



Serbian Minister in Bratislava

(5 December) Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic Peter Gajdoš has signed an intergovernmental agreement with Serbian Minister of Defence Zoran Djordjevic during his official visit to Slovakia. The main purpose of the agreement is to deepen bilateral and defence-technical cooperation, as well as to open up new possibilities for cooperation in the field of defence industry manufacturers.

"We perceive Serbia to be an exceptional partner in the region of the Western Balkans, and after the signing of this agreement we expect to see our defence cooperation being revitalised," remarked Peter Gajdoš. According to him, the Armed Forces of both countries could cooperate on training military units and preparing medical staff or troops to be deployed on peace support operations. The head of the SVK Ministry of Defence emphasised that the Slovak Republic will continue to assist Serbia in its efforts to become a member of the European Union and in developing cooperation within NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme.

Peter Gajdoš underscored the good relations between our countries in UNFICYP in Cyprus, where members of the Serbian Armed Forces operate as part of the force elements embedded in the Slovak Contingent. "SVK Armed Forces soldiers have always appreciated cooperation with their Serbian colleagues," he stressed. He went on to remind that the offer for members of the Serbian Armed Forces to participate in the International Staff Officers' Course at the General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy still holds.

Zoran Djordjevic confirmed his interest in deepening cooperation in the fields of education, training, military medical service, and the defence industry. "I believe that both sides are interested to move on to more concrete details of our cooperation," he said. The Serbian side has an interest in conducting joint exercises aimed against the threats of terrorism and illegal migration, and supports the cooperation between the intelligence and security services as well as the cooperation on standing up joint battle groups.

During the meeting, the Ministers paid their attention, inter alia, to the ongoing migration crisis and were in agreement on the necessity to find a suitable, effective and long-term solution to it. Therefore, they give their preference to comprehensive solutions, the ones that are focused on the root causes of the migration, rather than its consequences only. "Slovakia is, at the same time, ready to continue to provide help to Serbia and to the most exposed countries in the region of the Western Balkans by delivering adequate assets of practical assistance, based on real needs," added the head of the Slovak Ministry of Defence, Peter Gajdoš.

As part of his official visit to the Slovak Republic, the head of the Serbian Ministry of Defence, Zoran Djordjevic, also met with the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko.

Government approves cooperation on protecting airspace

(7 December) In a government session, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved the Agreement between the Slovak and Czech Republics on Cooperation on Mutual Protection of Airspace. The draft agreement, submitted a week earlier by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, has also been approved by the Security Council of the Slovak Republic, yet still it needs to be endorsed by the Parliament and ratified by the President. Upon exchange of the instruments of ratification, the agreement will come into force on the first day of the following month.

"The Agreement will advance comprehensive, effective and mutually beneficial cooperation between both states on securing the inviolability of their airspace. It is an outcome of the above-average relationship between the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic and exemplifies real cooperation between our countries," noted Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, adding that security to the airspace over one Contracting State may be provided by the assets being available to the other Contracting State.

Today both countries have been engaged in cooperation on protecting airspace within the NATO Integrated Air and Missile Defence System (NATINAMDS). The draft agreement extends this scope of cooperation. Provided that either the Slovak Republic or the Czech Republic temporarily loses its capability to protect its airspace, the other country will be approached to do so based on the agreement. Towards this end, specific procedures will be set out in a separate implementation agreement. The law of the affected state will be instrumental in making a decision on potential incident response action in common airspace. Nevertheless, Slovakia and Czechia will continue to provide security to their airspace independently.



- On 5 Dec, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš introduced Ing. Peter Čokina as the new **Director of the Office of the Minister of Defence**.
- On 9 Dec, the **Director of the Military Police**, Col Michal Migát, met in Trenčín with the former directors of the Military Police, including Maj Gen (Rtd) Jiří Egg, who was historically the first to have held the post of Chief of the Military Police. Along with the Director of the Police Enforcement Support Department Trenčín, Col Vladimír Poláček, and the Director of the Police Enforcement Department Bratislava, Lt Col Štefan Masaryk, he briefed the guests on the Military Police's current structure and tasks.
- To mark the end of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the Slovak Republic, a **ceremonial reception for members of the European Union Military Committee Working Group (EUMCWG)/ Headline Goal Task Force (EUMCWG/HTF)** was held on 6 Dec on the premises of the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU in Brussels. In his speech, Col Erich Hrehuš, the Deputy Military Representative, highlighted the working groups' successful achievements over the period.

• Lt Gen Pavel Macko, 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff, received **Lt Col Norbert Simons**, of the Federal Republic of Germany, who has, since June 2016, provided specialist assistance in organising and supporting the events held under the SVK Presidency of the Council of the EU. On behalf of the Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Macko extended his "Thank You" to him and awarded him the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic Memorial Badge, 2nd Grade.

- **Brig Gen Martin Stoklasa**, Commander 2nd Mechanised Brigade, presented Letters of Commendation to 24 service personnel for their role in the international autumn exercise Slovak Shield 2016 during an award ceremony, attended by subordinate battalion and unit commanders, which took place in HQ 2nd Mech Bde's Hall of Honour and Fame on 5 Dec.
- Sgt Zdeno Kandráč, a junior medic, was selected from among the ranks of the Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment as the **Best 2016 Non-Commissioned Officer**, while Pte 1st Class Michal Franko, a measurer, was named the Best 2016 Soldier in the Other Ranks.

• In preparation for their deployment to UNFICYP, the training of the SVK Armed Forces members to be deployed to Cyprus has been underway. The training of the key personnel for execution of operational tasks in the area of operations was held in the period from 21 Nov to 2 Dec at the Peace Support Operations Training Unit (PSO TU) Martin.

• Held under the auspices of the 19th Battlefield Coordination Detachment and the 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, the **International Fires Warfighter Forum** took place on 1 Dec on the NATO AIRCOM premises in Ramstein with the coordination of fire support elements within NATO and the enhancements to the air defence systems in service with missile and artillery units and their use in combat as the main themes of the conference. Representing the SVK Armed Forces at the event was the Chief of Staff at the Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment, Maj Roman Bobal.

• **BVP-1 Infantry Fighting Vehicle gunners-operators**, from 2nd Mechanised Brigade, who had not completed their training in November due to extreme weather conditions, got a second chance on 6-7 Dec in the snow-covered environment of the Vihorlat Mountains on Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area. The officer in command of the exercise, Maj Vincent Csegy, of 22nd Mechanised Battalion, expressed his satisfaction with the course of the repeated live fire exercise.

Minister welcomes troops returning from RSM and UNTSO

(9 December) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lt Gen Pavel Macko welcomed the soldiers returning from their tours of duty with the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan and with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) observer mission in Israel during a homecoming ceremony at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin. A total of 36 Service personnel have returned from Afghanistan, and 1 soldier from the Near East. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister stressed: "Slovakia has been operationally committed to Afghanistan for 14 years already, and this is one of the examples of us being a responsible ally, one that is definitely not just a consumer of security but is actively involved in delivering it. Through their work every Slovak



serviceman and woman represent and earn a good name for our country abroad." At the same time, he expressed his "Thank You" to the families of the active duty soldiers for their supporting.

In his speech, Lt Gen Pavel Macko underscored the Slovak Contingent's exemplary work: "Our soldiers successfully accomplished missions in demanding conditions. We are proud of them and thank them for their exemplary representation of Slovakia and our Armed Forces." At the homecoming ceremony, the soldiers were awarded the Medal for Participation in Military Operation and the War Veteran Badge. As of today, a total of 202 SVK Armed Forces servicemen and women have rotated in and out of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan and 35 soldiers have completed tours of duty in UNTSO.

Conference on MNMPBAT

(8 December) The Granit Mountain Hotel and the Climatic Spa Facility Tatranské Zruby hosted an evaluation conference for the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNMPBAT) on 5 through 8 Dec.

The joint battalion, formed of Military Police units from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Croatia, was established as a NATO project in a bid to perform police-specific support tasks and goals according to the needs of the NATO Alliance in crisis regions. In 2016, members of the MNMPBAT deployed on the Alliance's largest exercise, dubbed Anakonda-16, which took place in Poland. The attending participants were in agreement that the Battalion members have accomplished the tasks of the exercise successfully and proved the viability of the MNMPBAT.

The command positions at the Battalion are staffed every year on a rotational basis. This year the Battalion has been commanded by Lt Col Mateusz Dadal of Poland. He has now passed the baton on to Maj Dejan Džidić of Croatia. In 2017, Slovakia will staff the position of Chief of Staff. This appointment will be taken up by Maj Pavol Šalus. Since the start of 2016 the position of the Command Sergeant Major of the Battalion has been held by CSM Peter Očenáš of Slovakia.

The Slovak Military Police will be the Lead Nation of the MNMPBAT throughout 2017. This means organising the international exercise Saber Strike 2017 in Poland and Germany as well.



Dukla to help policemen

(6 December) A working meeting between the Director of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (MSC DBB), Richard Galovič, and members of the Military Police Training and Canine Section, led by Lt Col Marián Turanský, was held on the MSC DBB premises. The main issue of common interest was the cooperation between the MSC Dukla Banská Bystrica and the Military Police on the conduct of national training for Operation EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA in the Mediterranean Sea.

Richard Galovič introduced a sports training model which takes account of basic performance trends so as to maximise the physical fitness levels of the assigned military policemen. The training will incorporate monitoring the military policemen's physical development and movement performance where mission accomplishment depends, among other things, on the level of one's movement proficiency and physical fitness.