



On the situation in Iraq

(6 January) The Ministry of Defence will respect the collective decision of Allies on Iraq. The next course of action regarding the SVK deployment in Iraq will be announced following a more detailed familiarization with the conclusions of the North Atlantic Council of 6 Jan 2020. The MOD is in regular contact with the Slovak soldiers in Iraq. All operational tasks geared towards training activities have been suspended. The situation is stable for now and our soldiers are safe. The situation is closely monitored and we are ready to act immediately and decisively on any changes that may occur. The security of our soldiers comes first. This statement was made by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš after his meeting with PM Peter Pellegrini and members of the SVK Security Council, which was initiated by the Minister on 5 Jan 2020.

"Technically, today it is no longer possible to send an aircraft for our soldiers in Iraq, because the situation does not permit it," said Minister Gajdoš, adding that no further details can be released due to security reasons. "We are exerting maximum efforts to make sure our soldiers are safe and return home happily."

According to Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, our soldiers have been fully involved in implementing the measures adopted and ordered by the Mission Command. "The morale of our soldiers is high, because our soldiers have, in the long term, been trained to face such critical and dangerous situations," said Gen Zmeko.

A total of 7 SVK Armed Forces personnel are deployed in Iraq as part of the non-combat NATO Mission Iraq (NMI). They are tasked with providing advice and training to Iraqi security forces. NATO has temporarily suspended its training activities for Iraqi security forces after the death of Gen Qasem Soleimani of Iran.

Sending greetings abroad

(23 December) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko hosted a video conference call with service members who will be executing international crisis management tasks abroad over the Christmas period.

They thanked them for their service and wished them a peaceful Christmas. Minister Gajdoš highly praised the highest standards of performance of service members on tours of duty abroad throughout the year. "I am aware that it must also be demanding for your close ones who must cope with everything without you, that is why we appreciate your work all the more," he emphasised.

CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko appreciated the soldiers' commitment to missions and operations and their smooth functioning despite the challenges they must face during their deployment in the crisis regions.

During the video conference call, the commanders of the SVK contingents updated Minister Gajdoš and Gen Zmeko on the current state of play of operational tasks and thanked them for their support.

Soldiers awarded for assisting in the aftermath of the gas blast in Prešov

(3 January) Minister Gajdoš awarded the soldiers who assisted in the aftermath of the residential tower block gas blast in Prešov. Over 880 Slovak Armed Forces members, including 27 military policemen and 61 transport assets, have taken turns on duty in the area to date. Soldiers will continue to assist until further notification. Head of the MOD thanked the soldiers and military policemen for handling the effects of the tragic disaster and providing security in the affected area. He added that our thanks also go out to the military psychologists and chaplains who offered psychological and spiritual support in the crisis centre. Slovak Army Commander Maj Gen Jindřich Joch pointed out that the armed forces responded to the crisis situation immediately. "In the area they executed the tasks assigned to them by the incident response commander from the Firefighting and Rescue Corps. Subsequently, they helped patrol and guard the area in line with the requests from the crisis staff," he added.

Members of the CSS Battalion, ISTAR Battalion, and Helicopter Wing Prešov, and military policemen have taken turns on duty at the site of the tower block gas explosion. Shortly after the explosion they helped evacuate residents, transported injured people, and made the access roads passable for the rescue services, as well as distributing humanitarian aid. Working in coordination with the SVK Police Corps, they are currently patrolling the area and guarding the site where demolition works are underway.



■ The MOD Press Office published **A3 and A4 wall calendars and table calendars for 2020**. Commanders and chiefs of the organisational units from across the MOD and the Slovak Armed Forces interested in getting copies can email to Mgr. Milena Slezáková at milena.slezakova@mod.gov.sk.

■ **Skier Petra Vihová**, of the DUKLA Military Sports Centre, won the women's World Cup slalom on 4 Jan 2020 in Zagreb, Croatia. This marks her 30th podium placement in the World Cup.

■ From 20 Dec 2019 to 2 Jan 2020, military chaplain Lt Jaroslav Leopold Jablonský paid a pastoral visit to SVK personnel deployed on NATO's eFP role in the **Ādaži Training Centre in Latvia**. He used the opportunity to hear pre-Christmas confessions from SVK as well as CZE soldiers and celebrated Holy Masses for them.

■ On 30 Dec 2019, **Supply Base II Command Martin** hosted a meeting on the implementation of obligations arising out of the 2020 Trade Union's Collective Agreement in the presence of the Supply Base II Commander and the chairmen of the Trade Unions from the military units VÚ 5728 Martin, VÚ 5728 Sklené, VÚ 5728 Poprad, VÚ 5728 Trenčín and CMaŠ Žilina.

■ SVK soldiers deployed in support of the **Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan** were pleased to receive Christmas greetings from pupils of Ľumbierska Primary School in Banská Bystrica.

■ **Mons František Rábek**, Bishop – Ordinary of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps, celebrated the Christmas Eve Holy Mass for medium and high risk prisoners at Leopoldov Prison on 24 Dec 2019.

■ At the end of 2019, members of the **11th Mechanised Battalion Martin** attended a farewell ceremony for the outgoing Deputy Commander of the Battalion Maj Vladimír Moško and Commander of the 3rd Mechanised Company Cpt Ján Sedliak. Maj Moško took up an appointment at the SVK General Staff in Bratislava and Cpt Sedliak was posted to the Slovak Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš with effect from 1 Jan 2020.

■ Members of the CBRN Bn Rožňava participated in the **6th Christmas Sauerkraut Soup Cooking Competition** in Rimavská Sobota on 20 Dec 2019. The competition attracted 52 teams from across Slovakia.

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be **Allied road movements** across Slovakia between 6-12 Jan 2020. They will include 5 road movements by POL troops and 1 rail movement by HRV troops.

EU funds to protect environment

(27 December) The SVK Ministry of Defence has received non-repayable EU funds worth over 2.7 million from the SVK Ministry of Environment's Quality of Environment Operational Programme to remediate environmental burdens at Sliač and Jamník - Mokrad Barracks. All remediation works, geological supervision, and, partially, the salaries of the project team will be covered from the EU funds.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Thanks to another two projects, we will remove the damage caused to the environment in the years 1957-1989. By drawing EU funds, we save the MOD's financial resources, which can then be used for modernization programmes." He added that the MOD has received a total of €9 million in this way for the remediation of contaminated sites this year alone. Thanks to this, 15,000m² of contaminated soil are scheduled to be remediated across Martin, Michalovce, Piešťany, Sliač and Jamník - Mokrad Barracks in the years 2019-2023. The aim of the remediation project is to remove the effects of environmental burdens and limit the spread of pollutants in soil, water and rock environments.

Soldiers on patrol over festive period



(2 January) A total of 318 soldiers provided public order and security on the streets of Bratislava over the festive period. They conducted mixed foot patrols with members of the SVK Police Corps from 22 Nov

2019 to 1 Jan 2020. The main mission of the mixed patrols was to provide public order, protect life, health and property, and combat terrorism and organised crime. Soldiers were earmarked for this purpose due to current security developments, following a request for assistance from the SVK Police Corps and the Cabinet's decision of 6 November 2019.

23rd Mot Bn passes under SOCOM

(27 December) Trebišov Barracks hosted a re-subordination ceremony, marking the transfer of the 2nd Mechanised Brigade's 23rd Motorised Battalion to the SVK Special Operations Forces Command (SVK SOCOM). The ceremony was attended by Deputy Commander of the Slovak Army Brig Gen Martin Michalko, Commander of the 2nd Mechanised Brigade Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň, and Maj Slavomír Hanko acting for the Commander of the SVK Special Operations Forces. Deputy Commander of the SVK Army Brig Gen Martin Michalko thanked members of the Battalion for their work to the benefit of the SVK Army.

New Year and Slovakia's foundation marked with ceremonial gun salute

(1 January) Service members fired a 20 round New Year's Gun Salute from Bratislava's Tyrš Embankment to commemorate the foundation of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Armed Forces (originally known as the Army of the Slovak Republic). In his statement, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "First of all, let me sincerely thank all military and civilian staff for their work last year and wish them, above all else, the best of health in the New Year."



I wish to see our soldiers maintain the public's high levels of trust in the military just as has been the case so far. And I believe our citizens can rest assured that the Slovak Armed Forces are here for them in 2020, too." The New Year's Gun Salute was fired from six 122mm HD - 30A howitzers by artillerymen of the Self-propelled Artillery Battalion Michalovce, led by 2nd Fire Battery Commander Cpt Michal Németh. Over 50 soldiers with 26 assets supported the event.