



## Tribute to Romanian soldiers

(23 February) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited Senohrad and Oremov Laz at the Training Centre Lešť to pay tribute to the memory of the fallen Romanian soldiers who along with the Red Army and Czechoslovak units liberated Slovakia in WWII. The commemoration ceremonies were attended by the Ambassador of Romania to Slovakia, HE Ms Steluța Arhire, and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security/Deputy Chairman of the SNS Party Anton Hrnko. The act of commemoration at the Training Centre Lešť was held at the restored Romanian Army Memorial for the first time last year.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Also here at the restored memorial, I would like to convey the words of gratitude and recognition the Rumanian soldiers deserve from us all because we are indebted to them for our long-wished freedom." In his remarks, Anton Hrnko placed particular emphasis on the value of freedom and peace. "We must never forget those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and the fact that thanks to them we have lived in safety and peace." he noted.

In her speech, Romanian Ambassador Steluța Arhire thanked for the efforts of the Slovak Government and authorities to honour the memory of her fellow countrymen. "For us Romanians, the commemoration of our heroes is very important. Therefore, on behalf of the Romanian Government and people and on behalf of myself, I would like to express my appreciation for the care provided to keep the memory of their sacrifice alive," she said.

Over 240,000 Romanian soldiers participated in the battles to liberate Slovakia, whereas more than 10,000 Romanian soldiers died in action.

## An Mi-17 in the air again

(24 February) A grounded Mi-17 helicopter earmarked for the Air Search and Rescue (SAR) Service has already been test-flown and is fully capable and ready to perform SAR missions in support of domestic crisis management. The test-flight was required after the prescribed work on the helicopter had been completed in previous days.



The temporary halt of operations of the SVK Air Force Mi-17 fleet has in no way threatened the defence capability of the Slovak Republic. The execution of SAR missions over the period the SAR helicopters could not be airborne was delivered in line with the Mutual Cooperation Agreement on Aircraft Searches and Assistance in Rescue Operations in the Event of Air Disaster by the SVK Interior Ministry helicopters. Meanwhile, the SVK Air Force put their SAR ground teams from its air bases and UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters on stand-by to assist in emergencies.

The temporary grounding of the Mi-17 helicopter fleet was ordered in an attempt to check the system of helicopter engine stock inventories over the past years. This is a preventive measure to eliminate any suspicion that the operation of the helicopters could in any way put the lives of pilots, crews or passengers in harm's way. For the SVK MOD and Armed Forces, flight safety is No. 1 priority. The MOD will provide more information once all the checks which go all the way back to the procurement of the engines in 2006 have been completed.

## Colonel Štefan Acsai becomes Commander NFIU SVK

(22 February) Colonel Štefan Acsai officially took up the appointment of Commander NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK) on 22 Feb. During the Change of Command (COC) ceremony, he replaced the historically first NFIU Commander, Colonel Jozef Zekucia, who was at the formation of the unit and the unit under his command achieved Initial Capability (IC) and Full Capability (FC). The COC ceremony held at Vajnory Barracks was attended by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš along with other SVK MOD, Armed Forces and NATO officials. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš thanked the outgoing commander, Col Jozef Zekucia, and wished the new commander, Colonel Acsai, a lot of strength and energy in his new role. Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim said: "Colonel Acsai has proved himself to be a capable organiser and commander at different levels of command." In his speech, Commander NATO MNC NE Szczecin, Lieutenant General Manfred Hofmann emphasised that NATO is aware it is inevitable to adjust to the current security situation. "The Slovak NFIU has become a stable factor in the Central European region. I am very pleased that I can cooperate with this team," he said.



## Last farewell to Maj Pavlovský



(20 February) The funeral service for Major Peter Pavlovský with full military honours was attended by his family and friends, SVK Armed Forces personnel, and MOD leaders on 20 Feb in Zamarovce at Trenčín. Major Peter Pavlovský died last week whilst on a tour of duty on Operation EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim came to pay their last homage to the deceased serviceman.

Also in attendance at the last farewell ceremony were his colleagues from SVK LF HQ Trenčín and SVK LF Commander Maj Gen Jindřich Joch. General Maxim handed over the Flag of the Slovak Republic to the deceased soldier's wife. During the funeral service, the coffin, draped in the Flag of the Slovak Republic, was placed on a catafalque in front of the funeral home, where the National Anthem was played by the SVK Armed Forces Band and the Guard of Honour fired a rifle volley in tribute to Major Peter Pavlovský.

Major Peter Pavlovský was awarded, posthumously, the Commemorative Cross for Participation in Military Operation by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and the SVK Chief of Defence Commemorative Cross by CHOD General Maxim. He was also awarded, posthumously, the EUFOR ALTHEA Medal by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission, Federica Mogherini. The medals were handed over to the next of kin. We honour his memory!

## Tasks of NCOs



(23 February) Speaking at the convention of NCOs, chaired by the Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of the SVK Armed Forces, on 22-23 Feb at 1st Mech Bde Topoľčany, CHOD General Milan Maxim said: "NCOs play an irreplaceable role in the day-to-day military life. Be it field exercises, maintenance of vehicles and combat systems, and domestic and crisis management operations. I am pleased that most officers perceive NCOs and the NCO Corps as their partners." Then CSEL Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš took stock of the results achieved by command sergeant majors in Training Year (TY) 2017. He underscored that they focused their efforts on applying changes to the career-related and specialist training and education of the NCOs and the Other Ranks. The convention saw the best NCOs recognised for their work. General Maxim congratulated SSgt Miroslav Ďurkovský, of Mech Bn Martin, on his achievements in TY17.

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- Two airmen returned to Helicopter Wing (HW) Prešov from the **Resolute Support Mission (RSM)**, Afghanistan. They received advice on maintaining and repairing Afghan helicopters. On 20 Feb they were welcomed in a homecoming ceremony by Maj Gen Lubomír Svoboda, COM SVK Air Force, Col Marián Kurill, DCOM Strategic Crisis Management Centre (GS), and Lt Col Peter Kríž, DCOM HW Prešov. Maj Gen Svoboda presented them with the War Veteran Commemorative Cross and the Medal for Participation in Military Operation.

- Col Ladislav Dovhun, Commander Anti-Aircraft Missile (AAM) Bde Nitra, and Col Ján Sediľáček, AAM Regt Strakonice, agreed to cooperate together on training activities in Training Year 2018 (TY18). The foundations of the **cooperation between SVK and CZE air defenders** have been laid on joint exercises over the past years.

- Transport Wing (TW) Kuchyňa hosted the **Aircraft Exit Specialists Course and Conversion Training** on 19-21 Feb. They were attended by members of the SVK Air Force, 5th SOF Regt, and ISTAR Bn. Aircraft exit specialists familiarised themselves with the technical specifications of equipment used for airborne operations, especially the paratrooper kit for the L-410 aircraft and the Mi-17M/SAR helicopter.

- A group of military diplomats accredited to the Slovak Republic visited the **Topographical Institute** on 22 Feb. Following a briefing on the Institute's past and present, key tasks and products, they received a tour of the Institute's production facilities and visited the Topographical Institute Hall of Fame.

- Personnel from Transport Wing (TW) Kuchyňa carried out an **independent staff rehearsal** on the Command Staff premises, focused on domestic crisis management. The aim of the exercise was to update standing operational procedures for emergencies. The output will be used for managing the deployments of TW forces and assets on domestic crisis management ops.

- Banská Bystrica-based SNP Museum Education Centre hosted the **International Conference on Nazi Policy on Slavic Nations** on 21 and 22 Feb. It was organised by the SNP Museum Banská Bystrica in close cooperation with the Institute of Military History (MOD) and the Institute of History (SAV).

- The SVK MOD informs the drivers in Slovakia of the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 26 Feb – 4 Mar 2018. A total of 27 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve POL troops transporting materiel, U.S. Army convoys, and CZE troops en route to TC Lešť for a training exercise. This week will also see SVK military round trip convoys with oversize cargo of equipment along the routes: Prešov – Martin – Valaškovce; Prešov – Trenčín – Nemecká; and Sereď – Nemecká.

## Logisticians learn to protect convoys under winter conditions at Lešť

(22 February) While a convoy was moving from one base to another, it struck multiple IEDs and met a simulated opposing force who ambushed it with small arms fire. The explosion rocked the command post vehicle carrying the convoy commander. The damage to the vehicle made it unroadworthy, the driver was seriously injured, and the commander was dead. Other vehicles were damaged as well and their crews suffered various types of injuries. The Second-in-Command took over and put convoy defensive arrangements in place. His soldiers



Convoy Protection Course participants had to work through at the Training Centre Lešť. The course was aimed at members of Tpt Coy, of Log Bn Hlohovec, and for the elements of CSS Bde Trenčín, i.e. Repairs Bn Martin, Log Bn Topoľčany, and CSS Bn Prešov. The main task was to sustain and unfold the capabilities necessary for the defence of logistic convoys so as to make soldiers familiar with the protection of convoy platforms in the face of hostile incidents and situations. The loggies at Lešť had to become adjusted to adverse winter weather conditions, including low temperatures, snow and sleet. The exercise culminated with a convoy ambush, where the exercising troops applied everything they had learned during the course.