



SNP marks its 73rd anniversary

(29 August) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš took part in Slovakia-wide 73rd anniversary commemorations of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) in Banská Bystrica. The official programme saw the participation of the three highest state representatives alongside direct participants of the anti-Nazi resistance movement.

A delegation of the Romanian Government, led by *Vice Prime Minister Ion Marcel Ciolacu and MOD State Secretary for Defence Policy and Planning Mircea Duşa*, with whom Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš had visited the Romanian Army Cemetery in Zvolen before the start of the official commemorations, participated in the event this year too. Together they paid their respects to the memory of more than 10,000 Romanian soldiers who had made a considerable contribution to liberating the territory of today's Slovak Republic. "I have immense respect for all those who fought for our better future. It is an honour for me to salute their sacrifices," underscored Head of the MOD.

The official programme of the SNP commemorations was launched with a flypast of SVK Air Force aircraft. To mark one of the most significant events in our history, soldiers had prepared a rich programme of side events, including a paratroopers' air drop and static displays of vehicles and weaponry. A Memorial Bench, conceived as a symbol of a resting place in recognition of veterans' engagements and achievements on military operations and missions abroad, was unveiled in tribute to veterans during an unveiling ceremony. The Memorial Bench is a Thank You for their service to their homeland, for defending peace and democracy, and for their role in the fight against international terrorism. It comes to represent a symbolic link between the Second World War and contemporary military history.



Constitution Day

(1 September) The 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic was marked with a ceremonial session at the SVK Parliament in the presence of the highest constitutional representatives and members of the SVK Government, including SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. The ceremonial session was opened by Parliamentary Chairman Andrej Danko. As part of Constitution Day celebrations, Parliament and Bratislava Castle were open to the public. The official programme incorporated side events, including static displays and role demonstrations of SVK Armed Forces units. The dignity of the celebrations was reinforced by flypasts over the SVK Parliament Building by the SVK Air Force's air assets – MiG-29 Fulcrum and Aero L-39 Albatros aircraft and Mi-17 and UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. The celebrations were rounded off by a ceremonial gun salvo.



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Adjutant General of Indiana National Guard in visit to MOD

(31 August) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard, Maj. Gen. Courtney P. Carr, at the MOD Main Building. Topics of discussion included the longstanding SVK-U.S. defence ties and the opportunities for ensuring continuity of cooperation in the upcoming period. Also addressed was the modernisation of the SVK Armed Forces. On this, Head of the MOD expressed his appreciation for the role U.S. instructors have taken on in training SVK personnel and hence helping to introduce the UH-60M Black Hawk rotary aircraft into the inventory of the SVK Air Force.

The Minister also informed Maj. Gen. Carr of the finalised strategic documents to be submitted to the SVK Government for review this September. Speaking about the documents, Minister Gajdoš said: "The Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces until 2030 defines the future shape of the SVK Armed Forces from the modernisation perspective of the SVK Land Forces, SVK Air Force, and Special Operations Forces." He further added that the new Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic is now ready.

The SVK Armed Forces have enjoyed close and pro-active cooperation with the Indiana National Guard (INNG) as part of the U.S. State Partnership Program (SPP) since 1994. For example, Indiana Guardsmen have regularly joined in a wide array of international military exercises in Slovakia, with Slovak Shield 2017 to be next on the list.

For their role in maintaining continuity of the excellent defence engagement, Slovak Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim awarded Maj. Gen. Carr with the SVK CHOD Memorial Cross (2nd Grade), and presented CSM James Gordon, *Indiana National Guard* State Command Sergeant Major/Senior Enlisted Leader, with the SVK CHOD Memorial Medal.



- The 73rd anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising and the 25th anniversary of the coming into force of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic were remembered across Slovakia's military units and garrisons, including the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM, Otto Smik Tactical Wing Sliac, Logistics Office Trenčín, SVK Land Forces HQ.

- During his official programme to Slovakia, the **Adjutant General of Indiana, Maj. Gen. Courtney P. Carr** paid a visit to 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov, where he was welcomed by CHOD General Milan Maxim and COM 2nd Mech Bde Brigadier Stoklasa. This was followed by his visit to Helicopter Wing Prešov, where W/C Col Róbert Tóth showcased the brand new UH-60M Black Hawks. He was received by Mayor of Prešov Andrea Turčanová at Prešov Town Hall Office.

- During the first weekend of September, soldiers of **Helicopter Wing Prešov** assisted in **firefighting efforts** over mountainous areas of difficult accessibility. This time they were called in to put out a fire over a logging area at Podslúľová – Long Valley, employing two Mil Mi-17 rotorcraft equipped with the Bumbi buckets. The request for the aerial firefighting response came from Slovakia's Fire and Rescue Corps. The Armed Forces are on stand-by to conduct missions as part of domestic international crisis management to the benefit of Slovak citizens on a 24/7/365 basis.

- The **MOD Half Marathon Championships**, held as part of Banská Bystrica Marathon on 3 Sept, were won by SSgt Marek Mockovčiak (01:19:05, overall 7th place), of CSS Bn Prešov, and PFC Nikola Lapošová (01:37:08, overall 3rd place), of SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour.

- Another ceremonial opening of the **Czechoslovak Legion Train 2017** was held at Railway Station Zvolen at 1000 hrs on 5 Sept. The Czechoslovak Legion train is a genuine replica of the authentic Czechoslovak Legion Train of 1918–1920, which transported Czechoslovak legionaries across Russia along the Trans-Siberian Railway.

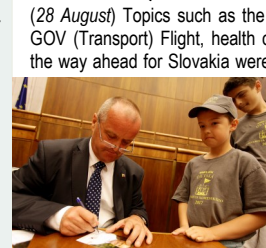
- The SVK MOD and Military Forests and Estates lifted the **temporary ban on entry into some portions of military forests**, originally imposed on 3 Aug due to prevailing high temperatures and increased risk of fire breakout, at Military District Záhorie with effect from 29 Aug at 1900 hrs. Other conditions for entry into Military District Záhorie remain unchanged, with a ban being in place while military training is in progress and while other activities are underway in line with the published official time schedule.

Freedom is not for free



(28 August) SVK MOD civilian employees and military professionals attended a ceremony to mark the 73rd anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP). Addressing the gathered audience at the MOD Club, Slovak Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Our freedom is not for free. We are truly happy that we know about the war atrocities only from what our grandparents and soldiers, who were once deployed on international crisis management operations, have told us." That same day, to recognise this significant milestone in the history of Slovaks, State Secretary Róbert Ondrejčák represented the MOD at an act of commemoration in Bratislava's SNP Square.

1-hour Question Time with kids



(28 August) Topics such as the purchase of airliners for the SVK GOV (Transport) Flight, health care problems, free transport, and the way ahead for Slovakia were included in the curious questions posed to the SVK GOV Ministers in Parliament by the children who have been pursuing their "studies" as part of Children's Comenius University this summer holiday. The special 1-hour Question Time, chaired by SVK Parliamentary Speaker Andrej Danko, was also attended by Slovak Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš. In his response to a question on military aircraft, he explained that C-27J Spartans will soon enter service with the SVK Air Force and will serve the needs of all Slovak citizens. "In the event of crisis situations our soldiers are always ready to help and the aircraft will be employed in such emergencies too," he said.

Military hike up to Mount Kriváň



(2 September) To honour the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) heroes, the Soldiers' Union of the Slovak Republic organised the 22nd International Hike up to Mount Kriváň. The 2494m high peak of the High Tatras was also climbed by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš and DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko. Over 750 people participated in the hiking event, with the youngest hiker aged 8 and the oldest one aged 77. Before setting out on the hike, MOD officials and soldiers from across Slovakia and abroad paid their tribute to the SNP warriors at the SNP Memorial at Mountain Lake Štrbské pleso.

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Paras on JCET Airborne and Military Free Fall

(21 August - 8 September)

The international training activity dubbed Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) Airborne and Military Free Fall for Special Operations Forces (SOFs) from Slovakia, the USA, and the Czech Republic has been underway at Kuchyňa Air Base. The training began on 21 August and will run until 8 September. At the start of the training, 20 members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina alongside 20 Czech and 30 U.S. airborne troops familiarised themselves with the rules for parachute jumps from the C-130 Hercules military transport aircraft. Then they jumped with the American MC-4 parachute, focusing on parachute control and crisis situation solutions. Next, they conducted military free fall (MFF) jumps and opened their parachutes at a high altitude, while wearing parachutist oxygen masks and carrying weapons. They also carried out navigation jumps.

During a joint session, paratroopers from the 5th SOF Regiment Žilina



shared their specialist experience with their U.S. and CZE counterparts in picking up motorised teams with the aid of a "land – pick up – take off" system and in dropping off cargo with guided parachutes.

Speaking after visiting the exercising airborne soldiers on Wednesday (30 August), the U.S. Defence Attaché in Slovakia, LTC Jonathan S. Dunn said: "There has been a strong and longstanding bond between our Special Operations Forces and this exercise marks yet another step in joint training on interoperability, in other words, the ability to cooperate together even better."

On the joint training activity, the Commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, Col Miroslav Gardlo, said: "In view of the expected delivery of the C-27J Spartan transport aircraft for the SVK Armed Forces, we very much welcome the joint training with the use of the C-130 Hercules aircraft."

The final training phase will be dedicated to navigation jumps and other air-land night-time deployment tasks.