



## A gift from Minister

(23 December) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš held a video conference call with the Slovak service personnel who are currently deployed on missions and operations abroad. He wished them happy, merry and blessed Christmas festivities and that they get off to a good start in the New Year. He was interested to learn more about their service duties during the Christmas season, and made them happy with a present – the soldiers were allowed to make phone calls to their families and close ones for longer, as he increased the free talk time limit with extra phone minutes. Today a total of 255 servicemen and women are deployed on missions and operations abroad. Most of them are in Cyprus (169), followed by Afghanistan (42), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (41). 2 SVK Armed Forces members are on tours of duty with UNTSO in the Near East and 1 serviceman is embedded with the EU-led mission in Georgia.

## A visit to Bosnia

(20 December) As a member of the delegation led by President and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces Andrej Kiska, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited the Slovak soldiers serving with the European Union Force Althea (EUFOR ALTHEA) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Along with Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim, he brought presents for the 41-strong Slovak Contingent to make their Christmas time more pleasant. Not to be missed was a Christmas tree, ingredients for Christmas cabbage soup, greetings from children of Comenius Primary School in Turany and Pavol Marceľ Primary School in Bratislava.



Speaking in front of the gathered soldiers, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Let me thank you wholeheartedly for the work you are doing not only for our Armed Forces and the Slovak Republic as a whole, but also for the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina as part of EUFOR ALTHEA. I wish you merry and blessed Christmas festivities and that you get started off on the right foot in the New Year and return home safely on completion of your mission."

Addressing the Slovak troops, SVK President Andrej Kiska said: "You have a fantastic reputation here and, at the same time, you are building a good name for our country. I wish to thank you for that."

At the beginning of their visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Slovak delegation also met with Maj Gen Friedrich Schrötter, Commander EUFOR. Members of the SVK Armed Forces have served with EUFOR ALTHEA since the inception of the operation.

## New Year greeted with gun salutes

(1 January) To mark the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and its Armed Forces, soldiers from the Rocket Launcher Detachment Rožňava fired, in the presence of Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff Lt Gen Pavel Macko, 20 artillery gun salutes from Bratislava's Tyršovo Embankment. On this occasion, the Minister of Defence wished the Slovak citizens a successful 2017, good health, and much happiness, peace and quiet. Consistent with the Order of the President of the Slovak Republic who acts as the Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces, the gun salutes were fired from 6 122mm HD-30A howitzers. The event for the public was supported by approx. 50 soldiers. The Military Police played a role in securing the protection of the area.

## Race walker Matej Tóth of MSC Dukla is the 2016 Sportsman of the Year

(22 December) 1st Lt Matej Tóth has been named the 2016 Sportsman of the Year. That this Olympic gold winner in the men's 50km race walk at Brazil's Rio de Janeiro Olympics triumphed at the Slovak Sports Awards 2016 Sportsman of the Year was decided in a vote by 122 sports journalists. Matej Tóth is a member of the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica.

Speaking after the announcement of the poll results, the 2016 Sportsman of the Year said: "It is a great honour especially in the year that we have experienced. You all know how many people are behind each success." He went on to extend his thanks to the Slovak Ministry of Defence as well as the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica for their support.

The Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica was strongly represented among the dozen sportsmen and women nominated for the Sportsman of the Year accolade. Besides Matej Tóth, skier Veronika Velez-Zuzulová achieved an excellent 6th place, and Petra Vlhová, another Dukla skier, finished 10th.



- Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chairman of the Slovak Workers' Trade Union in Defence Mária Huszliczková met in Trenčín on 29 Dec to sign a **collective agreement** for 2017. The agreement regulates the mutual relations between the Ministry of Defence and its employees relating to the performance of work in public interest. Consistent with the new agreement, all of the 2016 employee benefits will be preserved.

- On 21 Dec, Chief of the General Staff **Gen Milan Maxim** held a video conference call with the commanders of the Slovak Contingents deployed on operations outside the territory of the Slovak Republic. He listened to a series of briefings providing situational updates on their areas of operations. At the conclusion of the call, he wished the soldiers merry and especially safe Christmas festivities and good health in the New Year 2017.

- A year after the unit's reorganisation scheme, a new emblem was approved for the **Logistics Battalion Topoľčany** in Dec 2016. Recently, the emblem has been produced and installed at the entrance to Jaselské Barracks and onto the façade of the Logistics Battalion HQ Building.

- On 21 Dec, Commander Slovak Land Forces **Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad** approved, in the presence of the key SVK LF HQ staffers and the commanders of the subordinate Land Forces formations and units, the Planning Documentation of SVK LF HQ and Land Forces Formations and Units for Training Year (TY) 2017.

- Commander JFC Brunssum (JFCBS) **General Salvatore Farina** recognised two servicemen of the SVK Armed Forces – Maj Miroslav Kováčik and MSgt Miroslav Makara – for their excellent service in favour of JFCBS. Maj Kováčik was recognised for his personal contribution to several NATO exercise planning teams. MSgt Makara received recognition for his work in favour of the Afghan Focus Group and the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan.

- On completion of their tours of duty with the **NATO Resolute Support Mission** in Afghanistan, Commander NCISG Maj Gen Walter Huhn awarded members of the Resolute Support – Signal Support Group (RSSSG), including 4 Slovak DCM-C members who were based at HKIA in Kabul and served as system administrators of the Afghan Mission Network Operation Centre. Maj Gen Walter Huhn thanked them for their hard work, and, joined by RSSSG Commander Col Jaroslav Praus, handed out the Non-Article 5 NATO Medals.

- Col Ludovít Péter, of the Staff for Strategic Planning at the SVK General Staff, and Capt Richard Spišák, of the Personal Office of the Chief of the General Staff, **concluded their professional careers** as active duty soldiers with effect from 31 Dec 2016. Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim awarded them the Memorial Cross as an expression of appreciation for their work and for their personal commitment to performing challenging tasks.

- During a change of command ceremony held in the presence of Commander 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov Col Ján Parimucha at Brig Gen Ján Nálepka Barracks in Trebišov on 30 Dec, the outgoing Commander **21st Mechanised Battalion Trebišov**, Lt Col Róbert Funtal, handed over command to the incoming commander, Lt Col Róbert Plávka, who officially assumed the appointment with effect from 1 Jan. Lt Col Funtal took over a new appointment in HQ 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov on 1 Jan.

- In Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 20 Dec, Col Marián Bodolló, Chaplain General of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, presented Snežana Kováčová, of the Regional Red Cross Branch Foča, with humanitarian aid worth €22,000 and a financial donation of €5,000 during a ceremony attended by Maj Branislav Krajčík, Commander LOT Team Foča. The gift included material aid from the Ministry of the Interior and a financial contribution from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.

## New deal for voluntary soldiers

(30 December) Under the latest arrangements, voluntary soldiers will conduct exercises in better conditions in 2017. The Ministry of Defence has already submitted a Draft Bill on Voluntary Military Training (VMT) for an interdepartmental review process. The MOD wants to increase the quality of the project by delivering the training of voluntary soldiers under better conditions in the new year. The changes follow from an analysis of the VMT pilot project, which has incorporated, among other things, the assessments of the VMT scheme by its first graduates. The MOD will resume training new voluntary soldiers immediately after the effective date of the Bill.

## Farewell to Brig Gen Imrich Gablech

(28 December) In Havlíčkův Brod, a final farewell ceremony was held in honour of Slovak WWII pilot Brig Gen Imrich Gablech, who passed away at the age of 101 on 16 December. In attendance at the funeral ceremony were the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Róbert Ondrejčák, the 2nd Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, and the Director of the Institute of Military History, Col Miroslav Čaplovič. Imrich Gablech was a recipient of numerous Slovak, Czech and foreign military awards and decorations. To mark his 100th birthday jubilee, last year he was promoted to Brigadier General in the Czech Republic. On 21 December 2016, Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim awarded him, posthumously, the Memorial Cross of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, 1st Grade.

## Lt Gen Ján Husák passes away



(29 December) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš participated in a final farewell ceremony, held at the Crematorium in Nitra, in honour of Lt Gen Ján Husák, who died at the age of 93 on 22 December. This direct participant of the anti-Nazi resistance movement in the Slovak National Uprising and long-time member and chairman of the Slovak Anti-Nazi Combatants' Union was paid homage, among others, by the 2nd Chief of the General Staff,

Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, and the Director of the Institute of Military History, Col Miroslav Čaplovič. To mark the 93rd birthday anniversary of Lt Gen Ján Husák, last year Peter Gajdoš awarded him the Minister of Defence Memorial Medal, 3rd Grade.

## Policemen appreciate cooperation

(21 December) The 1st Vice-President of the Police Corps of the Slovak Republic, Col Jaroslav Málik, and the Deputy Director of the Office for International Police Cooperation at the Presidium of the Police Corps of the Slovak Republic, Col Katarína Keratová, presented a Letter of Thanks to the Crisis Management Strategic Centre at the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces for building successful cooperation with the Police Corps on the delivery of security measures during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Letters of Commendation were handed out to the Centre Commander, General Staff (GS) Col Ján Bujňák, and Lt Col Ján Halaj during a ceremony held at the MOD Hall of Fame. The Ministry of Defence and the SVK Armed Forces cooperated on the protection of buildings and of the outside perimeter of Bratislava Airport, assisted in keeping public order, joined the dispatching services to coordinate movements, and performed other tasks. Taking part in performance of the tasks were more than 4,500 personnel, including members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, Slovak Land Forces and Slovak Air Force soldiers, the Military Police and other MOD components.

## Deploying to Afghanistan



(30 December) 14 members of the Deployable Communication Module - Charlie (DCM-C) will take off for Afghanistan where they will link up with the Resolute Support Mission (RSM). SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and 2nd Deputy Chief of the General Staff Maj Gen

Jindřich Joch bid their farewell to them during a pre-deployment ceremony held at the base in Ružomberok. The Minister expressed the MOD's full support for the outgoing troops. The DCM-C unit will look after the communications and information systems used across the RSM Headquarters in Afghanistan.