Air Traffic Control Squadron at the Tactical Wing Sliač, put emergency services on full alert at 0926 hours local time. Members of the Fire and Rescue Service/employees of Sliač Airport and members of the Defence Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS) at the Tactical Wing Sliač were activated in the full emergency call-out. They were joined by civilian and military technicians, members of the Airport Support Unit, and personnel of the Military Medical Service – First Aid Station. No injuries were reported. The recovery of the civilian aircraft from the runway and the runway's subsequent inspection and handover for operation took several hours and had an impact on the scheduled military air activity. Throughout the incident response, members of Maj Gen Otto Smik Tactical Wing performed their duties at a high professional standard.