



Minister visits Sarajevo

(6 December) On his official visit to Sarajevo, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with Minister of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina Marina Pendeš for talks on the SVK deployment on Op EUFOR ALTHEA and the potential areas of cooperation on training and education between the SVK and BiH Armed Forces.

Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The Western Balkans region is among the priorities of Slovak foreign policy. This has been evidenced by the deployment of SVK soldiers on Op EUFOR ALTHEA." He expressed his conviction that the Euro-Atlantic community offers good prospects for the security and stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina. "We are ready to share our expertise on education and training and help this country on the road to building a stable and peaceful environment," he added.

Head of the SVK MOD underlined Slovakia's role as Lead Nation for the LOT Coordination Centre (LCC). "At present 41 SVK personnel are posted to Op EUFOR ALTHEA and NATO HQ Sarajevo. We are planning to strengthen our contribution by another two servicemen with effect from April 2019, to conduct reconnaissance and intelligence missions as we declared at the informal meeting of EU defence ministers in Vienna. This will not be about increasing our troop levels on the ground but about changing the structure of our contribution in line with the current requirements," he added.

During the bilateral meeting, the ministers agreed on the need to update the SVK-BiH defence cooperation agreement, to reflect today's areas of cooperation. Minister Gajdoš also met with Maj Gen Martin Dorfer (AUS), Commander EUFOR ALTHEA, who expressed his appreciation for the work of SVK personnel in BiH.

Presents ahead of Christmas

(6 December) On his official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš paid a visit to SVK personnel carrying out the tasks of Op EUFOR ALTHEA. At a pre-Christmas meeting with SVK soldiers, he handed over 7 new vehicles to them.



Traditionally, he also brought them a Christmas tree and ingredients for the Christmas sauerkraut soup from Slovakia. He used the occasion to say "Thank You" to them for maintaining high standards of performance and their commitment to peace and security. He reminded that almost 850 SVK servicemen and women have rotated in and out of Op EUFOR ALTHEA since its inception.

Chief of Defence Lt Gen Zmeko added that the SVK Contingent has been an integral part of EUFOR troops in BiH, he said: "By carrying out their operational duties and responsibilities, our troops are delivering on the goals of Op EUFOR ALTHEA, to ensure there is no recurrence of violence," said Head of the Armed Forces. Lt Col Štefan Rigas, Commander SLOVCON Op EUFOR ALTHEA, appreciated the delivery of the new vehicles: "Also thanks to the new equipment, I am convinced we will discharge our duties even better."

The Slovak Republic has been the Lead Nation (LN) for the LOT Coordination Centre (LCC) since 1 September 2012, with its Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs) monitoring the situation across the whole of BiH. SVK personnel have been posted to NATO HQ Sarajevo and three LOTs based in Novo Sarajevo, Foča and Višegrad. As of today, there are 41 SVK personnel serving in BiH.

Winners of 14th MOD Literary Competition collect prizes

(7 December) Winners of the 14th MOD Literary Competition visited the MOD, to collect prizes for their winning essays from Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš and General Secretary Ján Hoľko. This year MOD judges assessed 130 competitive entries written by secondary school and college/university students on the theme of '8s in Slovak Military History and their Influence on our Present'. The prizes in the College/University Students category went to Laura Belicajová (1st place), of Comenius University in Bratislava, Peter Kromka (2nd place), of Comenius University in Bratislava, and Martina Pomikalová (3rd place), of Catholic University in Ružomberok. The Secondary School Students category was won by Christina Zelísková (1st place), of Ivan Kupec Grammar School in Hlohovec, Mária Čápayová (2nd place), of School for Exceptionally Gifted Children and Grammar School in Bratislava, and Denisa Fujašová (3rd place), of St Francis of Assisi Grammar School in Žilina and Children's Art School in Kysucké Nové Mesto. Four competitive entries were selected from each category by MOD judges. Of them, three best entries were chosen by the public in an online vote on SVK MOD Facebook. The online vote, which lasted from 24 November and until the midnight of 29 November, attracted 3,103 voters.



■ **Instructors of the Training HQ, Military Academy Vyškov**, practised fighting in built-up areas at the shooting facilities located at the Training Centre Lešť. The Czech Republic has no training premises where troops can practise firing with live ammunition inside buildings. In the future, TC Lešť plans to organise a higher level shooting course for instructors.

■ Working in collaboration with the SVK Embassy in Nicosia and the Slovak Flamingos School in Cyprus, members of the SVK UNFICYP Contingent prepared an **Advent event** where they decorated a Christmas tree and gave a presentation of their work in Cyprus. On St Nicholas Day, the colourful Christmas tree also attracted 'St Nicholas' to Štefánik Camp, Famagusta.

■ Romania marked the Centenary of the Great Union. The Centenary celebrations saw a **military parade in Bucharest**, with the participation of the Romanian Armed Forces and partner armed forces from more than 20 countries. Also in attendance were 20 members of the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour, led by Capt Miroslav Smolka, from HQ Bratislava Garrison.

■ **The Tactical Wing Sliac has a new commander**. 8 years on since assuming command of Sliac Air Base, General Staff Col Vladimír Lisý handed over to his SinC, Lt Col Martin Kuterka. The Change of Command (COC) ceremony took place on 4 December, in the presence of Commander SVK Air Force Maj Gen Lubomír Svoboda and other guests.

■ Call desk at the **Museum of Military History Piešťany** was restored on 7 Dec and is contactable on +421 337 913 804 (fixed line). Group visits (at least 10 visitors) to the museum can also be ordered on +421 903 544 299 (mobile phone).

■ The three-week pre-deployment training for the SVK personnel to be deployed to UNFICYP, Cyprus culminated with a **final tactical exercise** on Nitra Garrison's training ground at Koliňanský vrch. The readiness of the rotating unit was tested by a Strategic Crisis Management Centre internal control team, led by Col Lubomír Podhorec, and a SVK Air Force Commander's committee, led by Maj Vladimír Smolej. 101 service personnel, of whom 8 were women, took part in the exercise. Of them, the 70 best performing soldiers and 2 military policemen will depart for Cyprus in the middle of March 2019.

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be **Allied military road movements**, mostly involving USA, CZE and POL troops, across Slovakia from 10-16 Dec 2018. In addition, SVK Army vehicles carrying oversized cargo will drive in convoy from Martin via Zemianske Kostolany, Zvolen and Košice to Michalovce and from Trenčín via Žilina and Prešov to Michalovce.

Culmination of 5th SOF Regt Žilina Combat Readiness certification

(4 December) The roughly 10-day certification of the SVK SOF Task Force, of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, culminated at the Training Centre Lešť on Tuesday. The aim of the Special Operations Forces Evaluation (SOFEVAL) process was to certify the unit for the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF). Ex Samson 18 was held as part of the certification, testing the unit's ability to plan SOF operations at the tactical level and to exercise C2. "During today's culmination of the exercise you could see SOF operatives, acting on intelligence updates, arrest a person of



interest and search through a residential building," said Col Miroslav Gardlo, Commander 5th SOF Regt, adding that "A SOF team, supported by MWDs, conducted a raid." Ex Samson 2018 ran concurrently with Ex Anakonda 2018 in Poland, where Polish SOF units trained under POL Armed Forces Command. The SOFEVAL process in Slovakia was overseen by a special of evaluators from the NATO Special Operations Headquarters (NSHQ), Belgium. 62 members of 5th SOF Regt Žilina took part in the exercise, with another 26 personnel playing the role of an exercise control team and an enemy force.

New vehicles for MP



(7 December) Military Police received 21 new pick-ups. Having procured the vehicles via an e-auction, the MOD saved €103,982 and spent the money on more vehicles for Military Police. Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš and General Secretary Ján Hoľko

handed over the new vehicles to military policemen in a handover ceremony at the SVK MOD. Military Police will use the new vehicles for incident response to support investigation teams, crime technicians, military working dog (MWD) handlers, and patrol teams as they conduct preventive law enforcement, inspections of offence and crime scenes, detection and collection of trace evidence, and patrolling. The vehicles will be assigned to MP units based on their current requirements.

NATO Mission Iraq



(4 December) SVK Army soldiers and Military Police personnel will deploy to Iraq to perform tasks as part of the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). The proposal for their deployment was approved by Parliament. 42 Armed Forces personnel will serve in Iraq, providing advice and training

for Iraqi defence and security forces in order to stabilise the security situation in the country. The non-combat NATO Mission Iraq evolved out of the NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq (NTCB-I) as early as July 2018.

MP Amendment Act



(4 December) Military policemen are closer to having their powers extended, which will allow them to perform tasks to a higher standard and more efficiently. MPs will now move on to debate the second reading of the MOD-

sponsored Military Police Amendment Act in Parliament. It contains several changes, including a range of sanctions for illegal use of SVK Military Police uniforms, badges and insignia. If approved, the Amendment Act will come into force on 1 April 2019. It explicitly delineates the powers of military policemen in escorting foreign convoys, and extends their competences when detaining trespassers who have trespassed on military sites. On unauthorised entries by drones at military installations, it allows military policemen to detain the drone operator and terminate the drone's flight.