



Slovakia marks 27 years

(8 January) MOD civilian and military staff gathered at the MOD Club to commemorate the 27th anniversary of the foundation of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Armed Forces (originally known as the Army of the Slovak Republic).

Head of the MOD said "Thank You" to members of the MOD and General Staff community for their achievements throughout the previous year. "I trust each of us will work as hard as we can this year too, so that together we can see our tasks through to a successful completion to the benefit of the Slovak Republic and our armed forces," he said, adding that the road to this success, i.e. the foundation of an independent state, was not easy. "It is, therefore, all the more difficult to witness that, more than 30 years on from the Gentle Revolution, we are once again waging a struggle for democracy and the preservation of basic values and principles," he said, giving his assessment of the current state of play.

To mark the anniversary, HQ 2nd Mechanised Brigade Prešov hosted a ceremony on 8 Jan. The staffers were addressed by Commander 2nd Mech Bde Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň who introduced the 2nd Mech Bde's new senior leaders – Col Ondrej Vaško who was appointed Deputy Commander 2nd Mech Bde and Col Miroslav Borsuk who was appointed Chief of Staff 2nd Mech Bde, both with effect from 1 Jan 2020.

The founding of the Slovak Republic was also marked by other Armed Forces and MOD elements.



With Pakistani Ambassador

(9 January) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš held talks with the Pakistani Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Mansoor Ahmad Khan. As part of their first joint meeting, they devoted their attention to bilateral cooperation between both countries in the field of security and defence, as well as to potential areas of cooperation on education and training for service members.

Minister Gajdoš said: "There is a space for cooperation of both countries especially in the field of education and training, and this is largely thanks to the unique training facilities the Slovak Armed Forces can offer within their capacity."

Minister Gajdoš highlighted the possibility for Pakistani service members to participate in the International Staff Officers Course (ISOC), which is delivered as part of NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP) by the Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš.

Slovak service members flown out of Iraq to safety

(7 January) With the training activities under the NATO Mission Iraq (NMI) suspended and the security risk levels increased, SVK personnel were flown out of Iraq to safety. The movement of the SVK NMI personnel was coordinated thoroughly with the commander of the SVK NMI contingent and went off according to plan. Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko highlighted the high degree of the deployed soldiers' organization and discipline.

Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "Slovak soldiers together with their colleagues were flown out of Iraq at night in a coordinated and safe manner. The entire movement was monitored by the SVK Armed Forces Command. Once it was conducted, the information was passed on to the MOD leadership." He went on to add: "All of our soldiers are in good physical and mental condition, they accomplished the movement tasks while complying with all security measures, including the protection of classified information. Their current place of deployment is logistically secured and they will be back to normal working routine in the coming days." More information cannot be released due to security reasons.



■ On 10 Jan 2020, Ordinary of the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps (Bishop of the Forces) **Mons František Rábek** visited the Presidential Guard of Honour (GOH) to bless the premises of the GOH on the occasion of Epiphany House Blessings. Two days earlier, he also blessed the premises of HQ Bratislava Garrison.

■ **Paulína Fialková** (SVK), biathlete the DUKLA Military Sports Centre, placed 6th in the women's 7.5km pursuit race at the Biathlon World Cup – Stage 4 on 9 Jan 2020 in Oberhof, Germany. This marks her 5th placement in the elite top ten this season.

■ This year's first **Basic Military Training (BMT)** began for 212 soldier trainees and Armed Forces Academy cadets at the Training and Mobilization Manning Base Martin on 7 Jan 2020. Among them are 38 women. On successful completion of the training, the BMT trainees will attend a graduation parade in the presence of their family members and invited guests on 21 Feb 2020.

■ The **Institute of Military History (VHÚ)** has added an interactive museum exhibits location map onto its website at www.vhu.sk as well as a link to its Youtube channel where those interested can view VHÚ-made videos on the military history of Slovakia and Slovaks.

■ As part of Epiphany House Blessings, Staff Chaplain to 2nd Mech Bde 1Lt Slavomír Krajčák blessed the service premises of **HQ 2nd Mechanised Brigade** in Prešov on 8 Jan 2020.

■ This year's first Slovak senior athletic titles went to Miroslav Úradník and Mária Katerinka Czaková, of the DUKLA Military Sports Centre, who triumphed in the **Slovak Walk Race Hall Championships** held on 5 Jan 2020 at the Secondary Sports School Banská Bystrica.

■ The Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Commandant's Testing Commission tested the knowledge of those attending the **21st Officers Course for College and University Graduates**, focusing on general military subjects. Chairman of the Testing Commission Maj Dušan Hrnčiar concluded with satisfaction that 23 Temporary State Service personnel and 49 Preparatory State Service personnel are ready to move on to the course's specialist military training phase.

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be **7 Allied road movements** from 13 to 19 Jan 2020 in Slovakia. Most of them will involve POL and HRV troops. During the week, SVK Army convoys will ferry oversized cargo from Martin to Sučany Garrison Training Ground and from Hlohovec to Trebišov and on to Moldava n. Bodvou. There will also be a SVK Army road movement from Trenčín to Nitra.

On cooperation with Israel



(9 January) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš received the new Israeli Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Boaz Modai, at MOD Main Building. During the talks, they discussed current issues on the defence and security agenda

and explored options for furthering the bilateral cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the State of Israel.

Speaking on this occasion, Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Options for mutual cooperation in the field of security and defence between our states present an opportunity to strengthen the capabilities of our countries and a space for exchanging expertise in the field of education and training."

On Slovakia's cutting-edge training facilities, Minister Gajdoš informed Ambassador Modai about the capabilities of the CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostolany and the Training Centre Lešť.

At the meeting, head of the MOD brought Israeli Ambassador Boaz Modai up to date on the modernization programmes across the SVK Army and the SVK Air Force, the performance of Slovakia's international commitments in the field of defence, as well as addressing cooperation between the SVK and ISR Special Operations Forces as a potential area of cooperation. They also exchanged their views on the situation in the Middle East.

Winter Youth Olympic Games

(9 January) The third edition of the Winter Youth Olympic Games (WYOG) got underway in Lausanne, Switzerland. Slovakia is represented at the Games by 49 sportsmen and women, with Anastasiya Kuzmina, former biathlete and 6-time Olympian, acting as Ambassador of Team SVK. At the Olympics, Team SVK will compete in downhill, cross country and acrobatic skiing, snowboarding, biathlon, short track speed skating, ice hockey – a team's tournament and a mixed 3x3 tournament, luge, bobsledding and alpine skiing. Representing the DUKLA Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre at WYOG are Rebeka Jančová (downhill skiing) and Vratislav Varga (luge). WYOG in Lausanne will be held until 22 Jan 2020.

Last batch of Black Hawks delivered

(11 January) The last three of 9 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters touched down at the General Colonel Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing Prešov. The delivery comes part of the contract with the United States of America. Slovakia has now 9 new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. The SVK MOD procured the multirole helicopters via the U.S. Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. The contract, which is worth US\$ 261 million, provides two-year contractor logistic support, training of aircrews and technicians, and also covers the costs associated with the delivery of the helicopters to Slovakia.

Helping the soldier who lost his flat in the tower block blast in Prešov

(8 January) Cpl Jozef Bilohuščin, who, along with other residents, lost his flat in the tragic gas blast of the residential tower block on Mukačevo Street in Prešov on 6 Dec 2020, received a certificate symbolising the money donated to help him cope with the difficult situation. It was presented to him by ISTAR Battalion Commander Lt Col Dušan Cisár during the ceremony marking the 27th anniversary of the founding of the Slovak Republic and its Armed Forces on 7 Jan 2020. "This was the minimum we could do for you, keep your head up," said Lt Col Cisár and encouraged him to continue serving in



the Army. The appeal for cash donations was made by the Military Support Foundation (MSF), and was joined by members of the ISTAR Battalion, service members from across the Armed Forces, and citizens from the civilian sector. During the appeal period, MSF raised 6,702 euros for the cause. Cpl Bilohuščin thanked everyone for the financial assistance, a sense of togetherness, and moral support which helped him a lot through the traumatic moments. After the gas blast, he found himself cut off from the escape route. Yet he kept his presence of mind, and even helped his neighbour and her pet onto the balcony where they waited for the rescuers.