



Presidential visit

(11 December) Slovak President Andrej Kiska, who concurrently acts as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic, visited the SVK MOD for a traditional pre-Christmas meeting with SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and other MOD officials and Armed Forces leaders.

At the meeting, they discussed topics of current relevance to Defence, including the SVK Armed Forces' modernisation programmes and their performance of tasks at home and abroad. The President was keen to learn about the SVK military deployments on international crisis management operations and missions this Christmas and about the soldiers' opportunities to stay with their families over the period.

Farewell to policemen

(15 December) At a predeployment ceremony held at the Military Police Training and Canine Department Vlkanová, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš bid his farewell to the Military Police members who are deploying for a 6-month tour of duty in support of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia II to carry out assigned tasks. This time too, just as in the case of the first rotation, 10 military policemen will be involved.

"I believe the MP members will build on the work of their predecessors and confirm that Slovakia belongs to the elite when it comes to carrying out tasks on international crisis management missions and operations," said Head of the SVK MOD. As SVK Military Police Director Col Michal Migát added, the MP personnel who will be entrusted with the duties of Operation Sophia have been through a demanding training programme over the past months. Apart from Slovakia, it was conducted in Germany, where they trained with boats to get ready to respond to all scenarios.

The aim of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia is to stop human trafficking from the African states to Europe in connection with the migration crisis. The first Slovak rotation was deployed in August this year.

Whilst still in Vlkanová, Minister Gajdoš also handed over a new vehicle to the SVK Military Police to support military working dog (MWD) handlers.

EU Foreign Affairs Council officially launches PESCO

(11 December) The EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) formally adopted the Council Decision establishing Permanent Structured Cooperation in the field of security and defence (PESCO), with 25 EU Member States participating in PESCO. The Slovak Republic expressed its intention to participate in this enhanced form of cooperation by signing a joint notification on PESCO on 13 November 2017 at the Council of the EU. In this respect, the Slovak Republic has achieved its first successes. Its own "EuroArtillery" project, aimed at developing the Indirect Fire Support (IFS) capability, has made it onto the list of the first collaborative PESCO projects. The Slovak project has been selected from among the 49 PESCO related project proposals for the final 17 projects, which will be implemented in Phase I of PESCO. Italy has declared its preliminary intention to join the project, while Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain will be involved as observers. The MOD is seeking to gain additional partners. The aim of the "EuroArtillery – Indirect Fire Support" project is to develop a Mobile Long-Range Precision Artillery Platform. Slovakia's modernisation of the Self-Propelled Artillery Unit and further R&D of a complex artillery fire control system are among the development priorities of the SVK Armed Forces. At the same time, these areas of interest represent an opportunity for greater involvement of the Slovak defence industry in multinational projects.



- On 8 Dec, Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base (TMRB) Martin hosted a homecoming ceremony for the **SVK military personnel** returning from Resolute Support Mission (RSM), Afghanistan and UNTSO, Israel. In attendance were SVK DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian, Commander SVK Land Forces Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, and other distinguished guests. At the ceremony, the returning SVK soldiers received the Medal for Participation in Military Operation, the Medal for Service in Peace Observer Missions, and the War Veterans Badge.

- On 4-8 Dec, CBRN Centre Zemianske Kostofany hosted this year's last training exercise of **CBRN specialists** from the Army of the Czech Republic, aimed at working with real toxic chemicals and their detection, decontamination of troops, and standard procedures for operating in a contaminated environment in adverse weather conditions.

- Mountain Hotel Granit Smrekovica hosted a **Military Police Director's Military Council** meeting on 12-13 Dec, with the participation of the SVK Military Police key leaders. The aim of the meeting was to take stock of the Military Police's performance results for the third quarter of Training Year (TY) 2017. The MP Director, Col Michal Migát, presented the intentions for building and developing the SVK Military Police and the main tasks for the coming period.

- The Slovak Contingent UNFICYP members assigned to Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) placed 2nd in the **Military Skills Competition**. MFR had registered the team, led by Lt Daniel Lešanič, for the competition. Their performance in the competition shows that our members are capable of holding their own against other contenders in an international environment.

- Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base (TMRB) Martin hosted a **graduation ceremony** for the graduates of the OR-5 NCO Course on 8 Dec. Of the 80 professional soldiers who followed the course, 78 graduated successfully. Cpl Jozef Karaffa, of Engineer Battalion Sered, was named Best Graduate of the Course.

- Combat Support Brigade members and National Military Transport Centre Bratislava personnel took part in Exercise **Pegas 2017** on 4-8 Dec. The SVK Armed Forces Academy's Simulation Centre Liptovský Mikuláš provided its facilities to replicate realistic conditions during the exercise.

- SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to update the inhabitants of Slovakia on the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 18-21 Dec 2017. A total of 4 Allied road moves, involving mainly Polish and U.S. troops, will take place across Slovakia over the period.

Verification trials get underway

(14 December) MOD specialists from the Military Technical and Testing Institute (VTSU) Záhorie have commenced verification trials of the joint 8x8 Slovak-Finnish Infantry Fighting Vehicle prototype. The verification trials will last until mid-January 2018. They will be followed by military trials well until March. As part of them, the vehicle will undertake a range of trials in Finland, whilst operating in extreme winter conditions. As part of the military trials in Slovakia, the SVK Armed Forces are planning to test the prototype vehicle over an uninterrupted period of operation for 28 days. On successful completion of the trials, further technical and organisational adjustments may be put in place to deliver potential technical and design alterations. KONŠTRUKTA-Defence (JSC) is the prime contractor for the vehicle prototype R&D programme. Assuming that the trials prove a success and with the consent of the SVK Government, the SVK MOD will go ahead with the procurement of up to 81 vehicles gradually through to 2024.

Slovak-French talks

(15 December) SVK Deputy Chief of Defence Lt Gen Pavel Macko welcomed representatives of the French Armed Forces to the Slovak-French staff-to-staff talks on 15 December. The talks confirmed the long-standing above-average SVK-FRA defence relationship, moving forward in line with the Joint Strategic Action Plan for 2013-2018.

At the talks, the delegations explored options for extending their bilateral cooperation, especially in the field of individual and small unit-sized training, sharing of lessons learned from deployments on international crisis management missions and operations. They agreed that the current security landscape is a challenge that can only be met when allies cooperate as closely as possible.

CBRN specialists hold talks

(12 December) Under the chairmanship of Col Miroslav Ofčarovič, Chief of Operations Combat Support Branch, Strategic Planning Staff at the SVK GS, CBRN specialists of the Slovak Armed Forces and the Army of the Czech Republic convened for a meeting in Bratislava on 12 December. The CZE CBRN delegation was led by General Staff (GS) Col Ondřej Havel, Chief of CBRN. Topics included the cooperation on joint education of CBRN officers as part of the Master of Science (MSc) programme at the University of Defence in Brno, the status of CBRN capabilities, participation in joint exercises, and CBRN capabilities development as part of the Framework Nation Concept CBRN Protection Cluster.

General Maxim meets Slovak soldiers in BiH

(13 December) The SVK Chief of the General Staff carried out a traditional pre-Christmas inspection of Slovak personnel deployed in support of Operation EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 12-13 December. He was updated on current developments and the activities of SVK troops in the country. During the visit, he handed over 12 new Landrover Discovery vehicles to soldiers to help them perform tasks at higher standards of performance.



The delegation also brought a Christmas tree and ingredients for traditional Christmas meals. Gen Maxim handed out Christmas presents to servicemen and women, just as he had recently done in Afghanistan. The CSEL of the SVK Armed

Forces, Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš, met with the deployed members of the NCO Corps. Whilst in BiH, General Maxim met with the EUFOR Commander, Maj Gen Anton Waldner, who commended the SVK soldiers for performing their tasks at the highest standard. He also met with the Chief of the Joint Staff of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lt Gen Anto Jeleč. In their first bilateral meeting, both generals highlighted the defence engagement between the Armed Forces. Gen Jeleč updated Gen Maxim on current developments and the modernisation of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in light of the ongoing defence review.

The Editorial Team of eBulletin Weekly and



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Monthly wish you a very merry Christmas and a prosperous 2018