



## Centenary of Czechoslovakia

(28 October) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš participated in the first part of the official celebrations of 100 years of Czechoslovakia's formation in Prague on 27 and 28 October. As part of the centenary celebrations of the independent state of Czechs and Slovaks, the Slovak delegation attended the reopening of the National Museum in Prague.

Speaking on the occasion of Czechoslovakia's centenary, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The period leading up to the foundation of the independent Czechoslovak Republic is one of the most decisive milestones in our history. That is why I am very happy that we commemorate the moments that have fundamentally shaped our history, be that today here in Prague or on 30 October in Martin where we will mark the 100th anniversary of the adoption of the Martin Declaration."

On Sunday the official programme commenced with an act of commemoration at the National Monument on Vitkov Hill. Members of the public were treated to a large military parade, a flypast of aircraft, and a static display of armaments, equipment and clothing.

While in Prague, Peter Gajdoš met with U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis for talks. Topics of discussion included Slovakia's modernization programmes, commitments vis-à-vis NATO, and hike in defence spending. On the modernization of the SVK military, the first four UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters have already entered service with the SVK Air Force. Moreover, earlier this summer the SVK Cabinet made a strategic decision giving the green light to the purchase of the U.S. F-16 fighter jet fleet.

On the SVK-U.S. defence relationship, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The United States of America is our strategic partner and the decision to modernise our tactical combat squadron with the U.S. F-16 fighter aircraft has strengthened our defence relationship."

The Minister updated the U.S. Secretary of Defense on further modernization programmes proceeding in line with the 2030 Defence Modernization Plan, with focus on 3D radars and ground assets.

U.S. Secretary of Defense J. Mattis was interested in the progress of the F-16 fighter jets purchase contract. He confirmed that the United States is ready to train SVK pilots and ground technicians. He appreciated Slovakia's hike in defence spending, with the defence budget rising to 1.73 per cent of GDP next year. The U.S. Secretary of Defense said: "You are a proof of the fact that a small country can bring big news."

## Modernization of Armed Forces delivers tangible results

(27 October) The SVK Armed Forces' historically largest modernization is delivering its tangible results. Under the new conditions, gunners are exercising in a way they have not done for years due to unavailability of military equipment. A case in point is the latest live firing of the Zuzana 2000 Self-propelled Gun Howitzers (SpGH) with the targets identified and the coordinates passed on from a helicopter, which has not been practised for over 20 years, as this week a UH-60M Black Hawk helicopter has provided guidance to artillery fire at the Training Centre Lešť. Commenting on the artillery training, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "It is almost unbelievable that we are now conducting this type of training after 20 years, which means that some service personnel have never had the opportunity to undergo such training over the course of their career in the Armed Forces. Thanks to our modernization programmes and defence investments, I believe this will change and joint Army and Air Force exercises will become a matter of routine." Taking part in the training are members of the 1st Fire Battery and the Reconnaissance Battery, Self-Propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce. The live firing tests the capabilities of the SpGHs, whereas the coordinates are passed on from a helicopter with the use of the newly fielded DELOSYS Fire Control System. The training involves 130 personnel and 32 assets. Communications are supported by soldiers from the Communications and Information Systems Base Ružomberok.



■ On 26 Oct, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received **UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq** and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) **Ján Kubiš** at MOD Main Building. The agenda was dominated by an assessment of the SVK military presence in the NATO Training and Capability Building Activity in Iraq (NTCB-I) and the planned engagement of Slovakia in the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) early next year.

■ On 18 Oct, **Military Bishop Mons František Rábek** consecrated the Chapel of St Francis of Assisi at the Training Centre Lešť and officiated a Pontifical Holy Mass, with the participation of military and police chaplains, TC Lešť soldiers and employees, and other guests.

■ Throughout Sept and Oct, the number of recipients of the **Prof MUDr Ján Janský Plaque** from the Stationary Communications and Information Systems Base for blood donations has risen, with MSgt Lenka Benková and Capt Milan Grznár receiving the silver and golden plaquettes.

■ The **Institute of Military History (VHÚ)** is staging a panel exhibition entitled *'Legionaries – Our Heroes of the Great War 1914-1918'* at the Turčianska Library in Martin. This significant period of Slovak military history is captured in texts and photos on 14 panels. The VHÚ has opened yet another panel exhibition *'M. R. Štefánik: A soldier, a politician and an astronomer'* at M. R. Štefánik Elementary School in Piešťany.

■ On 24 Oct, **HQ Combat Service Support Brigade Trenčín** hosted a ceremony to mark the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1 and the founding of Czechoslovakia. Commander of the Brigade Col Zuzana Kraushuberová presented selected HQ CSS Bde personnel with the Armed Forces Badge, the Chief of Defence Badge, and the Military Cross for Loyalty to SVK Armed Forces.

■ The Trnava Town Sports Hall hosted the **WUAP World Powerlifting Championships 2018** on 15-21 Oct in Trnava. **SSgt Martin Olejár**, of Stationary CIS Base Trenčín, became the **World Champion** and won the gold medal in the deadlift discipline in the U140kg weight category, breaking the **world record** by deadlifting 300kg. At the same time, he won the silver medal and became the Vice World Champion in Powerlifting with the results: squat (260kg), bench press (170kg), and deadlift (300kg).

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be **18 military road movements** across Slovakia in the period between 29 Oct and 4 Nov 2018. They will mainly involve CZE and POL troops. In addition, SVK Army vehicles carrying oversized cargo will move along the routes: Martin – Liptovský Mikuláš – Donovaly – Nemecká; Nitra – Turčianske Teplice – Martin; and Prešov – Vranov nad Topľou – Michalovce.

## Anti-flood defences

(23 October) Anti-flood detention basins in the former Military District Javorina have protected nearly 40,000 residents against flooding. Military Forests and Estates, a state-owned company under the SVK MOD, built 11 anti-flood detention basins and implemented 260 biotechnical measures throughout 2015. Benefiting from EU funds, it intends to build another 20 anti-flood detention basins in the near future. This information was provided during the visit of Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš to the company's branch in Kežmarok by Director General of Military Forests and Estates Ján Jurica. "That the anti-flood detention basins have prevented natural disasters from happening in Kežmarok, Stará Ľubovňa, Podolinec, Ľubica and in other surrounding villages is of inestimable value. This is why we support the efforts to extend the building of new anti-flood detention basins to other locations," said Peter Gajdoš.

## CHOD in visit to USA

(22 October) SVK CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko visited the United States of America. He met with Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) André Lanata before heading to Washington, DC to meet with Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) Lt Gen Charles Hooper for talks on the SVK Armed Force's modernization via FMS and the planned F-16 fleet acquisition. He then participated in the C-VEO Chiefs of Defense Conference, where he met for talks with Director for Strategic Plans and Policy Lt Gen Richard D. Clarke and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Joseph F. Dunford. Afterwards he visited Indiana at the invitation of Adjutant General of Indiana Maj Gen Courtney P. Carr.

## EUMC in CHODs format



(25 October) Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko attended the EU Military Committee (EUMC) in the EU Chiefs of Defence (CHODs) format on 24-25 Oct in Brussels. Topics included the EPF non-budgetary fund in support of CSDP

activities in 2021-2027, CSDP ongoing operations and training missions. Lt Gen Zmeko met with Chairman of EUMC Gen Kostarakos. He thanked him for the cooperation thus far and gave him an official accolade for his role in developing the relations between the EUMC and the SVK Armed Forces. The EU-NATO cooperation was presented by CMC Gen Sir Stuart Peach and DSACEUR Gen Sir James Everard. HR/VC Federica Mogherini updated on the implementation of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS). At the end of the meeting, Gen Mikhail Kostarakos handed over his post to Gen Claudio Graziano (ITA), who will assume office as CEUMC on 6 Nov.

## Procurement of Vydra 8x8 IFVs will contribute to meeting operational requirements

(22 October) With the procurement of Vydra 8x8 IFVs in line with the 2030 Long-Term Defence Development Plan, the MOD will meet the operational requirements of the SVK Armed Forces to a full extent, whilst taking account of the vehicle's required ballistic protection level, firepower, mobility and swimming capability. "The capabilities required for the vehicle have been verified and confirmed in several types of trials," said Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko. Should there be a requirement to increase the level of ballistic protection on the vehicle, he added, this solution is technically feasible. "If that is the case, our planners reckon with the vehicle's limited mobility in clearing water obstacles. This planning assumption is understandable, because today there is no such

vehicle whose ballistic protection would be Level 4 and above in a required configuration that could swim across water obstacles. The system of enhancing the ballistic protection of vehicles by fitting additional armour is a worldwide trend, one which improves the flexibility of the vehicle in terms of its operational use and saves resources markedly," he said. According to his own words, among the many crucial steps ahead is, above all, the vehicle's advanced anti-tank guided weapon system and fully interoperable communications and information system, including the ability to transfer classified information up to NATO Secret.

The aim of NATO defence planning is to harmonise national plans with NATO

requirements. This means harmonising the requirements of SVK defence planners for the final shape of the SVK Army's combat segment with NATO's requirement for a heavy mechanised brigade. Aligned with the 2030 Long-Term Defence Development Plan, the SVK Army's combat segment is comprised of 7 battalions, i.e. 1 motorised battalion (equipped with 4x4 vehicles), 2 mechanised battalions (equipped with 8x8 IFVs), 3 heavy battalions (equipped with tracked vehicles), and 1 tank battalion.

As part of consultations with the NATO defence capability review team, we explained the order of sequence to achieve the final shape of the SVK Army's combat segment and mechanised brigade according to NATO requirements. As

part of Phase 1, 1 artillery unit will be complemented gradually and reequipped with the Zuzana 2 SpGH. The outdated BVP 1 vehicles will be replaced by the Vydra 8x8 IFV fleet. A tank battalion, equipped with the T-72 tanks after a partial upgrade and life extension programme, will have been stood up by 2024, with the acquisition of 4th generation tanks scheduled after 2025. As the BVP 2 fleet will be phased out, new advanced combat tracked vehicles will be fielded after 2024 in line with the Long-Term Defence Development Plan. The structure of the heavy mechanised brigade in terms of NATO requirements and other tasks arising out of NATO and EU commitments will be delivered flexibly, depending on the availability of military assets.