



Minister decorates WWII heroes

(24 October) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today handed over commemorative medals to two veterans of the WWII national struggle for liberation during a medal presentation ceremony at the Trenčín Garrison Club. 95-year-old Štefan Šteflovíč and 90-year-old Pavol Liška received the medals in Trenčín, because they could not attend the ceremony at the Dukla Memorial on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the Battle of the Dukla Pass (Carpatho-Dukla Offensive).

Speaking about the recipients, Minister Gajdoš said: "Unfortunately, the health of these two heroes did not allow them to participate in the commemorations at Dukla. Yet I am convinced they deserve to receive the medals from me in person, so that I can thank them for everything they did for our nation and our better future."

As he further added, a lot of people take freedom, peace and democracy for granted. "This is not right. Practically every day we can see how fragile peace is and it is our duty to remind the young generation that it has never come for free," emphasised Minister Gajdoš.

Štefan Šteflovíč, a native of Adamovce near Trenčín, is a veteran of the national struggle for liberation who served in the period between 15 March 1939 and 5 May 1945. Pavol Liška, of Dobrá Voda in the district of Tmava, is a veteran of the national struggle for liberation who served in the period between 29 August 1944 and 1 November 1944. Both of them live in Trenčín.

Distinguished guests from abroad

(23 October) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today received the Secretary of Commerce for the U.S. state of Indiana, Mr Jim Schellinger, the Hungarian Chief of Defence, Lt Gen Tibor Benkő, and the Ambassador of the Republic of Estonia, HE Mr Rein Oidekivi, at MOD Main Building. In a series of bilateral meetings with the officials, the Minister presented the latest MOD-formulated strategic documents. The main theme of the meeting with Secretary Schellinger was the outstanding long-term defence cooperation between the SVK Armed Forces and the Indiana National Guard (INNG) in the field of training, with a particular focus on the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, and joint exercises.

On the defence engagement with the Indiana National Guard, Minister of Defence Gajdoš said: "The cooperation between our troops has been very active this year as well. I appreciate that just last week members of the Indiana National Guard joined our largest military exercise this year – Slovak Shield 2017." At the same time, he praised the role of INNG partners in the International Staff Officers Course (ISOC) at the "General M. R. Štefánik" Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš.

In a meeting with Hungarian Chief of Defence Lt Gen Tibor Benkő, both the Minister and the CHOD agreed on the importance of regional cooperation, including the V4 format. The Minister hailed the success of the joint TISA project, which saw the 15th iteration of Exercise Blonde Avalanche at the end of September 2017. Traditionally, the exercise is attended by HUN troops.

In a meeting with Estonian Ambassador Rein Oidekivi, Minister Gajdoš discussed the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In this respect, Minister Gajdoš appreciated the Estonia-sponsored cyber exercise that was on the official programme of the recent informal meeting of EU defence ministers in Tallinn.



The first of the two Spartan C-27J lands in Slovakia

(24 October) The first of the two C-27J Spartan transport aircraft is already in Slovakia. On Tuesday (24 October) it touched down at Kuchyňa Air Base after 10:00 hrs local time. Thus, another modernisation project in favour of the SVK Armed Forces is yielding its results. Over the next few days a technical handover of the aircraft to the "General M. R. Štefánik" Transport Wing (TW) Kuchyňa is due to take place. An official ceremony to mark the handover of the aircraft to the SVK Air Force will be held on 31 October 2017 with the participation of media representatives. On the C-27J Spartan's arrival in Slovakia, Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš remarked: "From the perspective of modernising our Armed Forces, this is another historic milestone. With the last Antonov AN-26 having been phased out, the SVK Air Force lacked this sort of transport capability for some time. I want to highlight that the aircraft will not only serve with the Armed Forces, but it is ready to carry out missions as part of domestic crisis management operations to the benefit of all Slovak citizens." The procurement of the two C-27J Spartan dates back to 2008, when a contract for delivery of the aircraft was awarded in an international competitive bidding (ICB) process. But it was not until 2014 that the contract was formally signed. The contract covers the initial 5-year logistics support package. The second transport aircraft is expected to arrive in Slovakia at the beginning of next year. As soon as the negotiations over the contract penalty for the delay in delivery of the first aircraft have been concluded, the MOD will keep the public updated on this issue.



- Students of **Ludovít Štúr Grammar School** visited SNP Barracks in Zvolen on 23 Oct on a fact-finding mission to learn more about the SVK Air Force as part of a project to educate local residents on national defence. Information on SVK Homeland Defence and protection of SVK airspace was supplemented by practical demonstrations of weapons. The event was organised by the Centre for Cultural and Educational Activities, which has been embedded into the structure of the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM since 1 Oct 2017.
- A **graduation ceremony** was held on 20 Oct at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin for graduates of the military occupational specialties (MOS) G-10, G-20, G-30, G-40 and L-10. Sgt Peter Harmančín, of 21st Cmbd Mech Bn Trebišov, was named Best MOS Graduate. The ceremony also marked the conclusion of the Command Staff NCO Course, with SSGT Peter Papík, of 11th Mech Bn, named as Best Course Graduate. Travelling prizes were handed to both of them by the Commander of the NCO Academy.

- The **Institute of Military History** informs the public that information from the archival fonds is available from www.vhu.sk/archivne-pomocky/. The link makes available the newly processed inventories and catalogues on archival fonds and collections in electronic format. Specific archival documents may be ordered for study in our study room by contacting us on 02 48207720 and by email at vha@vhu.sk.

- The invitation by the Military Bishop of Austria's Bundesheer Mons Werner Freistetter to an **international conference of Catholic Military Chaplains**, held on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Institute for Religion and Peace (Bundesheer), was accepted by 60 participants, of whom two dozens were from abroad. The conference entitled – Soldiers in the Process of Revolutions – was held on 17-18 Oct at Vega-Payer-Weyprecht-Kaserne Barracks in Vienna. Representing the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps was the Military Staff Chaplain of TW Kuchyňa, Capt Slavko Ganaj.

- The Hungarian Air Force's HQ AIRCOM hosted a conference for Exercise **Tobruq Legacy 2018** held at 54th Radar Regiment Vezsprém on 24-26 Oct. NATO's largest SBAD exercise will be held in June 2018 in Hungary. In attendance at the conference were specialists from 12 countries.

- Mortar units of **22nd Mechanised Battalion** conducted a live fire exercise on Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area on 24 October. The best results were recorded by Lt Alexander Bugyi, Commander Mortar Platoon.

- The SVK MOD informs residents of Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 30 Oct to 5 Nov 2017. A total of 13 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia. These will mainly involve Polish troops and U.S. convoys. In addition, next week residents of Slovakia should reckon with a number of SVK Armed Forces convoys.

State Secretary in Brussels

(23 October) State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Defence R. Ondrejčsák paid a visit to the seats of NATO and the EU to meet with senior representatives of both Brussels-based organisations. In a meeting with the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Policy and Planning, Heinrich Brauss, Secretary Ondrejčsák and Secretary Brauss addressed NATO's adaptation to the evolving security environment and the progress achieved in the implementation of tasks following the Warsaw Summit.

With the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Tacan Ildem, he discussed NATO communication strategies in a bid to make NATO activities as transparent and understandable as possible to wide audiences. In addition, they talked about the SVK MOD's participation in the Alliance-wide public information campaign – #WeAreNato – and ways to deal with damaging propaganda. With the NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Operations, Ms Burcu San, he discussed NATO's ongoing operations, the forms of the NATO training activity unfolding in Iraq, and Slovakia's involvement in it.

On the EU premises he met with a representative of the European External Action Service (EEAS), P. Serrano, to review the status of progress made in preparing the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) as a driver for European defence initiatives. The State Secretary said that this initiative for multinational cooperation on generating defence capabilities should be viewed as a consolidation of the European pillar of NATO, rather than investment in duplicate capabilities.

MACE XIX under preparation

(25 October) The SVK Air Force, working in collaboration with Aerospace Capabilities Group 3 (ACG 3), NATO Air Force Armaments Group (NAFAG), and SG/2 at NATO HQ in Brussels, is for the third time preparing an Air Force and Ground Based Air Defence (AF&GBAD) exercise, dubbed MACE, to be held from 9-27 July 2018. In connection with the exercise, the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen hosted an initial planning conference, led by the MACE XIX Planning Group. Over 70 local and foreign specialists familiarised themselves with the exercise's main tasks and plans, checked the grounds and premises of the Training Centre Lešť and those of Sliach Air Base. In addition, they set out training tasks for NATO and PfP units, focused on sustaining and enhancing capabilities in conduct of joint air operations, with emphasis on breaching GBAD defences and carrying out missions in intense radio-electronic jamming conditions. The presence of international units during the exercise will facilitate the training of GBAD, radar and electronic intelligence systems operators.



The first 15 Slovak servicemen bound for Iraq

(27 October) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim today participated in a predeployment ceremony for SVK soldiers heading to Iraq, which was held at the Engineer Battalion Sereď. As part of the first rotation, a total of 15 SVK Armed Forces personnel are deploying to Iraq. They will be tasked with training Iraqi Armed Forces instructors in the field of demining.

In his remarks at the predeployment ceremony, Head of the MOD said: "I am convinced that with this move we are sending a clear message that we do care about security in the world and that we are making an active contribution by deploying our troops on operations and missions abroad, or on training missions as this one." He further underscored that the SVK servicemen will not participate in combat operations, nor in their planning. "They will only conduct training activities," he emphasised.

"The aim of this initiative is to help Iraqi Security Forces under this non-combat military mentoring activity in building a new, modern

and qualified Iraqi Armed Forces, capable of facing current security threats," added Gen Maxim.

The mandate for dispatching up to 25 SVK Armed Forces members to Iraq was endorsed by Members of Parliament in October of this year. Their task will be to provide training, advice and assistance in building the capacities of the Iraqi Security Forces under the NATO Training and Capacity Building in Iraq (NTCB-I).

Aside from the outgoing soldiers under this rotation, in the coming days additional SVK Armed Forces personnel are gearing up for a tour of duty in Iraq to support the repairs operations on Soviet-era hardware. In line with the mandate, another 10 soldiers will be sent to Iraq. The activity of the SVK Armed Forces in Iraq will be implemented under NATO's Defence Capacity Building (DCB) package for Iraq with the approval of the Republic of Iraq and the conditions of service will be in accordance with international agreements and international contractual documents.

