



Meeting of Defence Ministers

(7 September) The informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers in Estonia's Tallinn was dominated by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative and a response to a simulated cyber attack. As part of the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) meeting in the format of EU Defence Ministers, the Ministers took part in Exercise EU CYBRID 2017, where they reacted to a simulated cyber attack on the EU's military structures. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg participated as an observer in the cyber exercise.

On EU-NATO relations, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "We consider the cooperation between the EU and NATO in the field of cyber defence to be of great importance. We voiced this opinion already throughout the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU. Joint exercises like this definitely enhance resilience against cyber attacks, therefore I believe they will go on."

Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD), and European Defence Fund (EDF) were high on the agenda in Estonia, where Head of the SVK MOD confirmed that the initiatives have been given full political backing in Slovakia and that we want to be one of the founding members of PESCO. "In the field of security and defence we must clearly focus on delivering solutions within the EU, stepping up cooperation, and increasing the level of interoperability of European defence capabilities," he emphasised.

The Ministers delved into the security challenges in the SAHEL and in the Horn of Africa, especially in the context of utilising the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations. "We must exploit this potential to a full extent and strengthen our engagement there where security threats and instability arise. Towards this end, we unanimously support the EU's complex approach to the regions," said Head of the Slovak MOD. In this connection, he recalled our contribution to EUNAVFOR MED Op Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea.

SVK Military Strategy Proposal

(6 September) The SVK MOD has submitted the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic Proposal for an inter-departmental review process. The submitted proposal builds on the new Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic Proposal, which is now also under inter-departmental review. The original 2001 Military Strategy was replaced by the 2005 Defence Strategy.

The bedrock of the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic Proposal lies in efforts to delineate the basic parameters for building and developing the SVK Armed Forces in the changing security landscape in line with their strategic goals and enablers. Following up on this strategic document is the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces until 2030, which too will soon come up for the government's perusal and approval.

On completion of its inter-departmental review and public consultation, the Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic Proposal will be made available to the SVK Security Council and Government for deliberations, and the latter will pass it on to the SVK Parliament.

Cooperation with Czech partners on PESCO and operations abroad

(5 September) Cooperation on the EU's PESCO initiative and international crisis management operations was on the agenda of today's meeting between SVK and CZE Defence Ministers Peter Gajdoš and Martin Stropnický who met for talks as the SVK and CZE Governments held Gov-to-Gov discussions in Czechia's Lednice.

At the meeting, the Ministers addressed rejoining [NATO's] enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) in the Baltics, where the total Slovak military contribution will be up to 152 personnel, who will most probably be operating under Canadian command. Similarly, in July of this year the Czech Republic approved a mechanised company and a mortar company to be deployed on eFP role. As with SVK troops, CZE troops will be dispatched to the Baltics starting from 2018. In addition, Minister Gajdoš informed his Czech counterpart about a SVK troops' deployment to Iraq.

In meeting with his Czech partner, Head of the SVK MOD likewise informed of [Slovakia's] interest in joining the EU's PESCO initiative. "We have the ambition to fulfil all the criteria and commitments associated with PESCO. In this regard, we consider the Czech Republic to be one of the closest partners, even when it comes to identifying joint projects which may be developed through PESCO," emphasised Minister Gajdoš. He and his Czech partner were in agreement that both countries are seeking to be part of the EU's integration core. Both Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to furthering the above-average defence engagement between the SVK REP and the CZE REP on joint training and exercises. Similarly, they were in agreement that forging closer cooperation under the CEDC grouping is in their countries' interest.

- SVK Chief of Defence **General Milan Maxim** was in visit to Italy on 6-8 Sept 2017 to pay an official call on the Italian Chief of the Defence General Staff General Claudio Graziano at his invitation. General Maxim laid wreaths at the M. R. Štefánik and A. Dubček Memorial in Rome. Shortly thereafter, he held talks on issues related to joint operations and missions.

- On 4-8 Sept 2017, Martin-based Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base's Peace Support Operations (PSO) Training Unit organised basic training for the SVK unit to be assigned to the newly established **NATO Training and Capability Building in Iraq (NTCB-I)**. The training objective was to prepare 28 SVK Armed Forces personnel for performance of tasks in the almost unknown environment of today's Iraq. The main mission will be to conduct mine safety measures in the interest of all unit members and local residents.

- On 6 Sept 2017, **U.S. Defence Attaché LTC Jonathan S. Dunn** and **U.S. Air Attaché MAJ Adrian Patrascu** visited Engr Bn, 1st Mech Bde Sereď, where they were briefed on the unit's mission and tasks.

- SVK Land Forces HQ Trenčín hosted the **final coordination conference** in preparation for the national Slovak Shield 2017 exercise on 5-6 Sept. It will be held in Oct 2017 at Training Centre Lešť.

- A change of command ceremony to mark the **official handover of the post of Commander SLOVCON/ SECTOR 4** was held at Camp Štefánik in Cyprus on 7 Sept 2017. Lt Col Jaroslav Marko succeeded Lt Col Rudolf Eštok as new COM SLOVCON/ SECTOR 4. Also in attendance at the ceremony was UNFICYP Force Commander Maj Gen Mohammad Humayun Kabir, who symbolically handed over the UN flag to the incoming commander.

- SVK MOD issues this traffic warning notice to alert the people living in SVK to the **upcoming movements of Allied military assets**, scheduled for 11-17 Sept 2017. A total of 52 road moves will be conducted over the period, especially in support of Ex DRAGON-17 and Ex TOXIC VALLEY. Next week, drivers in Slovakia should be aware of increased movements of SVK Armed Forces units, especially along the routes taking the convoys from Martin to TC Lešť, from Nitra to Sliac, and from TC Lešť to Rožňava.

- Professional soldiers of Supply Base (SB) III Zemianske Kostoľany, working in conjunction with Military History Club Polom, held a **lecture** on Operation Anthropoid and 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps in the USSR for pupils of "Elementary School Lehota pod Vtáčnikom" on 8 Sept 2017.

NFIU marks its first year in SVK

(5 September) Representatives of the SVK MOD and Armed Forces remembered the 1st anniversary of the establishment of the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK). State Secretary Róbert Ondrejčák reminded that the NFIU's stand-up and activation have strengthened our security and reaffirmed Slovakia's status of a full-fledged and reliable Allied partner. The NFIU in Slovakia was officially activated on 1 September 2016 and has since then been under the command of the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC-NE) Szczecin, Poland. Besides Slovakia, NATO NFIUs were also established in Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Romania and Hungary. The NFIU in Slovakia is staffed by 41 personnel. Their main task is to support NATO's collective defence in the planning process, to provide assistance to joint training and exercises, and to support and coordinate Allied forces' reception and movements across the region.

25th anniversary of Constitution



(4 September) SVK MOD service personnel and civilian employees gathered for a ceremony to remember the 25th anniversary of the coming into force of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. In his address, Minister of Defence

Peter Gajdoš said: "The adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic is an integral part of our contemporary history. This move laid the foundation stone for the establishment of an independent country and hence our Armed Forces. Let us approach this public holiday of our statehood with due respect, knowing that thanks to the adoption of the SVK Constitution we are now part of the democratic world." Adding, "The current SVK Government Manifesto Commitments oblige us to increase public awareness of patriotism in the spirit of national and military traditions. And our MOD is fully committed to delivering on this commitment."

Honouring the Holocaust victims

(8 September) A commemoration ceremony to mark Holocaust and Racial Violence Victims Day was held in Bratislava's Rybníčné námestie. Representing the MOD at the ceremony were State Secretary Róbert Ondrejčák and DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko. In the presence of Holocaust survivors, wreaths were laid at the Holocaust Memorial by representatives of the SVK Government, Parliament, European Commission, Embassies and other organisations and institutions. In his remarks, R. Ondrejčák said: "We must not forget the Holocaust just as today we must not allow any discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religion or the colour of the skin. We cannot be passive and we must not only condemn extremism but also stop it."

Armed Forces and Rescue Services Corps Day with Children

(9 September) Minister of Defence opened the 11th annual iteration of "Armed Forces and Rescue Services Corps Day with Children" at the Museum of Military History in Piešťany. As he said, it provides a unique space for Slovak citizens, especially for children and young people, to see for themselves the work of soldiers, policemen, firefighters and rescuers.

"Put simply, of all those who take care of our security and safety and who are always ready to respond and assist whenever there is a crisis situation."

At the same time, the Museum of Military History gives its visitors the opportunity to learn more about the history of our country. "Each and every patriot should be familiar with our national history. I am convinced it is an honour for our museum staff to



present it to our visitors in a captivating form," he accentuated.

A rich programme had been prepared for visitors on and over the Museum's grounds. Including a flypast of MiG-29s, paratroopers' parachute jumps, the 5th SOF Regt's dynamic demonstrations and weaponry displays, as well as the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour Show Programme. Several new exhibits made their debut this year: an Aligátor 4x4 Light Armoured Vehicle, a UAZ 452D Light Utility Vehicle, and a T-55 Mine Clearance Tank, which had been employed on operations by SVK EOD specialists in Eritrea. Dynamic and static

displays were also staged for the audience by policemen, firefighters, customs officers, rescuers, and Prison & Justice Guard Corps members.