



SVK engagement in EU

(31 January) EU Defence Ministers met for an informal meeting under the Romanian EU Presidency in Bucharest on 30-31 January 2019, to debate the need for alignment of the new defence initiatives which follow on from the implementation of the EU Global Strategy (EU GS) as well as the potential of technological innovations in the field of defence.

On the way ahead with EU initiatives, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Consolidating the status of the European Union as a global actor in the field of defence mainly requires the alignment of the European Defence Industrial Development Plan, European Defence Fund, Coordinated Annual Review on Defence, and Permanent Structured Cooperation."

On PESCO, Head of the MOD underlined that Slovakia has been involved in 8 PESCO projects and is in charge of coordinating the EuroArtillery project. "Through its active participation in so many projects, Slovakia demonstrates that it is an active player in the EU. For us, this is an opportunity to boost our domestic defence industry in cooperation with our European partners as well," he emphasised.

Also discussed was the important issue of supporting the EU's instruments for introducing technological innovations in order to facilitate the development of armed forces and rising up to the technological challenges in the field of defence that emanate from artificial intelligence (AI) defence systems and cyber defence. At the informal meeting, defence ministers also addressed the future of Op Sophia with the aim of providing further continuity. In the past, Op Sophia saw the deployment of SVK Military Police personnel as part of two rotations.

Preparations for SNP celebrations

(28 January) The SVK Ministry of Defence objects to some media spreading falsehoods about its preparations for a military parade reportedly for €10 million. Admittedly, preparations for the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP), which Slovakia will mark in



August 2019, have been underway. Traditionally, the programme features armed forces. However, no decision as to the form, role and extent of their involvement this year has been made so far. The public should rest assured that no way will the military parade cost the amount stated above. The Ministry of Defence strongly objects to the SNP celebrations issue being misused by some media.

Broader powers for military policemen endorsed by Parliament

(1 February) Military policemen will have broader powers that will enable them to perform their tasks to a higher standard and more efficiently. This follows on from the Military Police Amendment Act which was endorsed by MPs on 1 February 2019. The MOD-sponsored Amendment Act, which incorporates a number of amending proposals, among others, penalising the illegal use of Military Police uniforms, badges and identification insignia, will come into force on 1 April 2019.

Powers of military policemen in detaining trespasser onto military sites will also be extended. Under the new arrangements, military policemen will be empowered to proceed according to the Offences Act and initiate offence proceedings, as do policemen of the Slovak Police Corps, as well as penalising trespassers in the ticket proceedings. But when until recently military policemen detained a trespasser who trespassed on a military site, all they could do was to escort him from the site.



- A wreath-laying ceremony was held at the WWII Memorial in Heroes Park, Poprad on 28 Jan 2019, to mark **Poprad's 74th liberation anniversary**. In attendance at the ceremony were local residents and service personnel of the Military Unit 5728 Poprad and Prešov Garrison.

- On 29 Jan 2019, NATO HQ in Brussels hosted a ceremony where the funds raised from the annual **NATO Charity Bazaar (NCB)** were symbolically handed over to charities. The proceeds of the 51st NCB, which was held on 17-18 Nov 2018, will go to aid the work of 5 Belgian and 16 international charities, with Slovakia represented by two projects.

- Senior Chaplain of 11th Mechanised Battalion Martin Ján Ostapčuk visited Turany Primary School pupils on 30 Jan 2019, to thank them for the paintings they had made as **Christmas presents for SVK eFP members in Latvia**. He also presented them a letter from SLOVCON eFP Commander Lt Col Rudolf Ďurmik, in which he proposed, among others, developing further cooperation with pupils to the school principal.

- On 31 Jan 2019, Headquarters Supply Base (HQ SB) II hosted negotiations regarding the **Agreement on the Implementation of Obligations** arising out of the 2019 Collective Agreement between the Base Commander and chairmen of the Slovak Workers Trade Unions from the Military Unit (MU) 5728 Martin, MU 5728 Sklené, MU 5728 Poprad, MU 5728 Nováky, MU 5728 Trenčín, and the Metrology and Testing Centre Žilina. The agreement is the outcome of a constructive and fair approach of all the parties involved, with the result that the working conditions for service personnel and civilian employees are improving, while taking into account the justified requirements of HQ SB II.

- Sportsman of the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica **Petra Vihová of Slovakia** and Mikaela Shiffrin of the United States placed 1st in the women's giant slalom event at the International Ski Federation Alpine Skiing World Cup in Maribor (SLO) on Friday 1 Feb 2019. Petra Vihová placed 5th in the slalom event on Saturday 2 Feb 2019.

- Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be **26 Allied road movements** across Slovakia, scheduled from 4 to 10 Feb 2019. They will mostly involve HUN and POL troops. There will also be SVK Army movements from Hlohovec to TC Lešť and from Levice to HP Drietoma, and oversized cargo will be ferried from Prešov via Žilina and Trenčín to Bratislava, and from Martin via Levice to Bratislava.

DAs in the heart of SNP



(31 January) Slovak Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko participated in a regular meeting of the Defence Attachés (DAs) accredited to Slovakia, which took place in Banská Bystrica. The Doyen of

the Military Diplomatic Corps and Defence Attaché of the Czech Republic, Maj Gen Ján Gurník said they had chosen the venue of the meeting to pay homage to the 75th Slovak National Uprising (SNP) anniversary, which Slovakia marks this year. CHOD Zmeko used the opportunity to thank members of the Military Diplomatic Corps for their engagement and appreciated the fact that they, too, look on the SNP as a major landmark event in the history of Slovakia.

MOD backs NGOs

(2 February) The SVK Ministry of Defence will support the special interest projects of NGOs by offering nearly €100,000 in grants this year too. NGOs are invited to submit a maximum of one project proposal, which may be awarded funding from the MOD, starting from €500 up to €50,000. The deadline for applications is 31 March 2019.

Those eligible for funding are civil associations, foundations, special interest groups of legal entities, non-investment funds, non-profit organizations that are registered in Slovakia and deliver generally valuable services to society and the armed forces community. The projects must be oriented towards educative, sporting, cultural and social activities and events, whilst encouraging the patriotism of Slovak people, keeping the public updated on EU and NATO developments, training Slovak citizens for homeland defence, promoting the SVK Armed Forces, as well as catering for the cultural, spiritual and social needs of active duty soldiers, reservists, and veterans.

Applications for grants can also be forwarded by NGOs for the purposes of training sporting talents and promoting top level and high performance sports. Moreover, the MOD can fund projects aimed at facilitating the recruitment process in the SVK Armed Forces and developing military traditions and heritage, with special focus on military history. Further information can be found at www.mosr.sk → About us → Grants as per a) through d) → Application form for grants, <https://www.mod.gov.sk/20263/ziadosti-o-dotacie/>.

Tactical Medicine Course for medical professionals takes place in Liptov

(31 January) A Tactical Medicine Course for medical professionals was held in Liptov over the last two weeks of January 2019.

According to the course leader, MSgt Jozef Filický, of the Training, Education and Specialist Preparation Section, Specialist Medical Activities and Training Branch, Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Ružomberok, with a Field Office in Liptovský Mikuláš – Ondrašová, the course was aimed at members of the Military Medical Service with



General's Field Office in Liptovský Mikuláš – Ondrašová.

trades as nurses, birth assistants and medics. The Tactical Medicine Course trained the participants in all aspects of extended pre-hospital first aid in combat conditions. Week 1 saw the course participants from the CBRN Battalion Rožňava, 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, and Army Command Support Battalion Trenčín practising psychomotor skills at the Central Military SNP Hospital Ružomberok. Week 2 saw them exercising in field conditions at the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon