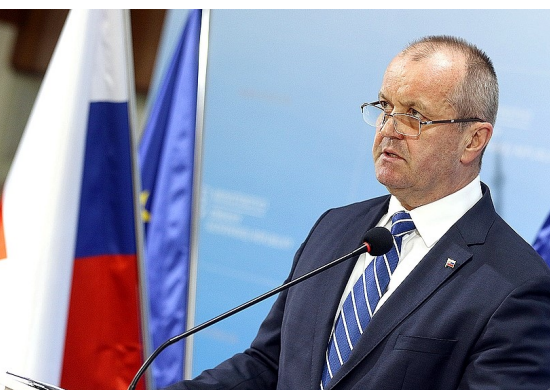




Pay rise for soldiers

(8 March) Service pay for members of the SVK Armed Forces will be increased by €300 on average this year. This is one of the measures the MOD has taken to improve the Service conditions for active duty soldiers. The official documents to effect such change have already been subject to preliminary consultations, to be followed by interdepartmental consultations.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš provided an update on the MOD's current steps. He emphasised that the MOD is taking real steps to improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of the military profession. Towards this end, preparations for a new nation-wide recruitment campaign have been in progress. He further noted that the steps to improve the Service conditions for active duty soldiers must go hand-in-hand with modernization.

According to General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko, the rise in Service pay is derived from the 2030 Long-Term Defence Development Plan. "The rise in Service pay will apply to all 13,000 soldiers in the Armed Forces and averages out at €300, so with some ranks this accounts for over a 30 per cent increase, as we announced before. Percentually, colonels and generals will, understandably, get less." He went on to explain that while there will be a 32 per cent salary increase for 2nd Degree Privates, generals will get 12 per cent more in remuneration.

Under the new concept, the remuneration system will change insofar as the rank-based salary will shift to the appointment-based salary.

MOD to procure radars

(5 March) The SVK MOD has completed the evaluation phase of the submitted official proposals in response to the SVK radar systems replacement Request for Government Proposals (RGP). Under the modernization programme, the MOD seeks to procure a total of 17 3D radars (6 medium, 5 short, and 6 very short range), consistent with the 2030 Long-Term Defence Development Plan and endorsed by the SVK Government in 2017.

On the basis of the RGPs, bids from 10 countries were submitted to the MOD. A project team has evaluated the bids in terms of technical and operational requirements, prices, delivery dates, interoperability with NATO, training, logistical support and the SVK defence industry's role in the modernization programme. The proposals from the governments of the French Republic, the State of Israel, and the United States of America have been evaluated as the most advantageous solutions.

As part of the next phase, the SVK MOD will enter into bilateral negotiations with representatives of the countries on the 3D radar systems replacement shortlist. At the same time, consultations will be held with respective NATO agencies on the integration of the 3D radars into Alliance systems, as well as with the Value of Money Unit, of the SVK Ministry of Finance, to make sure that financial resources are invested to the best effect.

As a result of the SVK Government's decision of July 2018, a Draft Government-to-Government Agreement for Implementation of "Slovak Air Force (Medium, Short, and Very Short Range) Radar Systems Replacement", detailing precise technical specifications of individual radar systems based on the requirements of the SVK Armed Forces, a delivery schedule, and a feasibility study compatible with the Public Investment Project Evaluation Framework, will be presented to the SVK Government no later than 30 June 2019.

20th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO commemorated in Warsaw

(10 March) A delegation from Slovakia was among those commemorating the 20th anniversary of Poland's accession to NATO in Warsaw. The prime ministers and defence ministers of the V4 countries, joined by NATO representatives, attended the official celebrations. As part of the trip, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited Slovak soldiers posted to NATO in Poland. Minister Gajdoš said: "This year the Visegrad Group countries, with the exception of Slovakia, commemorate 20 years of NATO membership. And while we are the one with the shortest time in the Alliance from among the V4 partners, nothing has changed the fact that, just like our partners, we have earned a status of being a responsible and respected member over the past 15 years of our membership and the voice of our region is heard in NATO." Today, there are 193 members of the SVK Armed Forces serving abroad within NATO. 18 Slovak soldiers are deployed in Poland, 16 are posted to NATO and the EU, and 2 are serving with the National Support Element (NSE). More than 6,500 SVK personnel have rotated in and out of Alliance missions and operations to date. Throughout 2018, the SVK-POL defence cooperation saw Slovakia participating in 18 exercises and training activities, of which 11 were held in Slovakia.



■ At a gathering at Vajnory Barracks in Bratislava on 6 Mar 2019, the **Training Year (TY) 2018 Report** of HQ Bratislava Garrison was presented in the presence of DCHOD/COS Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc. Garrison Commander Col Slavomir Milde analysed the TY 2018 objectives and decisive tasks and outlined the way ahead for Bratislava Garrison. At the end of the gathering, Col Milde presented the 2018 Best Bratislava Garrison NCO Award to Sgt Michal Drahoš and the Best Soldier Award to Cpl Matej Hockicko.

■ On 28 Feb 2019, the **Ordinariate of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps** marked the 16th anniversary of its foundation with a Holy Mass at the Cathedral of St Sebastian in Bratislava. In attendance were Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko, Rector of the Bratislava Police Academy Lucia Kurilovská, and other guests.

■ **New appointments.** Having served as Chief of Staff SVK Army Headquarters Trenčín for two years, Col Ivan Balog took up the appointment of Commander 1st Mechanised Brigade Topoľčany, which is directly subordinate to the SVK Army HQ. After serving for two years as Chief of Combat Training (G-7), Army HQ, Col Ferdinand Muriň assumed the appointment of Chief of Staff for Operations Support, SVK GS, and was succeeded by Col Štefan Acsai. With effect from 1 Mar 2019, Chief of the CIMIC and PSYOPS Section Col Milan Žilincár and Maj Jozef Krajčovič were posted from the Army HQ to the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) Slovakia. Capt Anna Štitková left the Army HQ as well.

■ On 4 Mar 2019, this year's second **SVK GS complex staff rehearsal** began with a morning briefing by exercising staffers. Within a week, their task was to elaborate on a Strategic Operational Plan for the CHOD, to lead a military campaign in defence of Slovakia. DCHOD/COS Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc was in charge of the rehearsal. A two-stage complex strategic operational staff rehearsal will build on the staff rehearsal, due in early April.

■ The Peace Support Operations (PSO) Training Unit, of the Martin-based Training and Mobilization Manning Base, provided **training for military observers** to be deployed to UNTSO in the Middle East and the EUMM in Georgia. At the end of the training, military observers completed a three-day exercise on Martin Garrison's Sučany Training Range, aimed at practising the skills necessary to perform tasks in the area of deployment.

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to be alert and drive with care as there will be **22 Allied road movements** and 1 railway movement across Slovakia, scheduled from 11 to 17 Mar 2019. SVK Army convoys will also ferry oversized cargo on the routes: Martin – Trenčín, Martin – Nemecká, Sliač – Trenčín, and Kuchyňa – Moldava nad Bodvou.

CHOD Lt Gen Zmeko amidst SVK CSMs in Zvolen

(6 March) A CSEL of the SVK Armed Forces Convention was held on the HQ AIRCOM Zvolen premises on 5-6 March 2019. According to CSEL Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš, as well as evaluating the activities and structure of SVK Command Sergeant Majors (CSMs) and presenting the Training Year (TY) 2018 Report, the main goal of the convention was to outline the tasks in order to further the SVK CHOD's priorities. In attendance at Day 2 of the Convention was SVK CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko, as was Commander of the SVK Air Force Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda. In his remarks, Lt Gen Zmeko praised the work of CSMs in delivering on the key Training Year 2019 tasks. CSEL Sgt Maj Beluš reminded that over the past year the NCO Academy has delivered courses on the new career courses list. He stressed that the trend of promoting efficiency and justifying the reasons why personnel should earn their places



Remembering generals

(4 March) During a ceremony, held traditionally at the Reconciliation Memorial at Kutuzov Barracks (MOD) at the beginning of March, we remember the four Slovak generals who were tortured to death at the Flossenbürg concentration camp at the end of WWII. On 4 March, representatives of the SVK MOD and GS, the SVK Generals Club, headed by Lt Gen (Rtd) Peter Vojtek, and officials of the Slovak Anti-Nazi Fighters Union came together to pay tribute to the executed generals – Augustin Malár, Ján Golian, Štefan Jurech and Rudolf Viesta – who were captured by Nazis after the suppression of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP). Mons František Rábek, Ordinary of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps, addressed the assembled audience at the end of the ceremony.

New COM 1st Mech Bde



(7 March) Deputy Commander of the SVK Army Brig Gen Karol Navrátil presided over the Change of Command (COC) ceremony for Commander 1st Mechanised Brigade (COM 1st Mech Bde), with Col Ivan Balog taking over from Col Milan Cvik, Deputy

Commander of the Brigade, who served in an acting capacity. The ceremony was held in the presence of members of HQ 1st Mech Bde, subordinate Battalions and Units, and members of the Slovak Generals Club, Chairman of the Soldiers Association Topoľčany Lt Col Ján Poliačik, as well as key representatives of the Police County Directorates and the Fire Fighting Rescue Corps.

Oath and graduation

(4 March) 137 new active duty soldiers, of whom 28 were women, officially completed Basic Military Training (BMT) by swearing the military oath of allegiance and attending the graduation ceremony at the Training and Mobilization Manning Base Martin, marking the end of their preparation for service in the SVK Armed Forces. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Commander of the Slovak Army Brig Gen Karol Navrátil, CSEL of the SVK Armed Forces Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš, Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA) Sgt Maj Rastislav Bodnár, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF) Sgt Maj Peter Kuka, and other guests. 1st Degree Private Erik Jaroš was named Best BMT Graduate and his name was entered into the Chronicle of the Unit, which is the highest moral recognition from the Commander Training and Mobilization Manning Base Martin. Sgt Maj Beluš recognised Sgt 1st Class Marcel Haluška as Best BMT Instructor.

on the courses continues. In 2018, the high number of Service leavers was contained, yet there are still shortfalls of soldiers with secondary school leaving qualifications in pinch point trades. This is true of trades such as engineers, EOD specialists, and flight engineers. While there are shortages of drivers in the Other Ranks, the NCO Corps is short of section leaders in the rank of Staff Sergeant.

Sgt Maj Beluš concluded: "Training Year (TY) 2019 will be far from easy. It will bring a lot of challenges we want to handle successfully." At the end of the convention, Sgt Maj Beluš joined Lt Gen Zmeko in presenting the CIMIC and PSYOPS Badge to the 2018 SVK Armed Forces Best NCO, Sgt 1st Class Martin Chovanec, of the CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre Martin. They also awarded selected NCOs and Other Ranks from across the SVK Armed Forces units and facilities.