



Visit of General Scaparrotti

(29 January) Slovakian Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) U.S. Army General Curtis M. Scaparrotti, who concurrently acts as Commander of U.S. European Command, are in agreement that Slovakia is an active member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). During his first official visit to Slovakia, General Scaparrotti paid an office call to Minister Gajdoš at MOD Main Building, to discuss politico-military topics of current relevance, NATO areas of cooperation, and the commitments arising out of NATO membership.

In this context, Minister Gajdoš said: "The security environment is constantly changing. As a member of the North Atlantic Alliance, Slovakia perceives this reality and actively contributes to and supports the activities that strengthen the defence and security of Europe and the world as such." He added that with the drafting of the MOD's strategic documents, such as the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with an Outlook to 2030, the Slovak Republic has confirmed its systematic approach to national security and defence, whilst at the same time trying to step up its contributions to NATO's collective defence and international defence and security. The leaders also touched on NATO-EU cooperation, the modernisation of the SVK Armed Forces, and the building of infrastructure in support of Allied interoperability.

During the meeting, Minister Gajdoš updated General Scaparrotti on the 2018 MOD tasks and priorities in relation to the Slovakian contribution to NATO's ongoing initiatives, especially on the SVK Armed Forces' activities in support of the NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq (NTCB-I) in the fields of demining and repairs of Soviet-era military equipment in an attempt to channel Slovakia's efforts into the international coalition's fight against terrorism. Head of the MOD, in the presence of Major General Courtney Carr, the Adjutant General of Indiana, praised the long-term cooperation with the Indiana National Guard, especially in the fields of joint exercises, training and education, with much of the current focus on SVK pilots and ground personnel being instructed in the operation of the UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Minister underscored that Slovakia is preparing its troops for the enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) deployment to Latvia, scheduled for the second half of 2018.

Chiefs of Defence Conference

(30 January) Generals from Slovakia, Czechia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and U.S. EUCOM, joined by Adjutants General of U.S. National Guards, convened for the Central European Chiefs of Defence Conference held at the Conference Hall of the SVK Foreign and European Affairs Ministry. They familiarised themselves with military mobility strategy, scheduled regional exercises, lessons learned from integrating air and missile defence and from transforming and modernising armed forces in light of today's security situation in the region.

Meeting of CSELS

(30 January) Command Senior Enlisted Leaders (CSELS) from SVK, CZE, POL, HUN, SVN, HRV, ROU, BGR, and U.S. EUCOM, joined by State Command Sergeant Majors from the countries' partner U.S. National Guards, came together for a regular meeting during the Central European Chiefs of Defence Conference. The meeting was opened by General Scaparrotti, Commander of U.S. EUCOM, and chaired by Fleet Master Chief Crispian D. Addington, Senior Enlisted Leader for U.S. EUCOM.

Minister gives coins to Dukla Olympians for good luck

(29 January) In the SVK Winter Olympic Team for Pyeongchang 2018, the Military Sports Centre (VŠC) Dukla Banská Bystrica will be most represented in individual sports, with 20 sportsmen and women in total. Veronika Velez-Zuzulová will be the flag bearer of Team Slovakia. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited Banská Bystrica on 29 Jan to say good-bye to them before their departure to South Korea. According to Lt Col Roman Benčík, Director of the VŠC Dukla, the team is prepared to the max for the Olympics. The SVK Olympic Team took the Olympic oath in the presence of the SVK President at the historic SVK Parliament Building on 30 Jan. Minister Gajdoš, too, attended the ceremony and wished everyone the best of luck. A total of 92 countries will compete in 15 disciplines at the Pyeongchang Olympic Games on 9-25 Feb 2018. Of the 56-member SVK Winter Olympic Team, 20 are members of the VŠC Dukla. The Dukla sportsmen and women will compete in three disciplines: biathlon, alpine skiing and luge. Representing the VŠC Dukla at the Winter Olympics will be biathletes Martin Otčenáš, Matej Kazár, Tomáš Hasilla, Michal Šíma, Šimon Bartko, Anastasia Kuzminová, Paulína Fialková, Ivona Fialková, Terézia Poliaková, Alžbeta Majdišová; alpine skiers Adam Žampa and Andreas Žampa, Matej Falat, Petra Vlhová, Veronika Velez-Zuzulová, Soňa Moravčíková; and luge racers Karol Stuchlák, Marek Solčanský, Jakub Šimoňák and Katarína Šimoňáková.



- The SVK-UK bilateral cooperation in the field of defence has a longstanding tradition and Slovakia and Britain have a very good relationship. This was agreed by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and **Her Majesty's Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Andrew Garth**, during their meeting at MOD Main Building on 30 Jan. Minister Gajdoš updated the UK Ambassador on the MOD's strategic documents and current modernisation projects. Also discussed was the scheduled V4 + UK meeting, with the agenda featuring, among other things, Reserve Forces.

- On the last day (31 Jan) of his visit to Slovakia, **Major General Courtney P. Carr**, Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard, accompanied by Brig Slavomir Staviansky, Chief of Staff (COS) for Strategic Planning at SVK GS, received a tour of Military History Museum Piešťany. He became familiar with the permanent exhibition and watched the museum's presentation in its 3D cinema room. At the end of the visit, the guests thanked the museum staff for preserving and promoting the military history of Slovakia.

- On 31 Jan, members of **HQ Bratislava Garrison** formed up for a Change of Command ceremony, in the presence of DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian, to mark the official handover of the post of Commander HQ Bratislava Garrison (COM HQ BA GAR) from outgoing Col Igor Jančovič to incoming Col Slavomir Milde, with effect from 1 Feb.

- The main planning conference for **Coronat Mask 2018**, an international CBRN exercise, was held between 29 Jan and 1 Feb in Liberec, Czech Republic. Taking part in the exercise will be BEL, BGR, CZE, NLD, LUX, DEU, POL, SVK and GBR. A total of 1,100 CBRN specialists will exercise across three training areas in DEU and CZE on 15-29 Sept 2018. Representing the SVK Armed Forces at the exercise will be CBRN Multipurpose Platoon and three officers from CBRN Battalion Command Staff, part of 1st Mech Bde.

- NCO Club Martin hosted a graduation ceremony for 49 successful graduates of the **NCO OR-6 Course** on 26 Jan. Sgt Ondrej Hanták, of Command Support Battalion Trenčín, was named Best Graduate of the Course.

- The final concentrated training of the Slovak Contingent before its deployment to EUFOR – ALTHEA was held on 22-26 Jan. The key part of the training – **Flaming Collector 2018**, a tactical exercise, was carried out exclusively in English as operational language. Deployable CIS Base, CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre and 2nd Mech Bde provided extensive support to the exercise.

- Munitions Testing Centre Nováky hosted a pilot **course on specialist operations with explosives, explosive devices and munitions** on 15-26 January. It focused on work with explosives, explosive devices and munitions, storage and stock records, work safety measures, packaging and marking, categorisation of explosives, and practical activities at a munitions depot.

- The SVK MOD informs drivers in Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 5-11 Feb 2018. A total of 25 Allied convoys will cross Slovakia over the period. Also planned are round trip SVK military convoys along the route between Prešov – Válaškovce and Michalovce – Zemplínska Šírava, as well as convoys with oversize cargo of equipment in Prešov and along the route between Válaškovce – Veľké Ozorovce and back.

Review of Training Year 2017

(1 February) Throughout 2018 the Armed Forces will continue to perform their tasks and goals in ensuring the defence of the State to the benefit of Slovak citizens as well as in delivering international commitments. An evaluation of TY 2017 and the tasks awaiting the Armed Forces and MOD in 2018 were presented by Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim, in the presence of President of the Slovak Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska and Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

The Minister highlighted that 2017 had been a historic marker from the perspective of the systematic modernisation of the SVK military. After a 12-year gap the MOD had come up with a new strategic framework for the defence of the State, as foreseen in the Defence, Military and Security Strategies. The MOD had worked closely on the drafting of the latter with the Foreign and EU Affairs Ministry. According to the Minister, the strategic documents, including the



MOD choosing fighter jets

(2 February) The MOD is preparing a long-term and systemic solution to the provision of SVK airspace protection. After taking office, the Minister of Defence requested the SVK GOV to effect a change to the existing decision on the procurement of fighter aircraft because of the unfeasibility of the then publically communicated bid by the Swedish side. Given the fact the most technically and economically convenient bid must be found to last for decades, this process cannot be hastened. The document will contain detailed analyses and a breakdown of the costs associated with the fighters' procurement, operation and infrastructure. Only two types of aircraft – the U.S. F16 and the Swedish JAS 39 Gripen – are now being considered for purchase. The current MOD leaders have never considered buying new Russian supersonic aircraft, and they are not considering it, either. The new proposal for the provision of SVK airspace protection will be submitted by Minister Gajdoš to the SVK Cabinet no later than 29 June 2018.

Farewell to a legend



(2 February) The interment of Maj Gen (Rtd) Ivan Otto Schwarz, who passed away at the age of 94 on 4 Jan, took place at Brookwood Military Cemetery, England. The SVK delegation, led by Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, came to pay their homage to the RAF WWII hero. The WWII cemetery, the final resting place of Maj Gen Schwarz, contains the Czechoslovak section where members of the Czechoslovak military units rest in peace. The Minister along with his delegation and the Czech delegation also paid tribute to the memory of the fallen Czechoslovak airmen and soldiers.

2nd rotation off to Iraq

(31 January) SVK soldiers will continue to train Iraqi Security Forces instructors in the fields of demining and repairs of Soviet-era military hardware. The 2nd rotation will see 24 personnel deployed to Iraq. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and CHOD General Milan Maxim bid their farewell to them during the pre-deployment ceremony on 31 Jan at Engineer Battalion Sereď. The SVK Armed Forces will be engaged in Iraq as part of a non-combat training mission in support of the NTCB-I, with the consent of the Republic of Iraq.

Conscription Amendment Act

(30 January) The Conscription Amendment Act received its formal first reading by SVK MPs. If it becomes law, Active Reservists will train under better conditions as from May 2018. The MOD-sponsored Amendment Act was approved by the SVK Security Council and Cabinet in Nov 2017. Changes apply to the self-employed and the transfer of soldiers to the Active Reserves, and are set to have a positive impact on employers.

Long-Term Defence Development Plan with an Outlook to 2030, provide systematic solutions to the defence of the State, the commitments ensuing from our membership in international organisations, and the manning issues in the Armed Forces.

President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska thanked servicemen and women for their performance of tasks. On modernisation, he called on the MOD leaders to ensure transparency and effectiveness. "We cannot disappoint the trust of our citizens," he said, adding that the fulfilment of international commitments is of equal importance.

As Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim remarked, the aim of the gathering was to provide a realistic representation of the situation that exists in the Armed Forces. "We have strategies, we have plans, and we have undertaken the first steps to replace equipment. I am pleased with the extent of attention the department is paying to the Armed Forces." He also said he values the high levels of public confidence in the Armed Forces. "It is a commitment for us," he stressed.