



Tribute to present-day veterans

(4 December) The SVK MOD's Hall of Fame has been enriched by another four contemporary veterans.

For their outstanding achievements going above and beyond the scope of their normal service duties, Lt Col (Rtd) Daniel Bavořár, MSgt Antonín Havlín, and two members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina were inducted into the Hall of Fame by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš. Traditionally, he has done so during the pre-Christmas meeting of MOD leaders with contemporary veterans, who currently number over 7,000 ex- and serving military professionals. This year the event was also attended by WWII veterans, so that the MOD could thank them for their acts of heroism in this way too.

In his remarks at the ceremony, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I believe this meeting is an excellent opportunity to thank all servicemen and women who have served on operations and missions abroad. Through their work they have made the world a safer place for us to live." He went on to add he is convinced that by inducting more heroes into the Hall of Fame we can motivate other soldiers to perform above and beyond the standard scope of their service duties.

Speaking on the occasion, SVK CHOD Gen Milan Maxim said: "Today we can pay homage to those soldiers who have cared about the destinies of others, though in most cases they have served in extremely difficult security and climatic conditions."

276 SVK service personnel, including 23 servicewomen, are currently deployed on operations and missions abroad. To date 18,000 SVK soldiers (nearly 500 servicewomen) have rotated in and out of the places of their deployment on tours of duty. Overall, 40 soldiers, including those inaugurated today (4 December), have so far been inducted into the Hall of Fame.

As part of this year's gathering, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš invited nominations for the 21st Military Deed of the Year Award. Traditionally, the MOD will recognise outstanding acts of service to the community in three categories – Rescue of Life, Public Assistance, and A Friend of the Armed Forces.

SVK Armed Forces 2017 Best NCO of the Year

(6 December) A selection board, led by the Command Enlisted Senior Leader (CSEL) of the SVK Armed Forces, Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš, unanimously agreed to present the SVK Armed Forces 2017 Best NCO of the Year Award to SSgt Miroslav Ďurkovský, of Martin-based Mechanised Battalion, after selecting him from a shortlist of 7 nominees. SSgt Ďurkovský is the commander of Artillery Reconnaissance Section, Mortar Platoon, Fire Support Company, Mechanised Battalion Martin. Apart from his military activities at home and on missions and operations abroad, he devotes his time to working with school kids and the Volunteer Firefighters Corps. Among the other high quality nominees who attracted the attention of the selection board were SSgt Norbert Kysler, of Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra, an unnamed medic, of 5th SOF Regiment Žilina, SSgt Jozef Filický, of Office of Surgeon General, MSgt Juraj Hladký, of Supply Base Zemianske Kostofany, Sgt Michal Drahoš, of SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour, and SSgt Miroslav Chovanec, of SVK Presidential Guard of Honour.



- On completion of the 6th Slovak Contingent rotation in support of **RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION (RSM)** in Afghanistan, a new SLOVCON unit has rotated in, taking over the operational task on 26-30 Nov 2017. To get things done smoothly and the right way, a HOTO team oversaw the handover/takeover (HOTO) process.

- On 5 Dec, Military Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology Bratislava, located at SVK MOD, hosted a meeting between the **Chief Hygienist of the Slovak Republic** and the Chief Hygienists of SVK MOD, Interior Ministry, Ministry of Transport and Construction, and Slovak Information Agency. The meeting was aimed at evaluating the cooperation on public health protection and support. The hygienists agreed that the hepatitis A virus (HAV) in and around Bratislava has been on decline largely thanks to the anti-epidemic measures in place.

- Stationary CIS Base Trenčín hosted **St Nicholas' Drop of Blood** on 5 Dec. A total of 32 service members and civilian employees joined the blood donation drive organised at their base without having to visit the local medical facility.

- On 28-29 Nov, almost three years on after the last PJI-M testing, TW Sliac Parachute Station hosted proficiency jumps for SVK Air Force parachute specialists to qualify for the **Parachute Jump Instructor-Master (PJI-M) Badge**. SSgt Peter Filkor, of TW Sliac, and Sgt Tomáš Marcinek, of HW Prešov, earned their PJI-M brevets.

- SVK Land Forces officials and invited guests were greeted by Commander SVK Land Forces Jindřich Joch as they assembled on 30 Nov to analyse the results of **Exercise Slovak Shield 2017**. Their discussion centred on summarising the findings and evaluating the pros and cons of the exercise.

- To mark his jubilee anniversary on 4 Dec, SVK Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim presented the SVK Chief of the General Staff Commemorative Cross (3rd Grade) to **Lt Col Peter Šumichrast**, Director of Military History Research Division/ Deputy Director of Institute of Military History, for his role in raising awareness of military history among service personnel.

- The **blood donation campaign** by members of UNFICYP has a long-term tradition in Cyprus. 30 members of Sector 4 decided to donate the most precious liquid in the run-up to Christmas. The donation of blood took place on 29 November in Deryneia, located in the south of the island.

- The SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to inform the inhabitants of Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 11-17 December 2017. A total of 37 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve Polish troops transporting material and in support of a course at the Training Centre Lešť. Also scheduled are SVK Armed Forces convoys in greater numbers, the route will take the convoys from Dubnica nad Váhom to Michalovce.

Gen Maxim in Afghanistan

(4 December) The SVK Chief of the General Staff, accompanied by a delegation, carried out an inspection of the Slovak Contingent (SLOVCON) deployed in support of the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan. On his three-day visit, he inspected the SVK troops at Kabul Airport, RSM HQ, and a SOF location. During his short meeting with Commander RSM General Nicholson, both generals expressed their satisfaction with the work of SVK soldiers. At Hamid Karzai International Airport (HKIA), he met with the HKIA Commander and, on behalf of the Minister, presented him with the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Cross for outstanding cooperation. Gen Maxim's trip coincided with the handover/takeover (HOTO) ceremony, where he wished the incoming SLOVCON troops every success, a merry Christmas and a happy New Year, and a safe return home on completing their tour of duty.

Exceptional inventory checks



(8 December) The Slovak Armed Forces have concluded exceptional inventory checks on munitions at their munitions depots, as ordered by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš after first establishing discrepancies. According to the initial

conclusions of criminal investigation bodies, it has not been demonstrated that the missing munitions were the subject of criminal activity. "I want to emphasise that these are the first 100-per cent physical inventory checks on munitions in the history of our Slovak Armed Forces. Every single piece of ammunition was checked," emphasised Head of the MOD, adding that none of his predecessors had initiated such detailed inventories to be carried out before. Minister Gajdoš underlined the need to have military personnel, and not civilians, guarding the munitions depots. He reassured the public that the MOD has been taking maximum efforts to assist in the ongoing enquiry into the missing munitions stockpiles. SVK CHOD Gen Milan Maxim informed that munitions are reported to be missing at Trenčín – Kubrá and Skleň Munitions Depots, and discrepancies in munitions inventories have also been established at the military units in Rožňava and Nováky. The 1st Vice-President of the SVK Police Corps, Col Jaroslav Málík stated: "The ongoing investigation thus far supports the assumption that there were no break-ins from outside, but there were failures by individuals who worked in the munitions depots. Also, there is an alternative that errors in stock records may have occurred during the division of the Czechoslovak military assets, when the materiel was being entered into inventories." The Director of the National Crime Agency, Col Peter Hraško, added that SVK Police have established no connection between the missing munitions from the military depots and the criminal cases of trading in weapons and munitions they have investigated recently.

Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic stages Industry Day for soldiers to present 4x4 military vehicles

(6 December) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today opened Industry Day 2017 at the Military Technical and Testing Institute (VTSÚ) Záhorie.

This is the second year the event has taken place, with this year's focus on presenting 4x4 light armoured vehicles. The MOD has the mandate from the SVK Government to go ahead with the procurement of 4x4 platforms. Today VTSÚ Záhorie also marked initial presentation of the outcome thus far of the Slovak-Finnish 8x8 IFV development.

In his remarks at the opening ceremony, Head of the SVK MOD emphasised: "We have prepared today's event especially for soldiers, because they are the ones who will operate the new vehicles and guarantee the security of our country." He pointed out that the SVK Parliamentary Committee members and media representatives, too, had been invited to come and see the presentation of Slovak and international partners' security & defence industry products, as the MOD is committed to maintaining full transparency throughout the entire process.

As Minister Gajdoš further underscored, the aim of the MOD is to make sure that the Slovak defence industry will become involved in the modernisation of the SVK Armed Forces to the maximum

extent possible. "In order to give Slovak companies as vast a space as possible and to revive the armaments manufacturing capability in Slovakia. If we ourselves do not support our domestic defence industry by putting its products into service with our Armed Forces, it will be all the harder for Slovak manufacturers to break into foreign markets," he reminded.

The Chairman of the Commission and Coordinator for Drafting, Assessment and Implementation of MOD Strategic Documents/ General Secretary of the MOD Service Office, Ján Hoľko highlighted the transparency of the entire vehicle procurement process. Speaking to the media in a joint press conference with the SVK Minister of Defence, Chief of Defence, and National Armaments Director, Ján Hoľko said: "Although there appear to be different objections, I want to underline the fact that this is a form of procurement which is in line with European and Slovak legislation alike." He added that efforts have been underway to find a partner and a way to deliver 4x4 vehicles to the SVK Armed Forces, with emphasis on incorporating the country's defence industry into the production of the vehicles to the maximum extent feasible. Chief of the SVK General Staff Gen Milan Maxim emphasised that he considers Industry Day 2017 to be a significant step in the

MOD's efforts to modernise the Armed Forces. "This is an opportunity for us to test and to gain first-hand experience from driving different makes and types of vehicles we could be interested in, and of course we welcome this initiative. We have expert teams, represented by all Army branches, ready to test the vehicles independently and later they can make the best of this test drive experience when conducting military trials," explained CHOD Gen Maxim.

According to the National Armaments Director Maj Gen Daniel Zmeko, today there have been over 19 pieces of heavy military equipment and other locally and foreign made vehicles at VTSÚ Záhorie. "For us, this is one of the essential steps in finalising the processes for the delivery of modernisation. The data will be utilised to carry out required analyses and we will be able to work with them in the long term," he said. Today participants have had an opportunity to come up with a name for the new 8x8 platform as part of an after-event feedback questionnaire.

Almost 40 companies were represented at Industry Day 2017. In addition to a static display of defence products, the presentation included dynamic demonstrations of 4x4 combat/multi-purpose light armoured vehicles as well as manned live firing trials.