



Hejce tragedy remembered

(19 January) Respects were paid to the Service personnel who perished in the worst air disaster in the history of the independent Slovak Republic by Slovak and Hungarian Defence Ministers Peter Gajdoš and Tibor Benkő, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Anton Hrnko, Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko, and other SVK MOD and Armed Forces officials during an act of remembrance on Borsó Hill, located at the village of Hejce, Hungary.

SVK Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "The event that forever changed the destinies of 42 families has been deeply engraved in our memory to date. Even 13 years on from the tragedy, nothing has changed inasmuch as 19 January is and will forever remain a black day for us."

HUN Defence Minister Tibor Benkő said: "We will never forget 19 January 2006, nor the Slovak soldiers who selflessly helped in Kosovo in the last months of their life, hoping to create one better world. May you be proud of them."

SVK Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "At this place of remembrance SVK military leaders and, of course, all members of the SVK Armed Forces pay tribute to the memory of our fallen heroes. I had opportunities to serve with many of them. It is an honour for me to have been here today and to have paid my respects to them."

The Antonov AN-24 military transport aircraft that was carrying SVK personnel en route from Kosovo crashed on 19 January 2006. 42 symbolic commemorative oak columns on Borsó Hill and a memorial in the village of Hejce stand as a reminder of the tragedy.

Tribute to victims of burned-out villages

(20 January) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš attended a remembrance ceremony at the villages of Klak and Ostrý Grúň, to pay his respects to the memory of the residents of Klak and Ostrý Grúň who died when, in 1945, the villages were burned down by Nazis. They resorted to perpetrating this act of cruelty in reprisal for local residents helping partisan groups in the Slovak National Uprising (SNP).



Remembering the horrors of the Nazi raids on the villages, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "The so-called 'Bloody Sunday' is a painful reminder of the Nazi reprisals that destroyed life at the two villages. Among the 148 victims were elderly people, women and children, with the youngest one only 3 months old." He continued: "Today the tragedy reminds us that many paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom and peace. And although it may sound as a phrase, the truth is that these values have never been for free, nor are they today."

In 1945, approx. 3,000 SNP partisans were concentrated in the vicinity of Klak and Ostrý Grúň. They were supported by local villagers who provided them with accommodation, clothing and food, engaged in reconnaissance and gathered intelligence. As a result, the Nazi occupation forces set out to carry out raids on the villages. On 21 January 1945, the German Edelweiss anti-partisan unit stormed into the villages on an extermination mission, killing 64 residents of Ostrý Grúň and 84 residents of Klak. Memorials were built in tribute to the victims in both villages.

SVK Chief of Defence attends NATO Military Committee in Brussels

(16 January) Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko participated in the 180th NATO Military Committee in Chiefs of Defence Session in Brussels on 15-16 January. Focus of the meeting was primarily on NATO's current and future challenges. The drafting of the new NATO Military Strategy, NATO's Readiness Initiative, Command Structure Adaptation, NATO-Georgia cooperation, and the developments across the Western Balkans, the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan and the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) topped the agenda. The SVK CHOD informed Allied CHODs about the SVK military's commitment to its active role in the said missions, to help maintain stability in the Middle East region. He then briefed the CHODs on the planned changes to the SVK contributions in 2019.

While still in Brussels, Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko used the opportunity to hold bilateral meetings with Allied partners. During a meeting with Canadian Chief of the Defence Staff Gen Jonathan H. Vance, Lt Gen Zmeko confirmed the deepening of Allied commitments to the Canadian-led NATO eFP BG in Latvia. Both leaders then discussed furthering bilateral Defence cooperation in other areas of interest. The SVK CHOD and the HUN CHOD met with Supreme Allied Commander Europe Gen Curtis Scaparrotti, to address NATO's current issues and strategic challenges.



- Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš visited the Supply Base I – Supplies Centre (SBI-SC) Poprad on 17 Jan 2019. He was briefed on the SBI-SC's organisational structure and 2019 tasks by Chief of SBI-SC Poprad Maj Ondrej Šomský. A day earlier, the minister called on the 22nd Mechanised Battalion Michalovce, where its acting Commander Maj Marián Kochan along with Commander Self-propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce, Lt Col Roman Bobaľ, familiarised him with the Units' mission, history, and structure. The visit wrapped up with a static display of main types of armaments, equipment and materiel fielded with both units.

- The Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Mons František Rábek visited the 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov on 18 Jan 2019, to officially usher in Lt Slavomír Krajňák as Staff Chaplain of 2nd Mech Bde Prešov. Mons Rábek, joined by military chaplains and in the presence of Commander 2nd Mech Bde Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň, celebrated a Holy Mass as part of blessing the local Chapel and setting up the Military Parish of St Michael Archangel at the ISTAR Battalion in Prešov.

- Members of the Self-propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce attended a ceremony to mark **Artillery Troops and Artillery Day** on 15 Jan 2019. In attendance at the ceremony were several distinguished guests, including Commander SVK Army Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, former SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, Lt Col (Rtd) Jozef Figura, the first Commander Artillery Unit Michalovce, as well as representatives of the Anti-Nazi Fighters Union and the Reserves Club Michalovce.

- After successful administrative in-processing and initial issue of gear, 141 state service candidates (30 women) and cadets began their **Basic Military Training (BMT)** on 14 Jan 2019.

- On 5 Jan 2019, 37 SVK personnel participated in a **blood donation event at the village of Deryneia, Cyprus**. This humanitarian activity was organised at the Deryneia General Hospital by Capt MUDr. Mária Kochanová, Chief of the Camp Štefánik Field Station, Famagusta, MSgt Jozef Mulík, senior medic, and Sgt Zdeno Kandrác, medic.

- Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be 11 Allied **military road movements** across Slovakia, scheduled from 21-27 Jan 2019. They will mostly involve POL troops. Also, SVK Army vehicles carrying oversized cargo will drive in convoy from Martin to PC Sučany.

Mountain Winter Course instructs on how to survive in winter mountains

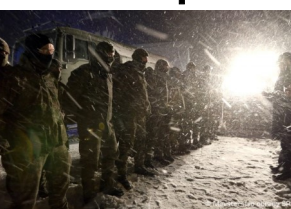
(18 January) The Training Centre Lešť organised the Mountain Winter Course in the third week of January after its successful debut last year. According to Course Leader Maj Igor Lišaník, Chief of the Tactical Training Section, TC Lešť, the course aims to provide information essential to ensure safe movement and survival in the mountains in winter conditions.

The course attendees, drawn from across the Armed Forces, from the Mechanised Battalions Nitra and Martin and the Tactical Wing Sliač through to the CBRN Battalion Rožňava and the Combined Mechanised Battalion Trebišov, devoted their attention to winter survival theory before practising winter survival skills with basic equipment, including ice axes, crampons and snowshoes, in



the snow-covered areas of Lešť. As well as learning how to work with an avalanche beacon, probes, shovels and an avalanche backpack system, they learnt to locate people trapped in an avalanche by companion shelter – igloo.

"The aim of the course was, among other things, to make the course participants realise that a trivial mistake which can easily be corrected in everyday life may result in a serious problem in the mountains. I am glad that the course appealed to all participants. The most active soldiers on the course were SSgt Ján Ondris, Sgt 1st Class Ľuboš Machač, and MSgt Róbert Králik, all of them from the Tactical Wing Sliač," said Course Leader Maj Lišaník with satisfaction.



(15 January) Soldiers from Žilina and Martin were involved in a heavy snow removal operation to help the villages of Oravská Lesná and Novoť recover from the effects of a snow calamity. Defence

Minister Peter Gajdoš visited the villages to see for himself what assistance the armed forces could provide for local residents.

On the military response to the snow disruption at the villages, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "It is important for our citizens to know they can rely on soldiers. And in the event of emergency situations like this one, they can count on them. Also for this reason, we have issued a tasking to representatives of the Armed Forces to participate in the meetings of the crisis staffs."

On Oravská Lesná and Novoť, the two villages most severely hit by the snow calamity in Námestovo County, Chief of the Žilina County Office Michal Lavrik said: "At this moment they require most assistance." He went on to stress that service personnel are very helpful in alleviating the results of the calamity.

Highly appreciating the deployment of troops and equipment to the villages, Deputy Mayor of Oravská Lesná Jozef Rošťák and Mayor of Novoť Radoslav Kozák agreed on one thing: "It is a truly great help for our residents."

Service members are prepared to respond throughout other villages and towns across Slovakia wherever the situation requires it. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš has tasked Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko to assign personnel and equipment to help clean up after the snow calamity in northern Slovakia. Among the responders to the calamitous situation in the Orava region were DCIS Base Ružomberok and TW Sliač soldiers.