



Ministers hold talks in Brussels

(9 November) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today attended a meeting of the Defence Ministers of NATO Allied countries in Brussels. The focus of the meeting was mainly on ensuring an effective provision of collective defence and stability of the security environment. In this context, Head of the SVK MOD informed of Slovakia's contribution to Iraq, where our soldiers will be tasked, in conformity with the SVK Government-approved mandate, with providing training to local security forces in the fields of demining and maintenance & repairs of Soviet-made military equipment. As he further mentioned, next year the Slovak Republic is ready to deploy SVK Armed Forces personnel to Latvia under so-called NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP). The total number of SVK military to be deployed in the region should be up to 152 personnel.

At the meeting today, Ministers also discussed reviewing the NATO Command Structure, which should, even more effectively, respond to a changed security environment, including cyber attacks and threats of hybrid nature. In the presence of High Representative / Vice-President Federica Mogherini, Ministers addressed the further deepening of NATO-EU strategic cooperation. The meeting was largely dominated by discussion of the new areas of NATO-EU cooperation, with one of the most promising areas being the development of cooperation on cross-border military mobility.

At the meeting, Defence Ministers from NATO Allies praised the new U.S. Strategy for Afghanistan and were in agreement that the result of a quick military withdrawal from this still unstable country would be destructive. Peter Gajdoš said in a statement after today's meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels that Slovakia is currently not planning to bring up its troop levels in Afghanistan, however, fulfilling the existing SVK Parliament-approved mandate cannot be ruled out in the future. On the SVK military deployment in Afghanistan, Minister Gajdoš clarified: "This should relate to our medical personnel who were supposed to withdraw on completion of their duty after the departure of the Czech Medical Team, under whom they served. But, for the time being, we have retained them in Afghanistan and we are now considering keeping them there."

As part of a multilateral session of the countries operating under the Canada-led eFP Battlegroup, Slovakia confirmed the posting of two officers to eFP BG HQ no later than 15 November. While still in Brussels, Minister Gajdoš also met with French Defence Minister Florence Parly for talks with particular emphasis on the participation of both countries in the EU-initiated Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to explore the potential use of this format in furthering the bilateral cooperation of both countries.

Slovakia to join PESCO

(8 November) The Slovak Republic is interested in participating in the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of building defence and military capacities and executing military activities (PESCO). As proposed by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, this intention received the SVK Government's go-ahead in today's session. On PESCO, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "For the Slovak Republic, participating in PESCO represents an opportunity to strengthen its defence capabilities, thereby contributing to the EU's ability to effectively counter current security threats." As he further explained, our involvement in PESCO obliges us to deliver a gradual uplift in defence capabilities building, to seek greater complementarity and compatibility between the SVK Armed Forces and other partners within the European Union, and to bring our operational engagement in international crisis management activities to a higher level. Head of the MOD added: "This also means stepping up our cooperation with the armed forces of other participating countries as well as giving opportunities to Slovakia's defence industry manufacturers to play a greater role in international defence capabilities development projects." The MOD will, no later than 30 November 2017, pass on to the SVK Government the so-called "Strategy of National Plan for Implementation of Commitments", i.e. the commitments that arise for Slovakia out of PESCO. They fully respect Slovakia's national interests and existing international obligations. The decision to formally launch PESCO is expected to be adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), when it meets on 11 December 2017.

Paying respect to brave veterans who have fought for better future

(11 November) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš commemorated the 99th anniversary of the end of World War I at Bratislava's Petržalka – Kopčany War Cemetery. Together with Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security / Deputy Chairman of the Slovak National Party (SNS) Anton Hrnko, he paid his respect to war veterans. On this occasion, SVK service personnel handed out red poppies to residents of selected cities across Slovakia, not only in tribute to the soldiers of WWI but also of all armed conflicts throughout human history. To mark War Veterans Day, the Minister of Defence presented the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Medals (3rd Grade) to Col (Rtd) Juraj Kayser, Maj (Rtd) Štefan Chňapek, and Col (Rtd) Štefan Dorociak. After the Act of Remembrance at the cemetery, he participated in the 4th Run in Honour of War Veterans. Together with service members, cadets of the SVK Armed Forces Academy Liptovský Mikuláš, sportsmen and women of the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica, led by Olympian Matej Tóth, and other runners, he ran a 5-km race. In another Act of Remembrance, the State Secretary at the SVK Ministry of Defence, Marián Saloň, and Her Majesty's Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Andrew Garth, commemorated the end of WWI in a ceremony held in Bratislava's Šafárik Square.



- A formation of troops on the parade square of Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra kicked off a joint specialist training on 6 Nov for the 106 SVK Armed Forces members to be deployed to UNFICYP in Cyprus later in March 2018. The training of the unit will culminate with a three-day tactical exercise.

- Bratislava's Hotel Devín hosted a meeting of the leading military authorities and technical experts in **geographical services** from the MODs of NATO and partner countries on 6-9 Nov. In attendance were delegates from 32 countries who cooperate in processing geospatial information and producing topographical maps from the world's crisis regions as part of the Multinational Geospatial Coproduction Programme and the TREF project.

- Rehearsing at Nitra Garrison's Koliňanský Vrch training ground, S-300 PMU SBAD system crews, of Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra, underwent a **concentrated training** from 30 Oct to 8 Nov, which culminated with tactical drills on 6-7 Nov. "The units have accomplished the set objectives and training tasks of the exercise," concluded Brig Miroslav Lorinc, Deputy Commander SVK Air Force.

- CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre Martin hosted a **Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) MOS-specific** course, led by instructors from the United States of America, on 6-10 Nov. The course was attended by specialists from CZE, ROU and POL.

- In Cyprus, **Sector 4 in UNFICYP** was visited by the Strategic Review Team from UN HQ, New York. The aim of the fact-finding mission was their familiarisation with operational tasks. The visit was linked to the UN efforts to conduct a complex strategic review of the Mission for a potential remodelling of UNFICYP.

- On 31 Oct, 12th Mech Bn Nitra carried out a selection for the **Best NCO/Soldier of the Year** from among the NCOs and Other Ranks. The Selection Board chose SSgt Matúš Fülöp, of Combat Support (CS) Coy, as the Best NCO of the Year, and Cpl Marián Pénzeš, of 3rd Mech Sqn, as the Best Soldier of the Year.

- 13th Mech Bn Levice named Sgt 1st Class Roman Žilkovan, Platoon Sergeant of Combat Support (CS) Platoon, as the **Best NCO of the Year**, and Cpl Marián Kučera, BVP-2 gunner/operator, as the Best Soldier of the Year in the category of the Other Ranks.

- SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to draw drivers' attention to the **upcoming Allied military movements**, scheduled from 13 to 19 Nov 2017. A total of 22 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia. These will mainly involve U.S. convoys transporting material in support of an exercise in Hungary. Also planned is a SVK military convoy from Michalovce to Kamenica nad Cirochou and back.

P. Gajdoš: The process of procuring 8x8 and 4x4 vehicles is transparent

(10 November) While making sure that the process of procuring 8x8 and 4x4 vehicle platforms is transparent to a maximum extent, the MOD leaders aim to select the best solution for the SVK Armed Forces on the basis of their operational requirements. In doing so, we wish to keep the domestic defence industry involved in their manufacture as much as possible, so that we can follow through on another deliverable as set out in the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments. The implementation of the project has been in progress in line with the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces with an Outlook to 2030. This information was presented by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš during a press conference on 10 November. "The document on which the SVK Security Council opened a discussion on Wednesday is highly specialist and analytical. It is not that the document would be poorly compiled or that the Council members would disagree with it. They just asked for more time to go over it," explained the Minister, adding that the document has already passed through interdepartmental consultations. "The document is not restricted because we are trying to keep something secret intentionally. But because it contains precisely defined operational requirements of the armed forces, which cannot be made public," emphasised the Minister.

EUMC meeting at CHODs level

(7 November) The European Union Military Committee (EUMC) met for a regular meeting in the EU Chiefs of Defence format on 6-7 November in Brussels. Topics included CSDP operations and training missions, the Follow-up to the Implementation of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, including the preparations for the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) launch. Also in attendance as guests at the meeting were CHODs from partner countries. In a separate session, the V4 CHODs – Gen Leszek Surawski (POL), Gen Josef Bečvář (CZE), Gen Tibor Benkő (HUN) and Gen Milan Maxim (SVK) – signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the V4 EU Battlegroup Stand-up and Activity. The V4 EU BG is due to be on stand-by in the second half of 2019. At the final session of the meeting, the EU CHODs elected General Claudio Graziano, the serving Italian CHOD, as next Chairman of the EU Military Committee. The next meeting of the EUMC in the Chiefs of Defence format will be on 16 May 2018 in Brussels.



Minister decorates veterans

(8 November) To mark War Veterans Day, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš awarded the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Medals (2nd Grade) to war veterans Otto Šimko, Julius Rattaj, Hugo Wald and František Predajňa. On behalf of the Minister, the medals were presented by State Secretary Marián Saloň in a ceremony during a solemn concert by the Military Band Banská Bystrica in Trenčianske Teplice. On the same occasion, other veterans were also recognised by SVK President and C-in-C of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska. The concert celebrating War Veterans Day was preceded by the President and the State Secretary paying their respects to the memory of the fallen soldiers in WWI in an Act of Remembrance at Trenčín – Kubrá Military Cemetery.

Remembering heroes

(10 November) On the occasion of the 99th anniversary of the end of the First World War, State Secretary Marián Saloň together with DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko and other MOD leaders visited Trenčín – Kubrá Military Cemetery to pay their respects to fallen soldiers. The Act of Remembrance was prepared in collaboration with the SVK Generals Club. Almost the entire cemetery has recently been reconstructed mainly thanks to the efforts of the SVK Generals Club, especially those of Lt Gen (Rtd) Pavel Honzek. A total 771 identified soldiers of 10 nationalities and 3 unknown soldiers are buried in the cemetery.