



## Defence cooperation in EU

(14 May) During the EU Defence Ministerial in Brussels on 14 May 2019, EU Defence Ministers discussed the progress made in implementing PESCO projects and the need to strengthen the partnership between the European Union and the North Atlantic Alliance, with focus on preventing and countering hybrid threats.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "As the coordinator of one of the PESCO projects, Slovakia has an interest in third states participation in this initiative strengthening the defence capabilities of EU Member States." In this context, he emphasised that Slovakia has been involved in 7 PESCO projects, as well as leading the 'EuroArtillery' Indirect Fire Support project. Also today in Brussels, EU Defence Ministers signed the Programme Arrangement on the Optimising Cross Border Movement Permission Procedures in Europe in an effort to strengthen Military Mobility.

The deepening of EU-NATO cooperation, especially in the field of hybrid threats, was high on the agenda. In this regard, Minister Gajdoš highlighted the stepping up of preparations and consultations to prevent any such attacks. EU partners also agreed to strengthen cyber resilience as well as the fight against disinformation. Also discussed was the current security landscape in the Sahel region and the need to stabilise it by developing the capabilities of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and other projects, which are financially supported by the Slovak Republic as well.

## Joint V4 potential

(13 May) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with his partners from the Visegrad Group (V4) and the Ministers of Defence of France and Germany in Brussels on 13 May 2019. Historically, this was the first meeting in the V4 + FRA + DEU format. And, importantly, it took place during the Slovak V4 Presidency. Common goals in the fields of EU and NATO defence initiatives and international crisis management operations were the main themes during the talks. Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "As the Visegrad Group Presidency country, we initiated the meeting mainly due to the potential this cooperation offers. Because even though we may not always be fully united on partial issues, we have a common goal." He went on to underline that the Visegrad Group considers France and Germany to be significant and strategic partners in the Euro-Atlantic area. Speaking about the beneficial outcomes of the talks, Head of the SVK MOD said: "This forum has brought a unique opportunity for uniting our positions and exchanging our experience from both past and current defence initiatives." Ministers also addressed their national deployments on international crisis management missions and operations, especially in light of the fight against illegal migration and terrorism. They praised the contribution that Op EUNAVFOR MED Sophia and Op EUFOR Althea, joined by the Slovak Republic as well, have made towards this end.

## International Military Pilgrimage with motto of «Seek Peace and Pursue It»

(17 May) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš along with Interior Minister Denisa Saková joined the 61st International Military Pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes, France. A 150-strong SVK delegation, involving members of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps, set out for one of the world's most famous pilgrimage sites a day earlier, to link up with over 25,000 pilgrims who are set to arrive from 30 countries of the world. This is the 24th time Slovakia has participated in the Lourdes pilgrimage.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "This year's theme of the International Military Pilgrimage «Seek Peace and Pursue It» reflects the changing security situation in the world and the unchangeable fact that peace is not a matter of course. On the contrary, even today we need to find a way to peace, build it and sustain it and so prevent destructive armed conflicts."

Ordinary of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps Mons František Rábek said that get-togethers of service personnel from different countries of the world help foster friendly relations during the Lourdes pilgrimage.



- As the **Slovak V4 Presidency** draws to an end, representatives of the participating Armed Forces met for a two-day meeting on 15 May 2019 in Tatranská Lomnica. The delegations reviewed the activities of the year-long SVK V4 Presidency, the status of readiness of the V4 EU BG + Croatia, and other activities since the V4 Presidency takeover by SVK CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko last year in Budapest. Among the most interesting initiatives, the SVK side came up with a future battlegroups modular design concept. In attendance at Day 2 was also the Ukrainian Chief of Defence.

- The **Štefánik Phenomenon Conference**, organised by the Central Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the Armed Forces and Armed Corps (ÚEPS) in cooperation with the SVK MOD, was convened on 13-14 May 2019 in Myjava on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of General M. R. Štefánik's death. The conference programme also featured a meeting of V4 and NATO military chaplains.

- On Friday, 10 May 2019, **members of SLOVCON UNFICYP** were visited by Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General/Head of UNFICYP Elizabeth Spehar (CAN) and Force Commander Maj Gen Cheryl Pearce (AUS) at Camp Štefánik, Famagusta, Cyprus.

- A specialist meeting of military personnel responsible for **crime prevention** across the units, offices and facilities of the Slovak Armed Forces was held at the Trenčín Garrison Club on 15 May 2019. The event was organised by the Crime Investigation and Documentation Section, MP Department.

- On 15 May 2019, the central exhibition display of the Institute of Military History – Museum of Military History Svidník hosted a **vernissage for 'Flowers of Gratitude'**, an exhibition dedicated to the 74th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

- Working in cooperation with the Educational and Cultural Activities Section, SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office Liptovský Mikuláš, the Garrison Club Martin organised the **19th Folk Rock Army Festival** on 11 May 2019. The last six editions of the festival have taken place as a City of Martin event.

- Drivers are asked by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be **28 Allied road movements** from 20-26 May 2019. They will mostly involve U.S. troops in support of Ex Saber Guardian as well as BGR, HUN and HRV troops in support of Ex Capable Logistician. Over the period, SVK Army convoys will also ferry oversized cargo on the Martin – Sučany and Hlohovec – Martin routes. There will also be SVK Army road movements from Rožňava to CV Lešť and from CV Lešť to Zemianske Kostoľany.

## Application process for Active Reserves for 2020 is underway

(15 May) The Slovak Armed Forces launched the application process for the Active Reserves (AR) for the year 2020. The reservists who meet the conditions set out in legislation can submit their application forms by 15 September 2019. In 2020, the Armed Forces want to train 90 reservists for the 21st Combined Mechanised Battalion Trebišov, 81 reservists for the CBRN Defence Battalion Rožňava, 121 reservists for the Engineer Battalion Sereď, 38 reservists for the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, as well as 25 military policemen.

Training will be conducted from 11 May to 22 May 2020 at the 21st Combined Mechanised Battalion Trebišov, from 1 June to 14 June 2020 at the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, from 8 June to 19 June 2020 at the Engineer Battalion Sereď and



the Military Police Department Vlkánová-Hronsek, and from 21 September to 2 October 2020 at the CBRN Defence Battalion Rožňava.

According to legislation, the active reservists who undertake at least 75 percent of the annual training programme are eligible for a payment of €600 and a commensurate part of rank-based pay for the period of time spent on training or exercise. Besides this, the MOD will reimburse employers while their employees are on training or exercise and the self-employed will receive compensation for their business income. In both cases, the Ministry of Defence will also refund social and health insurance premium payments. More information can be found on the SVK MOD's website, <https://www.mosr.sk/oznamenie-ministerstva-obrany-sr-o-moznosti-zaradenia-vojakov-v-zalohe-do-aktivnych-zalohei/>.

## Combined effort with CYP



(13 May) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš received President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus Demetris Syllouris at MOD Main Building. Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Membership of both countries in the European Union creates an excellent space for strengthening mutual cooperation, be that in the fields of joint security challenges resolution or defence cooperation. This is also evidenced by SVK soldiers' engagement in Cyprus." He further said that 241 SVK personnel are currently deployed in Cyprus and that over 3,400 SVK personnel have rotated in and out of UNFICYP so far. "We will remain on the ground as long as it is necessary. We certainly prefer to resolve conflicts diplomatically," emphasised Head of the MOD. Taking the opportunity to thank for the SVK military's role in UNFICYP, President of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus D. Syllouris said: "Peace forces are needed in Cyprus, and as much as they are the basis of stability, they are very important for resolution of problems."

## SVK support for GEO



(13 May) State Secretary of the SVK MOD Róbert Ondrejcsák paid a two-day visit to Georgia (GEO), where he held talks with First Deputy Defence Minister Lela Chikovani and a series of bilateral meetings with representatives of GEO state institutions. He also delivered a speech at the South Caucasus Security Forum. Minister Chikovani underlined the significance

of practical military cooperation that benefits the transformation of the GEO Armed Forces and their interoperability with NATO partners. She praised Slovakia's long-term contribution to the EUMM Georgia and the SVK military's deployments on NATO exercises in Georgia. Secretary Ondrejcsák reaffirmed that Slovakia's position on Georgia is long-lasting and unchangeable and that the SVK MOD is ready to further defence cooperation with Georgia as part of the Substantial NATO-Georgia Package (SNGP) as well as on a bilateral basis.