



## One step closer to PESCO

(29 November) The SVK Security Council and Cabinet today approved the Strategy of the National Plan for Implementation of Commitments and Criteria resulting from the Participation of the Slovak Republic in the European Union's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Currently, a formal decision by the Council on establishing PESCO is in the process of being prepared.

On PESCO, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I perceive PESCO to be an environment in which we have committed ourselves to doing more for the security of our citizens." He went on to add that this is an opportunity for the Slovak defence industry and R&D, offering the chance to draw funding from the European Commission, to be precise, from the European Defence Fund (EDF).

Delivery of the commitments spelled out in the Cabinet-approved Strategy will call for close coordination between the Ministries of Foreign and European Affairs, Economy, and Education. The Strategy contains a commitment to raising the defence budget regularly and envisages 1.6 per cent of GDP on defence spending in 2020. Of this, the total expenditure on the modernisation of the SVK Armed Forces will be more than 20 per cent. There is also a commitment to stepping up cooperation with other partners, whilst following through on some commitments jointly. Moreover, the Strategy will strengthen the cooperation on military crisis management with other EU partners.

The Council of Ministers is expected to adopt a formal decision establishing PESCO at its meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council on 11 December 2017.

## Active Reserves to be more attractive

(29 November) The Active Reserves will be more attractive next year. This ensues from the National Service Amendment Act. The amendments to the Act were approved today by the SVK Security Council and Cabinet. As from May 2018 active reservists should start training under the new conditions. On the National Service Amendment Act, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "There will be better conditions for the self-employed and, similarly, we have adjusted the scale of military ranks for specific positions so as to allow more soldiers in the Reserve to meet the entry criteria." In practice, this means that the soldiers in the Reserve who hold the rank one below or two above the rank required for the specific positions to be assigned to will be allowed to join the Active Reserves. Drawing on previous experience from the pilot project, the need for salary reimbursement arose not only for employees but also for the self-employed. Another new feature is the repayment of the costs incurred by employers for the payment of premiums for social and public health insurance. At the same time, the Amendment Act specifies that an active reservist is entitled to a commensurate part of rank-based pay only for the period of time spent on regular training or when performing tasks in favour of the SVK Armed Forces. It further sets out the obligation for active reservists to report changes in the conditions of their assignment to commanders. Also changed are the provisions on non-attendance at regular training activities by active reservists.

## Minister Gajdoš meets with Macedonian Chief of General Staff

(30 November) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš held talks with Lt Gen Metodija Velichkovski, Chief of the General Staff, Army of the Republic of Macedonia. Topics of discussion included international security priorities and bilateral defence engagement. Head of the SVK MOD informed the Macedonian CHOD of the strategic documents the SVK MOD has formulated throughout 2017, as well as updating him on the modernisation projects of the SVK Armed Forces. Both leaders appreciated the cooperation between Slovak and Macedonian troops on operations abroad. Also discussed at the meeting was SVK support to the integration of the Republic of Macedonia into the EU and NATO. At the meeting, the Minister offered to keep the International Staff Officers Course (ISOC) open to Macedonian soldiers at the SVK Armed Forces Academy.



- Commander SVK Land Forces announced a **selection of service personnel** to staff 112 (MOS Code) Human Intelligence Specialist positions open to personnel ranked Lieutenant, Sergeant 1st Class, Staff Sergeant and Sergeant for service with the Intelligence Support Company, part of ISTAR Battalion Prešov. Applicants in the ranks listed above or those eligible for required promotions are invited to apply for selection. More information is available at <http://www.mil.sk/74045/?pg=1>.

- The **commanders of Bratislava and Prague Garrisons** met in Bratislava on 30 Nov – 1 Dec to exchange information on the state protocol activities in 2018. SVK DCHOD Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian emphasised the importance of the SVK Armed Forces and the Army of the Czech Republic undertaking complex preparations and coordination in support of the historical commemorations in 2018.

- Having participated in the **oath of allegiance ceremony and passing out-parade** on 24 Nov at Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin, a total of 159 new professional soldiers completed their preparation for military service in the SVK Armed Forces. 1st Degree Pte Radoslav Bugár was named Best Graduate of Basic Military Training.

- SVK Deputy Chief of Defence – Chief of Staff Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian attended a **commemoration ceremony held at Les Invalides in Paris** on 23 Nov, marking the issuance of the decree on the establishment of the autonomous Czechoslovak Army in France by the French President.

- Members of Sliach Air Base paid their respects to the memory of **Maj Gen Otto Smik**, who died on 28 Nov 1944. The air base has carried his name since 2002. In attendance at the ceremony were, besides official dignitaries, the next-of-kin of Otto Smik. As part of the official programme, an exhibition dedicated to Otto Smik was staged for the guests.

- On 28-29 Nov, Nitra Garrison's Koliňanský vrch training ground hosted a tactical exercise for the SVK personnel to be deployed to **UNFICYP** in Cyprus as part of the March 2018 rotation. This marked the culmination of their three-week preparation. The commanders' abilities and procedures were evaluated as excellent and the contingent was rated as deployable. A total of 106 SVK service personnel took part in the exercise. Of them, the best 82 will be selected in final interviews.

- The Czechoslovak Republic's **elite Commando Course** was held from 23 Oct to 17 Nov. 14 successful graduates attended the graduation ceremony held in Prague on 20 Nov. Among them were MSgt Jaroslav Spišiak, of 22nd Mech Bn Michalovce, part of 2nd Mech Bde Prešov, and 1st Lt Peter Klučka, of CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre (SVK Land Forces).

- SVK DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko received the **Defence Attaché of the Arabic Republic of Egypt**, Brigadier Ayman E. Taha. They discussed the defence engagement between both countries and their further development. The Egyptian general appreciated the cooperation with the Slovak defence industry and expressed the Egyptian side's interest in deepening it.

- Bratislava hosted the 9th Regional Swimming Competition for mentally disadvantaged people on 24 Nov. The main organiser was Bratislava Self-Governing Region and Prof Karol Matulay Social Services Home. The event was supported this year again by 10 members of **SVK Presidential Guard of Honour**.

- SVK MOD informs the inhabitants of Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 4 to 10 Dec 2017. A total of 28 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve Hungarian and Polish troops. Also scheduled is a Czech Army convoy carrying military assets in support of its activity at Training Centre Lešť.

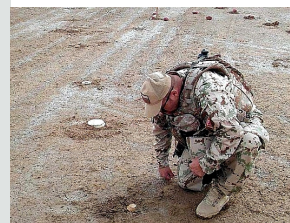
## Best soldiers and NCOs

(29 November) In the SVK Land Forces, PFC Martin Handzuš, Recce Scout/Specialist of ISTAR Battalion, part of 2nd Mech Bde, was named Best Soldier of the Year and Miroslav Ďurkovský, Section Leader of 11th Mech Bn, part of 1st Mech Bde, was made Best NCO of the Year. The announcement was made by a Land Forces Commander's selection board at the Training and Mobilisation Base Martin. Similarly, the Transport Wing Kuchyňa hosted a selection for the SVK Air Force's Best Soldier and NCO from among airmen and air defenders on 23 November. Cpl Eduard Slezák, of Helicopter Wing Prešov, was named Best Soldier of the Year and SSgt Norbert Kysler, of Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade, Best NCO of the Year. A selection for the SVK Military Police's Best NCO was held in Trenčín on 29 November. MSgt Martin Holko, Inspector/Senior Chief Specialist, of MP Operations Division Prešov, serving with MP Operations Section Martin, earned the title.

## Winners of MOD Literary Comp

(1 December) Winners of the 13th Literary Competition on the theme "Our security cannot be taken for granted" have been announced after being chosen in an online public vote on the Facebook social network. The Secondary Schools category was won by Klára Deketová, of Milan Hodža Bilingual Grammar School in Sučany, with her competitive entry entitled "You and Your Casualness", followed by Karolína Kollárová, of Bilikova Grammar School in Bratislava, and Anastázia Šurábová, of Sports Grammar School in Žilina. Winner of the College/University category was Peter Kromka, of Comenius University Bratislava, with his competitive entry "Those Affected", and second- and third-place finishers were Dominik Gromoš and Ján Dvorščák, both from the University of Prešov in Prešov. Having met the entry criteria, a total of 210 competitive entries were evaluated in the first round by MOD judges. Of all entries, 5 were selected in each category for an online public vote on Facebook. A total of 4,568 people participated in the vote between 22 and 30 November.

## SVK soldiers are already in Iraq



(2 December) The Slovak soldiers in Iraq have already begun training instructors of the Iraqi Security Forces in the field of demining. Up to 25 participants are expected to go through the course. 15 members of the Slovak Armed Forces are currently involved in Iraq as part of the NATO Training and Capacity Building in Iraq (NTCB-I). The ongoing manual demining course is being delivered by the Slovak contingent in the area of Bashmaya in Iraq. In the weeks to come, the contribution of the Slovak Republic will be extended by a further 10 soldiers in accordance with the valid mandate. They will be tasked with assisting the Iraqi Security Forces in conducting maintenance and repairs of Soviet-made military equipment. The SVK Armed Forces has members serving in Iraq as part of NATO's non-combat training activity, with the consent of the Republic of Iraq and under the conditions delineated by international agreements. This non-combat contribution is designed to help Iraq build its security forces to be capable of securing the stability of their country in the future.

## Helicopter Wing marks its jubilee

(28 November) The Lt Gen Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing Prešov hosted a ceremony to mark the 25th anniversary of the establishment of Prešov Air Base. The invitation to attend the ceremony was accepted by the Chief of Staff at the SVK Air Force's HQ Air Command, Col Stanislav Hurčík, commanders of the units subordinate to the SVK Air Force, commanders of the units within Prešov Garrison, Lt Gen Ján Ambruš's grandson Miroslav Ambruš, mayor of Prešov Andrea Turčanová, representatives of the central and local government bodies, members of the Slovak Generals Club, and representatives of Heli Company. The parade square featured a line-up of air and land-based equipment on static display.