



Slovakia chairs OSCE

(2 January) Slovakia assumed the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Central European Defence Initiative (CEDC) at the start of January 2019.

The MOD outlined the priorities of the Slovak OSCE Chairmanship in the politico-military area, with a particular focus on supporting military cooperation and strengthening confidence and security building measures (CSBMs), as well as tension reduction and conflict prevention. The MOD will organise events to promote Europe's security architecture and follow through with action to modernise the Vienna Document 2011 and armaments control.

In its role as the OSCE Chairmanship country, Slovakia will also continue with the Structural Dialogue on current and future challenges and risks to security in the OSCE area. The aim of its efforts is to promote a wider understanding of current challenges and risks in the politico-military area, one that may lead to achieving greater predictability of the security environment, de-escalating tensions, and reducing the threats and risks that are impacting on our common security environment.

In addition to holding the OSCE Chairmanship, Slovakia has also held the Central European Defence Cooperation (CEDC) Chairmanship since the beginning of January 2019. During the year-long Slovak CEDC Chairmanship, the MOD will press for its priorities. These cover ongoing projects as well as new regional initiatives for CEDC armed forces.

Successful examples of CEDC cooperation so far include the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) project in the field of CBRN led by Austria and a joint international exercise to contain potential migration waves on the EU's external border. The CEDC countries also stand united in supporting the integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries. The CEDC was established in 2010, with Hungary, the Czech Republic, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia and Slovakia as member states and Poland as an observer.

New Collective Agreement

(1 January) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chairwoman of the Slovak Workers Union in Defence Katarína Krajčová signed the 2019 Collective Agreement at the end of last December.



The wording of the Agreement was greatly affected by Amendment Act No. 553/2003 Coll. on remuneration of some employees in performance of work in public interest and the 2019-2020 Higher Level Collective Agreement, which will see a 10% increase across all pay grades as from 1 January 2019 and another 10% increase across all pay grades as from 1 January 2020. On sick pay scheme, employees will be eligible for 80% of the basis of assessment for sick leave pay, calculated from annual medical insurance premium payments, from the first day of sick leave over the period of 10 days. On turning 60, employees in performance of work in public interest will receive a financial reward for their work achievements worth the most recently awarded salary.

Illegal use of military uniforms will be punishable by fine

(9 January) Illegal use of SVK Armed Forces uniforms and insignia will be punishable by fine of up to €500. The measures against various doubtful and extremist paramilitary organizations were initially announced by the MOD last summer. They were incorporated into an amendment act which was approved by the Cabinet. The MOD maintains that the measures are not directed against any special interest groups such as fishermen and hunters who wear military uniforms with outdated camouflage patterns. The amendment act relates to the currently fielded uniforms.

Justifying the rationale behind the measures, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Military uniforms are intended exclusively for members of the SVK Armed Forces, graduates of Voluntary Military Training, Active Reserves, and soldiers on exceptional duty service for the duration of such service, and since they are the security components of the State, the uniforms cannot be worn just by whoever wishes to do so." He went on to add that exceptions have been granted to military pensioners, military disabled pensioners, WWII veterans, and soldiers with restored reputation.

It follows on from the amendment act that, besides uniforms, the ban will also apply to other items of clothing, featuring the emblem of the Slovak Republic, which may be mistaken for military uniform. Misuse of the official title 'Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic' will be illegal in writing, including in website domains or on vehicles. And misuse of a military ID by a non-military person will be treated as an offence as well. If endorsed by Parliament, the amendment act is likely to come into force on 1 May 2019.



- To mark Three Kings Day (Epiphany), Ordinary of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps **Mons František Rábek** paid a visit to the MOD and HQ Bratislava Garrison on 10 Jan, to bless and sprinkle with water the MOD premises and offices.

- During a graduation ceremony at the NATO School in Oberammergau (DEU) on 10 Jan 2019, Colonel Brian A. Hill (USA F), Dean of Academics, presented the NATO Instructor Certificate to **CSEL Sgt Maj Miroslav Dulaj** (SVK A) for graduating successfully from several NATO courses.

- To mark the 26th anniversary of the Slovak Republic, President Andrej Kiska presented state decorations to 30 personalities of Slovakia's social and cultural life during a ceremony held at Bratislava's Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra Concert Hall, Reduta Building on 8 Jan. Military honours during the ceremony were provided by the **SVK Presidential Guard of Honour**, led by Maj David Kejdan.

- Chaplains of the Gemer Seniorate met at the first Seniorate Pastoral Conference in 2019 held in the village of Roštár, with the participation of Chaplain General of Ecumenical Pastoral Service (EPS) in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps **Col ThDr Marian Bodolló**, who introduced the EPS mission and updated the chaplains on the Spiritual March in the Footsteps of SNP Heroes, which will go on across the Gemer Seniorate in May.

- Lt Gen (Rtd) Pavel Honzek and Maj Gen (Rtd) Dušan Humený, of the SVK Generals Club, called on the SVK Army Command Support Battalion on 7 Jan, to present 59 soldiers with **Memorial Plaques** for their efforts to restore the Kubrá WWI Cemetery in Trenčín.

- **The Sportsperson of the Year 2018 Award**, Slovakia's most prestigious annual individual and team sports accolade, went to Anastasiya Kuzmina, of the Military Sports Centre (VŠC) Dukla Banská Bystrica. As a biathlon relay team, Anastasiya Kuzmina, Ivona Fialková, Paulína Fialková, Terézia Poliaková, of VŠC Dukla, also won the Team of the Year category. Of the 13 Awards, 7 went to members of VŠC Dukla, making it once again the most successful sports centre in Slovakia.

- Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be **13 Allied military road movements** across Slovakia, scheduled from 14-20 Jan 2019. They will mostly involve U.S. troops. In addition, SVK Army vehicles carrying oversized cargo will drive in convoy from Prešov via Ruská Nová Ves to Trebišov and from Prešov via Ružomberok to Trenčín.

Successful sportswomen Petra Vihová and Anastasiya Kuzmina

(8 January) Slovak sportswoman Petra Vihová, of the Military Sports Centre (VŠC) Dukla Banská Bystrica, won the slalom to join the race. I am proud of myself for winning the race despite my health condition. I want to thank all fans, and my coach and team for their job well done." Slovak biathletes of the VŠC Dukla did well in biathlon as well. On 12 January, Anastasiya Kuzmina placed an excellent second place in the women's pursuit at the Biathlon World Cup in Oberhof, Germany. Paulína Fialková missed 5 targets and finished 32nd and Ivona Fialková missed 7 targets and placed 45th. The racers had to come to terms with unfavourable weather conditions, as gusty wind made their life bitter. While still in Oberhof on 13 January, Anastasiya Kuzmina, Paulína Fialková and Ivona Fialková placed 6th in the women's relay.



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(2 January) Nearly 120 service members were on duty over the period from 23 December 2018 to 1 January 2019, to keep the public safe and secure. Following the Cabinet's decision on joint military and police patrolling, they joined with policemen to carry out tasks in support of public order, life, health and property protection, and the fight against terrorism and organised crime. SVK Armed Forces personnel were assigned for this purpose in response to the current security situation in the world following the Cabinet's decision of 19 December 2018, consistent with the Police Corps Act.

New Year welcomed with gun salute



(1 January) SVK artillerymen fired a 20 gun salute from Bratislava's Tyrš Embankment, to welcome in the New Year along with members of the public and mark the 26th anniversary of the

Slovak Republic and its Armed Forces.

In his New Year's statement, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "In the new year we will go on with the historically most extensive and real modernization of the Armed Forces and the stabilization of personnel, as well as making the military profession more attractive and more competitive on the job market."

Acting on orders from the President of the Slovak Republic/ Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces, members of the Multiple Rocket Launch System (MRLS) Unit Rožňava fired the gun salute using six 122mm HD - 30A gun howitzers. Up to 100 service personnel and over 20 pieces of equipment were involved in the public event.

On duty over the festive season

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