



Armed Forces Day

(22 September) To mark SVK Armed Forces Day, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš thanked all professional Servicemen and women for their work to the benefit of the Slovak Republic. The official celebrations took place in Brezová pod Bradlom. Still before the opening ceremony Minister Gajdoš, Parliamentary Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security Anton Hrnko, and Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim paid their tribute to the memory of General Štefánik at the Tomb Monument to General Milan Rastislav Štefánik on Bradlo Hill.

Speaking at the ceremony in Štefánik Square, Brezová pod Bradlom, Minister Gajdoš emphasised: "The history of our Armed Forces is rich, yet their basic pillar has always been and will always be formed by Servicemen and women. Even if we had the most advanced military assets, indeed without quality human potential we cannot guarantee our primary mission, which is to deliver the defence capability of the Slovak Republic." His thanks went out to all Servicemen and women, including those who are celebrating today's official event on operations and missions abroad. Earlier in the morning he held a video conference call with their commanders.

Gen Maxim reminded that history is very important for service personnel. "That is why we commemorate this day every year, which is, from the historical point of view, one of our most significant ones." He gave special thanks to soldiers for their work and their families for support.

SVK Armed Forces Day is an opportunity to recognise the work of selected members of the SVK MOD and Armed Forces. Among those awarded was also Czech Chief of Defence Army General Josef Bečvář.

22 September 1848 marks the victory day for Slovak volunteers [in the Slovak Uprising of 1848-49]. That is why the SVK Armed Forces also marked the official event directly at the Memorial to Hurban's Volunteers in the Battle of Prieťzská cesta [Breakthrough Road]. A symbolic minute of silence was observed in tribute to all the Servicemen and women who have laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Ministry of Defence leaders introduce new strategic documents

(21 September) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, National Armaments Director Maj Gen Daniel Zmeko, and Director General for Defence Management, Armed Forces Development and Defence Planning Brig Josef Pokorný presented to media representatives new strategic documents – the Defence and Military Strategies of the Slovak Republic and the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces with an Outlook to 2030 – during an informal press conference at the SVK MOD. The documents follow up on the updated Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, which was formulated by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The priority of the SVK MOD under the Slovak National Party (SNS) leadership is to continue building and developing the SVK Armed Forces systemically and systematically, "so that they are modern, fully mission capable and trustworthy, whilst offering adequate potential, and being capable of delivering the defence of the Slovak Republic and participating in the collective defence of NATO and the EU," he said. In delivery of modernisation, the MOD wants to apply the principle of Value for Money. "So that we achieve maximum efficiency with the tax payers' money. Equally important, the production capacity of the domestic defence industry should be involved in the modernisation of the SVK Armed Forces to the maximum extent possible, with the aim of boosting Slovakia's employment levels, economy and GDP growth." On the strategic documents, Gen Maxim added: "Having drawn up the said strategic documents, the Armed Forces will have a legal framework to refer to when making their requirements, steering their development, and providing arguments for their justified needs."



- In furthering the preparation of the NATO GRP plan, Commander JFC Brunssum **General Salvatore Farina** and his delegation arrived for talks in Slovakia on 21 Sept 2017. Gen Farina was welcomed by CHOD Gen Milan Maxim. He was received by State Secretary Róbert Ondrejcsák before attending a meeting between the delegations.

- State Secretary Róbert Ondrejcsák and CZE Defence Minister Martin Stropnický opened the **17th edition of NATO Days** on 17 Sept in Mošnov near Ostrava. This is the eighth time the event has been associated with the CZE Air Force Day celebrations. SVK MOD was a special partner of the event. Representing Slovakia at the event were the SVK Armed Forces, Ministry of Interior, and the Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic.

- CHOD Gen Milan Maxim received the **newly accredited Defence Attaché to the Slovak Republic** at MOD Main Building on 18 Sept. During a meeting with Hungarian Defence Attaché Lt Col Csaba Vido, he appreciated the excellent long-term defence engagement in the field of training. In his meeting with Turkish Defence Attaché Col Abdülkadir Akturan, he praised the development of cooperation in the field of training and the SVK Communications Module's deployment to Operation Active Fence. Finally, Gen Maxim received the newly appointed Defence Attaché of the Kingdom of Spain, Col Santiago Conde de Arjona.

- At the end of WWII a British Halifax bomber crashed into the Forester's Meadow in the village of Radatice near Prešov, killing its Polish crew. On 19 Sept the tragedy was remembered at a ceremony by the next-of-kin of the victims, residents of Radatice, and representatives of the SVK, UK and POL Armed Forces. Among them was Commander SVK AF **Brig Lubomir Svoboda**, Commander Helicopter Wing (HW) Prešov Col Róbert Tóth, and Chief of Staff HW Prešov Lt Col Pavol Kľučerovský.

- On 20 Sept, the SVK General Staff hosted a **conference on the deployment of Task Group Štefánik to Latvia**, with the participation of Gen Maxim, with the intent that the lessons learned from the deployment be applied across the Armed Forces, especially to the benefit of the Slovak troops' upcoming deployment to Iraq and next year's contribution to Canadian-led enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) Battlegroup in Latvia.

- To mark SVK Armed Forces Day, members of Bratislava Garrison HQ held a **Culture Day** event at the local GAR Club on 19 Sept. Musical support by the Music Band "Pontooners" added to the warm atmosphere, while visitors viewed a variety of exhibitions, including those of the garrison's special interest groups, citrus fruit and vegetable arrangements, Photo Attack and Gallery Mil 2017. They are open to the public until 30 Sept at BA GAR Club.

- SVK MOD releases this traffic warning notice to update Slovak citizens and residents on the **upcoming movements of Allied military convoys**, scheduled from 25 Sept to 1 Oct. A total of 43 road moves and 1 railway movement will be conducted in support of troops returning from TC Lešť, Ex Blonde Avalanche, Ex Toxic Valley and Ex Training Bridge 2017.

Toxic Valley 2017

(19 September) The CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostolany is holding the 5th iteration of the international Toxic Valley 2017 exercise. A total of 168 CBRN specialists from 10 countries are participating in the exercise, which will run until 29 Sept. It is designed for teams with the specialisations for taking samples and mobile identification labs to practise identifying real toxic chemicals. The exercise is being attended by members of the Armed Forces from Slovakia, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and the USA. Observers are from Germany and the United Kingdom.

Legion train is in Bratislava

(19 September) The Czechoslovak Legion train called in at Bratislava as its last stopover in Slovakia. The train presentation ceremony to present a replica of the authentic Czechoslovak Legion Train in Russia was attended by State Secretary Róbert Ondrejcsák, Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, Director General of Slovak Railways Martin Erdössy, and other guests. The train will be open to the public until 28 September at Bratislava's Museum of Transport.

Commemoration in Myjava

(19 September) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security/Deputy Parliamentary Chairman Anton Hrnko visited Myjava to remember the 169th anniversary of the establishment of the 1st Slovak National Council, which laid the foundations of parliamentarism and democracy in Slovakia and emerged as the first national political body of the Slovaks. In this connection, Minister Gajdoš highlighted the need to educate young people and future soldiers on the history of the Slovak nation.

Blonde Avalanche 2017

(23 September) Soldiers from 7 countries have deployed on [Sered Garrison's] Váh Training Ground to rehearse responding in the event of a natural disaster and providing assistance to residents until 24 Sept as part of the 15th iteration of Exercise Blonde Avalanche 2017 under the TISA project, which brings together Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Ukraine. Taking part in the exercise are also troops from the USA, Austria, and observers from Czechia. While the command post phase is taking place at the Simulation Technologies Centre, of the SVK Armed Forces Academy LM, the training phase is underway at Kráľová nad Váhom.

Heroe of the Exercise

(21 September) Commander SVK AF Brig Lubomir Svoboda presented the Heroe of the Exercise Tobruq Legacy 2017 to Sgt Marcel Richňavský, of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra. COL David E. Shank, Commander 10th Army Air and Missile Defense Command, USAREUR, originally awarded the accolade to Sgt Richňavský for his exceptionally active approach and exemplary performance of tasks during Exercise Tobruq Legacy earlier this July. During the exercise, he served as Commander 9K38 IGLA MAMPADS with the SVK-CZE Surface Based Air Defence (SBAD) Battery/Task Force on Hradište Training Area in the Czech Republic.

P. Gajdoš: I will allow no other solution to the future of supersonic aviation but a pro-European and pro-Atlantic one



(20 September) The Slovak Ministry of Defence will not allow any other solution to our future supersonic aircraft fleet but a pro-European and pro-Atlantic one. In no way does the MOD envisage purchasing new MiG fighters and rejects the media campaign that a new coalition

crisis is emerging. This message was today communicated by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš during a press conference at the MOD. "If the government decides to do so and the Ministry of Finance allocates the resources required and indispensable for all the projects immediately, we are ready, once the ongoing negotiations on the price and support services have been concluded, to submit the contractual documents to the government in accordance with its decision. And thus resolve the future of our supersonic aviation for the next period. And I can assure you that we will allow no other solution but a pro-European and pro-Atlantic one," emphasised the Minister, adding that, according to him, the rearmament of the SVK Air Force is inevitable.

"However, at the same time we must complete funding for the

already contracted Spartan aircraft and Black Hawk helicopters. Yet we remain committed to taking supersonic aviation forward. But it is all about the resources – the money that the Ministry of Finance and the Government must approve for individual projects," explained the Minister, arguing that whereas air assets are already being replaced in the SVK Air Force, the SVK Land Forces have not been up for modernisation for decades. "And even then we need to phase out the Russian hardware and put new equipment into service, whilst substantially involving in its manufacture the domestic arms industry in cooperation with European partners." On the supersonic aircraft fleet, he further explained that the MOD has been in negotiations with the U.S. Government and some other European governments, including the Swedish Government.

"For the time being we do not have the contractual documents that we are bound to submit to the Government in line with its decision, because we need to negotiate every single detail, every single condition of support services, logistics, and infrastructure support," said the Minister. He further clarified that when he had taken over as Head of the MOD in 2016, the

negotiations with the Swedish side had to be started from scratch, as it turned out that the Swedish side was no longer interested in awarding us a lease package for the Gripen flight hours, as had previously been the case of the Czech Republic. "Put simply, this is not how their offer was made," he said and went on to emphasise that the life extension programme for the MiG aircraft is only a plan B and that the purchase of the supersonic aircraft still holds. Among the only limiting factors are the financial possibilities of the Slovak Republic and a fair and comprehensive package from potential suppliers. Head of the MOD today underscored that, for him, the issue of Slovak airspace protection is decisive and will be delivered, just as so far, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. "We are equally obliged to guarantee the defence capability of the Slovak Republic, and we do so via the SVK Land Forces, which form the core of our Armed Forces," he said.

Under the Long-Term Defence Development Plan, the modernisation of the SVK Land Forces until 2030 will require over 3 billion euros in funding and the completion of the SVK Air Force's modernisation a further 2.6 billion euros.