



A black day in Armed Forces

(19 January) During an act of commemoration on Borsó Hill and in the Hungarian village of Hejce, Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Hungarian Minister of Defence István Simicskó paid their respects to the memory of the 42 victims who perished in the Antonov AN-24 military aircraft crash on 19 January 2006. The SVK personnel were returning home on completion of their tour of duty in KFOR, Kosovo.

In his remarks at the ceremony, Minister Gajdoš said: "19 January 2006 will forever remain a black day in the history of our Armed Forces and the Slovak Republic as a whole. The time that has passed by since the occurrence of the tragedy will in no way ease the pain that has remained with us all. On this occasion, too, I would like to express my support to the families of the victims and reassure them that we will never forget their close ones."

In his speech, Hungarian Minister of Defence István Simicskó emphasised that the loss of the SVK personnel in 2006 was a common loss. "The tears in the eyes this place has seen for the past 12 years have not been only the tears of Slovaks. Nor have their hearts grieved the loss alone, we have felt just the same."

SVK CHOD General Milan Maxim, too, came to pay tribute to the SVK service personnel. He emphasised that the men and women of the SVK Armed Forces never forget their colleagues who have tragically died in the service of their country. "The whole tragedy is a memento and a hard lesson for us," he said.

Among those at the act of commemoration paying tribute to the SVK military personnel who lost their lives in the air disaster were General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko, members of the Generals Club, and Maj Martin Farkaš, the only survivor of the tragedy.



10th March of Honour

(18 January) For the 10th time service members of the 2nd Mech Bde Prešov have climbed Borsó Hill, located close to the Hungarian village of Hejce, the site where on 19 January 2006 a SVK AF An-24 military aircraft went down with 42 SVK personnel returning from KFOR in Kosovo on board. The participants of the March of Honour were addressed at the Air Disaster Victims Memorial by Deputy Commander 2nd Mech Bde Col Norbert Hrib. The act of commemoration was concluded with the remarks of Military Chaplain 1st Lt Slavomír Krajňák, of the 21st Cmnnd Mech Bn Trebišov, and Chaplain General of the Ecumenical and Pastoral Service Office Col Marian Bodolló. The March of Honour has become an annual tradition since it was first initiated 10 years ago by members of the 21st Cmnnd Mech Bn Trebišov.

Armed forces need consistency between modernisation and training

(21 January) The necessity to modernise the SVK Armed Forces, the improvements in the training conditions of Voluntary Military Training (VMT) soldiers and Active Reservists, and the fulfilment of the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments and the Slovak National Party (SNS) Manifesto – these were the main issues debated "In Politics", a TA3 TV programme, with the participation of SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, who also set out the SVK MOD 2018 priorities, including continuity of meaningful modernisation, and systemic solutions to personnel policy and amendments to the legislation connected therewith.

According to Head of the SVK MOD, aside the ongoing modernisation programmes, it is also important to deliver an adequate standard of quality training to soldiers. "The Voluntary Military Training and Active Reserves projects are equally important for us, because we count on them as a vital component of our country's system of defences." The SVK MOD wants to see maximum numbers of domestic defence manufacturers involved in modernisation programmes. "This means higher employment rates, more jobs for our citizens, and better economic results," he stressed. The current MOD leaders are pressing ahead with a systemic and systematic modernisation in line with the strategic document Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces with an Outlook to 2030. From among the SVK MOD's international obligations, Head of the MOD gave a high priority to PESCO, as the MOD wishes to make Slovakia's EuroArtillery project a success. "At the same time, it continues to apply that we do not want to be a consumer of security, but we want to actively contribute to it, which is exemplified by the numerous deployments of our troops on missions and operations abroad," added Minister Gajdoš.



- The first opening session of the **OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation (FSC)** under the leadership of the Slovak Republic took place in Vienna's Hofburg on 17 Jan. Slovakia thus assumed its historically first FSC Chairmanship. The first session under the SVK FSC Chairmanship was opened by State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Lukáš Parížek. In his opening remarks, he introduced the SVK FSC Chairmanship Programme to OSCE participating States, which Slovakia will press ahead with within the Forum, to a full extent, in the first trimester of 2018.

- His Excellency Mons František Rábek, Ordinary of SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Col Marko Trochan, Military Dean of SVK AF HQ AIRCOM, Maj Štefan Bartko, Chaplain for Pastoral Service to SVK Police, Capt Peter Hasara, Chaplain for Pastoral Service to Prison and Justice Guard, paid a visit to the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra on 15 Jan as Lt Jaroslav Jablonský took up the **appointment of Staff Chaplain of the Brigade**. The introductory Holy Mass was attended by Commander AAM Bde Col Ladislav Dohun and key HQ, Staff and unit leaders.

- The initial planning conference on **Exercise Air Shield 2018**, led by Chief of Staff SVK Air Force, Col Pavol Tököly, was held at the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM on 18 Jan. The conference introduced the exercise's intent, structure, system and time schedule. The exercise will take place from 1-12 Oct mostly across permanent bases, combined with partial deployment of troops and assets to a training area.

- On 16 Feb, Lt Col Peter Kríž, Deputy Commander Helicopter Wing (HW) Prešov, along with other HW officials bid farewell to their airmen deploying to Afghanistan. As part of the joint CZE-SVK Team, who will serve in support of the **Resolute Support Mission (RSM)**, they will be tasked with training Afghan Air Force flying and ground personnel on Mi-171 and Mi-24/35 helicopters.

- SVK Military Police personnel will conduct a **Slovakia-wide road safety operation** in collaboration with SVK Police from 06:00hrs to 11:00hrs on 22-31 January 2018. Targeting soldiers and MOD civilian employees, it will focus on road traffic checks, speeding enforcement, and compliance with road traffic rules.

- The SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to inform the inhabitants of Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 22-28 Jan 2018. A total of 8 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve Polish and Czech troops transporting materiel and personnel, as they return from an exercise. Military convoys will complete round trips along the route between Prešov – Training Centre (TC) Lešť, and there will also be round trip convoys, carrying oversize cargo of equipment, moving along the routes between: Prešov – TC Lešť, Prešov – Michalovce, Prešov – Martin, Martin – TC Lešť.

Artillerymen celebrate



(15 January) The Bratislava Garrison Club hosted the Artillery Day celebrations, which were initiated and organised by the Marksmen and Artillerymen Guild in collaboration with the SVK MOD, SVK General Staff, and Bratislava Garrison HQ. The event brought together serving

and ex-commanders of artillery units, with the participation of both our artillery unit commanders: Lt Col Roman Bobaľ, Commander Self-Propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce, and Lt Col Ľubomír Bodnár, Commander Multiple Rocket Launcher (MRL) Unit Rožňava. For their life-long contribution to spreading artillery traditions, among those awarded with the Czech and Slovak Artillery Association Silver Medal were Col (Rtd) Ľudovít Letošťák, Maj (Rtd) Štefan Pomsahár, Mariana Šimonová, Col (Rtd) Ivan Kvačkej, Col (Rtd) Ladislav Buday, Capt Juraj Urban (in the reserves), Lt Col Roman Grnáč and Col (Rtd) Peter Hartl. On this occasion, Maj Gen (Rtd) Emil Šranko and Maj Gen (Rtd) Ján Strcula were the first SBAD and Artillery personalities to be inducted into the Artillery Hall of Fame and Honour.

NATO Military Committee



(17 January) General Milan Maxim attended the regular January NATO Military Committee (MC) in Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) Session on 16-17 January 2018 at NATO HQ, Brussels. The first session focused on security challenges

in the Alliance's southern neighbourhood. The CHODs explored ways for NATO to broaden its engagement in the fight against international terrorism and to support NATO regional partners, whose existence has, in the long term, been endangered by the presence of the Islamic State. Special focus was on NATO's ongoing training and capacity building efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The NATO Command Structure Adaptation topped the agenda of the first day. The next morning's session was dedicated to NATO's cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia. The MC then reviewed the progress of their defence sector reforms, including the NATO EOD/C-IED (Explosive Ordnance Disposal/Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices) Trust Fund for Ukraine, where Slovakia is the Lead Nation. At NATO HQ, Gen Maxim met with SVK military personnel posted to the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO and across NATO's military structures. He took stock of the 2017 Armed Forces tasks and set out the 2018 priorities. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, Gen Maxim presented selected servicemen with the SVK Minister of Defence Memorial Medal.

We want to continue building a mission capable Armed Forces

(15 January) In 2018 the aim of the MOD leadership is to continue building a modern, functional, mission capable and professional Armed Forces and to continue delivering on the commitments set out in the SVK Government Manifesto and the Slovak National Party Manifesto. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš made the announcement at a press conference today at SVK MOD Main Building. Speaking of the way ahead for modernisation, the Minister of Defence said: "Last year we formulated our baseline strategic documents, with the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces until 2030 being our key document. Based on this document, this year we will press on with systemic and systematic modernisation." He further emphasised that the department remains committed to living up to its motto "Everything for Soldier", so that soldiers are properly trained, equipped and armed.

According to Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security/Deputy Chairman of the Slovak National Party (SNS) Anton Hrnko, throughout 2017 the SVK MOD worked closely with the

Defence and Security Committee and Minister Gajdoš kept MPs updated on the defence modernisation projects and the inspections of munition depots. "I would like to highlight the Defence Minister's transparency and the complexity of information he provided to the Committee," he said. General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko, who concurrently acts as Coordinator for Development and Implementation of MOD Strategic Documents, stressed the importance of the Long-Term Defence Development Plan as a historic investment plan, which had been missing for 25 years before its introduction last year. "This is a key document for systemic and systematic work, one which contains basic goals in areas such as the SVK military's modernisation, personnel and future shape," he said. Even in 2018, the MOD wants to honour its international commitments aligned with its pro-European and pro-Atlantic direction, to translate its strategic documents into practice, and to press on with reasonable modernisation. Making sure that our citizens know they can always trust and rely on the SVK Armed Forces remains a priority.