



## Struggle for Freedom Day

(17 November) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Parliamentary Chairman Andrej Danko today paid their respects to the memory of all those who laid down their lives in the struggle for a democratic society and freedom in a ceremony held at the Memorial to the Communist-Era Political Prisoners Executed and Tortured to Death at Vrakuňa Cemetery, Bratislava.

In his remarks, Head of the SVK MOD said: "It's not so long ago when freedom and democracy were suppressed, and people were persecuted and punished for their critical opinions. Today our thanks go out to all those who were not afraid to rise up against the Communist regime and struggled for the cause of democracy." He added that democracy is a value we must always respect and protect. "Recently, we have witnessed that increasingly more and more people are inclined towards extremism and are drawn to radical groups, and that is very dangerous. Indeed, democracy and freedom can never be taken for granted," emphasised the Minister. In the afternoon, the Minister of Defence also remembered Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day in an act of remembrance at a memorial in Bratislava's Devin.

A day earlier, SVK MOD civil servants, civilian employees and military professionals gathered at the MOD Club for a ceremony to promote the message of 17 November 1989. Speaking in front of the gathered audience, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "In retrospect, what deserves our admiration is the fact that our nation managed to close ranks and endured without giving up on its demands until we crossed the finishing line. And now there is only one task for us: to protect and to respect what we have managed to achieve and to never take it for granted."

He also expressed his gratitude to MOD employees and SVK Armed Forces personnel for their role in delivering defence and strengthening democracy by performing their duties in a responsible manner.

## PESCO is an opportunity

(13 November) Our participation in the EU's Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is an opportunity for us to strengthen our defence capabilities employable for national purposes or in the delivery of our international commitments. At the same time, it means stepping up cooperation with the other Armed Forces from EU Member States. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš made this announcement after signing a joint notification on the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) along with State Secretary of the Foreign and European Affairs Ministry Ivan Korčok and representatives from 22 other EU Member States in a signing ceremony. On PESCO, Minister Gajdoš said: "The SVK Armed Forces are currently faced with a number of significant modernisation projects, which will take a lot of effort. It is PESCO that creates room for using this effort more efficiently. For example, consider research & development (R&D) or joint procurement of military assets." He added that PESCO offers opportunities for greater involvement of the SVK defence industry in international projects. As its first PESCO project, Slovakia seeks to develop the so-called Indirect Fire Support project. At today's meeting, EU Defence Ministers also assessed the progress achieved in the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence, which is considerable, especially when it comes to the defence and security measures encompassed in the Strategy. The meeting was preceded by a V4 ministerial session.

## President backs the intent to involve SVK companies in procurement

(14 November) In a meeting with Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and MOD leaders, SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska appreciated that the SVK Government and the MOD are considering getting as many SVK producers as possible involved in the procurement of combat vehicles for the SVK Armed Forces. In addition, he underscored the necessity to go on modernising the SVK Armed Forces, whilst keeping the entire process transparent. At the meeting, the Minister informed the President of the procurement process for the combat vehicles. "I want to emphasise that we should participate in the manufacture of the 8x8 platforms by up to 70 per cent and in the manufacture of the 4x4 platforms by up to 80 per cent, if developments remain favourable," said Head of the MOD, while underlining that the Slovak Republic will be the 100 per cent owner of the products, which means that it will be able to sell them abroad. "I have informed President Kiska of the ways in which we are going to implement the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with Emphasis on Building and Developing the SVK Armed Forces with an Outlook to 2030, which has been endorsed by the SVK Government," added the Minister. The document envisages defence spending estimates of 1.6 % of GDP by 2020 and 2 % of GDP by 2024. In his remarks, the President highlighted that the solution is supported by an analysis conducted by the Value for Money Body, of the SVK Finance Ministry. "Modernisation is a commitment towards our citizens, towards the defence readiness of our country, and towards our Allies," emphasised SVK President A. Kiska.



- DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko participated in an act of remembrance on the occasion of War Veterans Day at the Memorial to the Fallen Members of the Royal Air Force (RAF) in Čunovo near Bratislava on 12 Nov. "British and Slovak soldiers deployed on missions, operations and exercises build on the heroic cooperation of their predecessors in the period of WWII," said the UK Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr Andrew John Garth.

- A joint training for Civil and Military Cooperation (CIMIC) specialists from Poland, Romania, Czechia and Slovakia, led by a U.S. Mobile Training Team (MTT), got underway on 13 Nov at the CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre, based at SNP Martin Barracks. The training was focused on CIMIC capabilities, tasks and environment analysis, utilising U.S. tools for CIMIC planning and implementation. As part of the course, participants practised techniques for conducting meetings, negotiations and mediations.

- The SVK Chief of Defence paid a two-day visit to Prague at the invitation of his Czech counterpart. He participated in a solemn concert of the Central Military Band of the Army of the Czech Republic at Prague's Rudolfinum on the occasion of Veterans Day and discussed involving the SVK Armed Forces in next year's centenary commemorations of Czechoslovakia's establishment, in the presence of SVK Ambassador Peter Weiss.

- The Training and Replenishment Base Martin hosted a graduation ceremony for graduates of the OR-6 and OR-7 NCO Courses on 10 Nov. The aim of the course was to prepare qualified soldiers in the ranks of Sergeant and Staff Sergeant who will be promoted to Staff Sergeant and Sergeant 1st Class. Sgt Rastislav Dolinsky, of AAM Bde Nitra, and SSgt Pavol Kmečik, of 5th SOF Regiment.

- The National Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL) Team, of SVK General Staff, carried out the first phase of National Capabilities Target 2013 – Mechanised Brigade evaluation, with particular focus on Mech Bde HQ's all arms preparation, CBRN readiness, combat readiness, personnel, protection of classified information, CIS, logistics, military medicine, legal and financial service. In his final assessment on 16 Nov, Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian, Commander CREVAL Team, deemed the BDE HQ COMBAT PREPARED.

- The SVK MOD releases this traffic alert on the upcoming Allied military movements, scheduled from 20 to 26 Nov 2017. A total of 29 Allied road moves and 2 railway movements will take place across Slovakia over the period. These will mainly include U.S. and Hungarian convoys transporting troops and military assets.

## Minister meets Dutch Ambassador

(14 November) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met the new Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Slovak Republic, HE Mr Henk Cor van der Kwast, at MOD Main Building. They addressed current topics of relevance on NATO and EU defence and security cooperation and SVK-NLD bilateral cooperation. At today's meeting, Minister Gajdoš suggested to Ambassador Kwast that the Netherlands consider the Dutch Armed Forces' participation in the Centre of Excellence EOD Trenčín and in the NFIU Slovakia. He also appreciated the longstanding support of the Netherlands for the International Staff Officers Course (ISOC), which is delivered by the SVK Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš, and thanked for the Dutch Air Force's regular attendance at the Slovak International Air Fest (SIAF). He also underscored the engagement of both countries in Afghanistan, where some SVK military personnel operated under the command of the Netherlands. Ambassador Kwast showed keen interest in the use by the Dutch military of the Training Centre (TC) Lešt' and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Defence Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostoľany.

## Results of MOD-wide displays

(13 September) The results of the MOD-wide competitive displays – Photo Attack and Gallery MIL – were announced for the year 2017 at the Trenčín Garrison Club. A total of 101 authors from across SVK Armed Forces units and facilities participated in them with 343 competitive entries. In the Photo Attack competition, Lt Col (Rtd) Zdenko Zatkó, of Personnel Office Liptovský Mikuláš, triumphed in the Woman in the SVK Armed Forces category, SSgt Aleš Mucha, of C2S Wing Zvolen, took first place in the SVK Armed Forces through Camera Lens category, and Jaroslav Matejček, of Trenčín Garrison Club, won the Freestyle category. The Gallery MIL competition saw Mariana Petříková, of Personnel Office Liptovský Mikuláš, as the winner in the Painting and Sculpture category, Jarmila Fabiánová, of Trenčín Garrison Club, came out on top of the list in the Applied Arts category, and Miriama Šimonová, of Trebišov, was left to celebrate in the Children's Works category. Also recognised were representatives of the Trenčín, Bratislava, Zvolen, Prešov and Liptovský Mikuláš Garrison Clubs, and among them was the doyan of military culture in Slovakia, Col (Rtd) Mikuláš Horváth.

## SVK MOD State Secretary in Berlin

(14 November) State Secretary of the SVK MOD R. Ondrejčsák held talks with representatives of the German Federal Ministry of Defence and leading foreign policy experts in Berlin. With his counterpart Parliamentary State Secretary R. Brauksiepe, Secretary Ondrejčsák discussed areas of potential multinational cooperation on removing capability shortfalls through different formats. Both officials gave their assessments of the bilateral cooperation in light of the Enhanced Structured Intergovernmental Dialogue, approved in April 2017.

## Sered'-based divers practise firing from the water



(19 November) With Training Year (TY) 2017 drawing to its end, Sered'-based Engineer Battalion reconnaissance divers, led by Sgt 1st Class Michal Ščepko, engaged in a control tasking on Sered' Garrison's firing range in Tomášikovo in a somewhat unusual manner – wearing wet suits and diver protective masks, they handled a range of firing tasks on emerging out of the water on to the shore. In doing so, the divers had their wet suits and closed circuit rebreathers on, which limited their movement and firing. The most complicated was the ascent out of the water and firing. The divers ascending out of the water in pairs had to move in a synchronised manner. "Based on the results of the firing exercise I can say with satisfaction that all divers on the exercise did well. I am pleased I was not mistaken about them. Everyone experienced first-hand that firing with a wet suit on is a lot more difficult than when wearing a classic combat uniform. But we need more training on this. We need to keep on training in the future," concluded Sgt 1st Class Ščepko.