



Active NATO member

(14 February) SVK soldiers' active role in Afghanistan and Iraq and the scheduled SVK deployment to Latvia as part of NATO eFP attest to the fact that Slovakia is an active member of the NATO Alliance, and not just a consumer of advantages. This was announced by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš after the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels. On NATO's Defence Investment Pledge, the Minister said: "I was immensely pleased that in front of our Allies I could once again declare Slovakia's ambition to increase our defence spending up to 1.6 per cent of GDP by 2020 and 2 per cent of GDP by 2024." The Minister added that the MOD's ambition is to keep within and above the existing guideline of spending 20 percent of the defence budget on modernisation.

When it comes to the performance of Slovakia's international commitments arising out of its NATO membership, SVK personnel will remain in the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. In addition, SVK specialists continue to be on the ground in Iraq to train and build the capacities of the Iraqi Security Forces in the field of demining, which will be extended to incorporate maintenance and repairs of military hardware. "Our next activity is the deployment of our troops to the Baltics, which is scheduled for this year already, whereas they will deploy to Latvia for so-called enhanced Forward Presence under the command of Canada. For this purpose, the Ministers of all Allies involved met in a separate session to discuss our joint engagement in Latvia," said the Minister.

NATO Defence Ministers agreed, among other things, the design of an adapted NATO Command Structure, to further improve its flexibility and rapid response to the crisis situations and security threats the Alliance is currently faced with.

The meeting was concluded with a late evening session on ways to ensure follow-up cooperation between NATO and the EU, with the participation of High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini. Key topics of discussion included taking stock of the implementation of the EU-NATO Joint Declaration strengthening the strategic partnership between the two organisations and the EU's resonating security and defence initiatives in the form of PESCO.

Support from Allies

(15 February) The Slovak contribution to Iraq is highly valued by our Allies, which is reflected in the decision of several Allied countries to refund the costs associated with the SVK deployment to Iraq to the SVK MOD.

On SVK training efforts in Iraq, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I consider our role in stabilising Iraq and building the Iraqi Security Forces as our contribution to global security. At the same time, there is good news for Slovak citizens, because our Allies will refund almost 80 per cent of our costs. This success has been achieved as part of our meetings and is the result of the concentrated, purposeful and systematic work of the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO and the MOD. Moreover, by involving our Allies in the project, we have managed to make our national project multinational in the spirit of cooperation by NATO countries." He stressed that the MOD will save €820,000 to Slovak tax payers.

The announced Allied financial contributions to the SVK MOD will be as follows: €500,000 (Germany), €200,000 (Netherlands), €100,000 (Luxembourg), and €20,000 (Croatia).

Anastasiya Kuzmina collects Olympic gold after two silvers

(17 February) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš congratulated biathlete Anastasiya Kuzmina on her Olympic gold medal in Women's Biathlon 12.5km Mass Start at the 23rd Olympic Winter Games in Pyeongchang. The member of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica claimed her third Olympic medal for Slovakia at this year's Olympics. In his statement on Kuzmina's gold-winning performance, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Our Nastenka is truly golden, the words are powerless here. I am so proud of her! On behalf of the entire MOD, I extend my sincere congratulations to her. The entire world can envy us our Nastenka." The member of the VŠC Dukla Banská Bystrica won her first silver medal for Slovakia in the 10-km women's pursuit race on 12 Feb, when she made it to the second place from her initial 13th starting position. She won her second silver medal in the Women's 15km Individual on 15 Feb, when the success of the VŠC Dukla and SVK biathlon was reinforced by Paulína Fialková's 5th place. Anastasiya Kuzmina has claimed 6 Olympic medals at Winter Olympics since 2010, 3 golds and 3 silvers and she is historically Slovakia's most successful athlete.



- Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received the Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Šani Dermaku on 13 Feb at MOD Main Building before the end of his Diplomatic Service appointment in Slovakia. At the meeting, they took stock of bilateral cooperation, exchanged experience on integration processes and military reforms, and evaluated the benefits of the intergovernment treaty signed between the countries in Dec 2016. The Minister brought Ambassador Dermaku up to date on the MOD's strategic documents and modernisation processes. The Minister also appreciated the long-term cooperation between SLOVCON and SERBCON in support of UNFICYP in Cyprus, with 46 Serbian personnel currently serving the command of SLOVCON.

- Poland's Minsk Mazowiecki hosted a workshop for Military Police (MP) personnel from CZE, SVK, HRV, POL in preparation for Exercise Sharp Lynx 2018. The NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNMPPBAT) Workshop was held on 5-9 Feb.

The aim of the workshop was to assure the operational readiness of the Battalion command staff. Maj Radek Ocelka (CZE) and Maj Jaroslav Siančík (SVK), COM and DCOM MNMPPBAT, were tasked with aligning the work of the command staff core. NATO MNMPPBAT is designed to deploy on NATO operations and is capable of undertaking a wide range of specialist missions. They will be put to the test at Exercise Sharp Lynx 2018 in Brno, simulating the role of MNMPPBAT on NATO operations.

- The Great Fatra Mountains saw members of SVK Military Police and Border Police Flying Squad engaged in winter training under adverse conditions, to test their expertise and knowledge of topography, camouflage techniques, and building snow caves and holes. The practical training was preceded by a briefing and practical demonstrations, where the participants had the opportunity to try out using avalanche transceivers and probes for finding people and equipment.

- The Training, Education and Specialist Preparation Section, Specialised Medical and Veterinary Activities Branch, Office of SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Ružomberok, organised a First Aid Course, aimed at practical rehearsals of first aid, bandaging techniques, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), at its detached unit in Liptovský Mikuláš on 6-8 Feb.

- The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) and Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar and Force Commander Maj Gen Humayun Kabir visited 3rd Company on 6 Feb at the Patrol Base (PB) CP-10, which is manned by SVK personnel. They were welcomed to the PB by COM Sector 4 Jaroslav Marko and briefed on the 3rd Coy's activity in the area of responsibility by COM 3rd Coy 1st Lt Jaroslav Meleg. The UNFICYP leaders said hello to all PB soldiers and thanked them for their job well done.

- The SVK MOD informs the drivers in Slovakia of the upcoming Allied military movements, scheduled from 19-25 Feb 2018. A total of 21 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve U.S. troops transporting materiel and Czech troops travelling to Martin to attend a course. This week will also see a SVK military round trip convoy with oversize cargo of equipment along the route Hlohovec – Topoľčany.

Conference in Munich

(16-17 February) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš participated the prestigious Munich Security Conference (MSC), which is among the most significant international forums in the field of defence and security. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The security environment is changing constantly, every day brings new threats that may escalate into armed conflicts. The MSC offers a space for constructive dialogues, to facilitate the prevention of or solutions to potential or existing crisis situations. Slovakia is an active contributor to the security of Europe and the stabilisation of several regions in the world, which at this conference makes us a stable and well-respected partner for the UN, the European Union, and NATO." As part of his official programme, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with Ms Elżbieta Bieńkowska, the EU Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. They discussed the EC's current initiatives to boost the development of the EU's defence industrial base through the European Defence Fund (EDF) and its potential use for funding the successful Slovak "EuroArtillery" PESCO project.

Maj Pavlovský dies in BiH

(14 February) 42-year-old Maj Peter Pavlovský, of Zamarovce, died whilst serving with EUFOR ALTHEA. Maj Pavlovský, a member of SVK Land Forces HQ, completed two tours of duty in Afghanistan and was currently deployed on his third tour of duty in BiH. On the morning of 14 Feb a sudden deterioration in his health condition was reported, he received medical assistance immediately at his place of deployment at Camp Butmir in Sarajevo, and was transported to a local hospital where he died.

On behalf of the entire Ministry of Defence and SVK Armed Forces, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim expressed their most profound condolences to the surviving family. The MOD arranged all necessary documentation and transferred the remains of the serviceman back to Slovakia on 16 Feb.

Through the eyes of kids



(13 February) The MOD has announced the 17th Annual "Soldiers through the Eyes of Children" Visual Art Competition. Elementary school pupils are invited to express how they imagine the demanding work of servicemen and women through their drawings and paintings. Their pieces of art will provide a feedback to the MOD how children perceive the SVK Armed Forces and their work for the cause of national defence. To qualify for the competition, each entry must include the following data: name, personal address, telephone number, date of birth. The competitive entries should be sent in an envelope marked COMPETITION to the Editorial Office of Defence Monthly, SVK MOD, Kutuzovova 8, 832 47 Bratislava. The results of previous competitions confirm that the interest of children in this subject matter has been growing, which is reflected in the twofold increase in the number of entries between 2016 and 2017.

Martin-based soldiers negotiate a winter driving course

(13 February) Drivers of the Mechanised Battalion Martin drove their tracked IFVs under harsh and challenging conditions on Martin Garrison's Sučany training ground, to hone their driving skills by day and night. The remaining snow and wet boggy ground at individual sections of the 4km-long driving course made the traversing of a provisional bridge, an obstacle course, narrow passageways with restricted sideway movement, and a ford even more difficult. The tasks were carried out in daytime and nighttime conditions by drivers of 1st and 2nd Mech Coys and CS and CSS Coys. Maj Vladimír Moško, DCOM Mech Bn Martin, reminded that the assignment for the drivers of both Mech Coys came part of their preparation for the Task Group Štefánik II deployment to Latvia, scheduled for the second half of 2018, as a contribution of the SVK Armed Forces to NATO eFP.

