



Solid basis for cooperation

(16 April) The defence cooperation between Slovakia and Croatia has a solid basis and the potential to go from strength to strength, be it at the bilateral level, within the European Union and NATO, or in the regional V4 and CEDC formats, which are currently chaired by Slovakia. This announcement was made by SVK Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš and HRV Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević during a press conference at the SVK MOD on 16 April 2019. Damir Krstičević was on an official visit to Slovakia.

Speaking at the press conference, Defence Minister Gajdoš said: "Slovakia and Croatia have cooperated actively in a number of fields – be it on joint international training activities or the collaboration between air forces or Military Police." He also underscored the significance of international cooperation, where he praised Croatia's accession to the V4 European Union Battlegroup (V4 EU BG), which is to be on stand-by in the second half of 2019.

Head of the MOD further underlined the potential for advancing collaboration on armaments at the levels of the SVK and HRV MODs and arms manufacturers, with emphasis on supporting their domestic defence industrial bases. He explained: "Such partnership already exists, for example, between Aircraft Repair Company Trenčín (LOTN) and Aeronautical Technical Centre (ZTC), both state-owned joint stock companies, in the field of powerplant repairs for Mi-8/17 helicopters."

Speaking at the press conference, Croatian Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Damir Krstičević said: "Slovakia and Croatia are participating together in the EU's two Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects – Military Mobility and Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe. By participating in these projects, we point to the importance of cooperation in the field of defence within the EU." He added that during the meeting, they agreed on the need to update the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on defence cooperation between the countries. "The existing Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation of 1997 is outdated and it is about time we published a new version and thus supported the cooperation between both countries in the fields of officer education, exchange of cadets, Military Police, Special Operations Forces, air forces, and defence industry," he said.

To advance collaboration on education and training, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš presented his counterpart an offer of unique training facilities in Slovakia – the CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostoľany and the Training Centre Lešť. Minister Gajdoš was also pleased to offer recreational stays for HRV military personnel, MOD employees and their families in SVK military recreational facilities.

During his official visit to Slovakia, Minister Krstičević was also received by Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Anton Hrnko at the National Council of the Slovak Republic.

New partner for NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion project

(15 April) Based on Georgia (GEO)'s interest in entering NATO, the GEO MOD is cooperating on several initiatives with its foreign partners via the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP). One of the initiatives is the SNGP Military Police Initiative, which is aimed at the GEO Military Police (MP) joining the activity of the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNPBAT).

For this reason and following the agreement of all parties involved, members of the NATO MNMPBAT conducted an initial readiness/capabilities evaluation of the GEO MP in Georgia's Vaziani on 7-13 April 2019, to analyse the status of the GEO MP's capabilities ahead of their inclusion into the NATO MNMPBAT. Running parallel with the evaluation exercise, on 9-13 April 2019, delegations of the NATO MNMPBAT participating countries held initial talks on the SNGP Military Police Initiative with officials of the GEO MOD, to be exact, GEO DCHOD Brig Gen Shalva Jabakhidze, Commander of the GEO MP Col Abesal Manjavidze, and representatives of the SNGP project. Also introduced at the meeting was the GEO MP's mission, structure and tasks, combined with live MP capability demonstrations. While the HRV delegation presented the NATO MNMPBAT's structure and tasks, the SVK delegation elaborated on the basic legal documents concerning the NATO MNMPBAT.

The talks culminated with representatives of the NATO MNMPBAT presenting an evaluation report on the GEO MP capabilities and with the GEO MP being offered partnership in the NATO MNMPBAT project, with the clear aim of further bolstering the cooperation with the GEO MP, which is set to culminate in the GEO MP's fully fledged membership of the NATO MNMPBAT.



■ This year's second meeting of the SVK Air Force Commander's Military Council was held on 17 Apr 2019. In attendance were Commander of the SVK Air Force Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda, Director of the Military Aviation State Administration Branch Ľubomír Žák (MOD), Chief of the SVK Air Force Support Branch Col Adolf Uličný (GS), Chief Inspector of Flight Safety Col Ján Salaj (MOD).

■ Mayor of Žilina Peter Fiabáne visited the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina on 16 Apr 2019, to familiarise himself with the Regiment's history, mission and capabilities. He was accompanied by 2nd Deputy Mayor of Žilina Barbora Birnerová.

■ Attendees of the Higher Command Staff Course paid a visit to the Tactical Wing Sliach on 17 Apr 2019, to familiarise themselves with the Wing's mission and tasks. The guests were welcomed by Chief of Staff of Tactical Wing Sliach Lt Col Rastislav Kučera, who briefed them on the Wing's history, organizational structure and key tasks. The official programme continued with an L-39 aircraft simulator demonstration and a static display of aircraft in the grounds of the Technical Repairs and Prescribed Works Squadron.

■ Commander of the SVK ARMY Command Support Battalion Lt Col Michal Rážga bid farewell to his 2IC Maj Peter Králik, who is to take up the appointment of Commander of the Munitions Depot Sklené, during a farewell ceremony on 15 Apr 2019. Speaking on behalf of the Commander of the SVK Army, DCOS SVK ARMY HQ Col Ján Drevenák thanked Maj Králik for the job well done.

■ The 72nd Devin – Bratislava National Run was held on 14 Apr 2019. Of 6,085 runners, 19 were servicemen of the SVK Presidential Guard of Honour (GOH) and 9 of them competed in the run while dressed in field uniform. The GOH team, reinforced by members of the Supply Base III Zemianske Kostoľany, placed 14th in the team category.

■ Ex Vigorous Warrior 2019 (VW19), an international NATO multi-level and multinational medical exercise was conducted in Romania at the beginning of April 2019. VW19 mobilised troops from 38 NATO and Partner Nations. The main training area was the Joint National Training Centre in Cincu, but the exercise also unfolded at Campia Turzii Air Base, at Naval Base Constanza, and in various locations in Bucharest. The aim of VW19 was to exercise and evaluate the interoperability of NATO and Partner Nations in the field of military medicine according to Article III/IV in a common civilian and military context. The Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General was represented by four officers who served with medical units conducting CD&E, MEDEVAC, and EXEVAL.

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be 29 Allied road movements, mostly by U.S., FRA, DEU and POL troops in support of Ex STEADFAST COBALT, scheduled for 22-28 Apr 2019. This week a SVK Army convoy will also ferry oversized cargo on the Kuchyňa – Moldava nad Bodvou route.

Soldiers battled a forest fire



(21 April) The SVK Armed Forces assisted in battling a forest fire in the cadastral area of the village of Kravany in the Poprad region. In response to a request for firefighting assistance from the Firefighting and Rescue Corps,

a SVK Air Force Mi-17 helicopter, of the Helicopter Wing Prešov, equipped with the Bumbi bucket, deployed to the area to assist with firefighting efforts in hardly accessible forested terrain.

Based on another request for assistance from the Firefighting and Rescue Corps, airmen of the Transport Wing Kuchyňa helped extinguish a forest fire between the villages of Malacky and Pernek. To deal with the situation, the Firefighting Unit, of the Transport Wing Kuchyňa, deployed to the area.

2019 Military Police Children's Camp

(18 April) The Crisis Management, Training and K9 Branch, MP Dept Vlkánová-Hronek, prepared an interesting programme for the 2019 Military Police Children's Camp for kids from the Children's Home in Kráľová Lehota. As part of the programme on 15-17 Apr 2019, they visited the Whitewater Canoe Centre in Liptovský Mikuláš and met with slalom canoeist and Olympic winner Michal Martikán. While at the Lešť TC, they tried out different rope techniques at the Bralce Rock Cliffs, as well as testing their orienteering skills in unfamiliar terrain. Director of the SVK MP Col Michal Migát briefed them on the mission and tasks of military policemen. They also familiarised themselves with the IFV Reconnaissance variant before meeting with members of the DUKLA Military Sports Centre to take part in different sporting contests. At the conclusion of the 2019 MP Children's Camp in Hronek, they were instructed on the training of MWDs and dog handlers by Maj Peter Šoltés, Chief K9 Specialist of the SVK Armed Forces/Chief of the K9 Section, MP Dept Vlkánová-Hronek.

Ex Toxic Valley 2019 approaching



(17 April) The General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces hosted the main planning conference for the 7th iteration of Ex Toxic Valley 2019, an international exercise for Sampling and Identification of Chemical Agents (SICA) teams and Mobile Identification Chemical Laboratories (MICHL), due to take place on 9-20 Sept 2019. BEL, CZE, DEU, FRA, HUN,

ITA, POL, SLV, SVK, and the USA have already confirmed their attendance. The exercise, involving 8 SICA teams and 4 MICHLs, will be evaluated by an international evaluation team consisting of, among others, members of the EOD COE Trenčín and the JCBRN COE Vyškov. The aim of the conference was to provide an update on the preparations for the exercise, including logistical requirements and numbers of participating countries.

Pupils are invited to participate in 18th MOD Drawing and Painting Contest

The SVK Ministry of Defence announced the 18th MOD Drawing and Painting Contest, called SOLDIERS THROUGH THE EYES OF CHILDREN, thanks to which children can express how they perceive the life of military personnel and work in armed forces. In close cooperation with primary schools in Slovakia, the MOD wants to stir up the pupils' interest in the themes associated with patriotism and homeland defence. Through their drawings and paintings, pupils can express what armed forces mean to them and how they perceive them. The competitive entries of primary school



goers will be evaluated by MOD judges. This year's judges will include painters, MOD employees, and service personnel. The three best works in the categories of junior and senior pupils will receive financial prizes and will be printed in the MOD-published Obrana [Defence] monthly magazine and displayed on the SVK MOD website. Individuals and teams are asked to place their entries in envelope marked 'Contest' and, along with their title, author's name, home address, school address, and school grade, send them no later than 12 May 2019 by mail to OBRANA Editorial Staff, Kutuzovova 8, 832 47 Bratislava. Traditionally, the results are announced in public during the Children's Day with SVK Armed Forces event.