



Training Year assessed

(30 January) 2019 was the Year of the Soldier, which was evidenced by the MOD's real measures to improve the Service conditions for soldiers on active duty and the historical rise in Service pay. This message was conveyed by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš as the Training Year 2019 Assessment was presented at the Annual Meeting of Commanders.

Minister Gajdoš said: "Throughout last year our task was not only to continue to drive modernisation programmes forward as required by the Armed Forces, but above all to ensure better working conditions for regular soldiers. And we exerted maximum efforts to achieve our intent. The outcome is higher Service pay for regular soldiers, and never before in history has the increase been so marked."

Highlighting the real progress achieved in modernising the armed forces, Minister Gajdoš said: "We completed the modernisation of the Helicopter Wing and today we have 9 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. I am convinced they will be employed not just by the Armed Forces, but they will also be available to our citizens for the needs of domestic disaster relief operations." He stressed that last year new equipment had also been delivered to the SOF and reminded that Zuzana 2 SpGHs, the cutting-edge product of the SVK defence industry, would be fielded to the SVK Army as early as 2020.

Speaking about the primary task of the Armed Forces in 2019 – to enhance the operational readiness and fighting ability of the armed forces, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "We accomplished this task. Indeed, all measurable aspects show an increase in individual indicators that are instrumental to measuring the fighting ability of the armed forces." He added that the armed forces will continue to enhance their capabilities to remain capable of responding to the current security landscape. Finally, he said "Thank You" to all Armed Forces personnel for their commitment demonstrated and results achieved last year.

President and C-in-C of the SVK Armed Forces Zuzana Čaputová thanked servicemen and servicewomen and civilian employees for their contribution in 2019. She praised the performance of SVK personnel on missions and operations abroad and appreciated that increased investments are being made in defence, the number of service leavers is down, and military equipment is being replaced.

SVK service members to enjoy the best Service conditions in history

(31 January) Thanks to the current MOD leadership, soldiers on active duty can enjoy the best Service conditions ever in history. Service pay has been increased by 300 euros on average since Sat 1 Feb 2020. Real progress has also been achieved in the modernisation of the armed forces and the support of the SVK defence industry. Welfare services for veterans have been improved as well, and the SVK Armed Forces has the highest public confidence rating of all public institutions. Parliamentary Chairman/SNS Leader Andrej Danko and Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš were today agreed on this at an MOD press conference, in the presence of Chairman of the Parliamentary Defence and Security Committee Anton Hrnko and General Secretary of the SVK MOD Ján Hofko.

Parliamentary Chairman Andrej Danko underlined that the SNS-led MOD will never allow the military air bases to be reconstructed from U.S. funds. "I want to see a proud and strong Slovakia in the EU, which concurrently delivers on its

Officer Commissioning Course participants undergo training at 11th Mech Bn

(27 January) College and university graduates on the Officer Commissioning Course, delivered by the General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy Liptovský Mikuláš, are gaining practical expertise and experience at the 11th Mechanised Battalion Martin from 6 December 2019 to 5 February 2020. The objective of the specialist training and internship for the future officers is to acquire basic military knowledge, skills and habits as a necessity for leading small-size tactical units. The course participants are embedded in the Battalion's staff and units and are participating in everyday military life, including command staff, marching, marksmanship, tactical and physical training. On successful completion of the course, they will be commissioned as officers in the rank of Lieutenant and ready to perform assigned tasks and for follow-on training in the Slovak Armed Forces.



■ Commander 1st Mechanised Brigade Topoľčany

Brig Gen Ivan Balog welcomed Topoľčany Town authorities and other guests to Jaselské Barracks on 28 Jan 2020. He hosted a working lunch for them, where he thanked them for cooperation thus far and expressed his conviction that the good relations should be further deepened.

■ On 27 Jan 2019, NATO HQ Brussels hosted a ceremony where the symbolic cheques with the funds from the annual 52nd NATO Charity Bazaar (NCB), an international charity organisation, were presented to charities. Out of the projects from Slovakia, financial assistance was taken over by Mrs Livia Tornyaiová on behalf of the Rojko Charity Civic Association and by Mayor of Senec Dušan Badinsky. Both projects are specifically intended to help build playgrounds for disabled children.

■ The Agapé Centre in Svätý Júr hosted a meeting of chaplains from the Ecumenical Pastoral Service (EPS).

Joined by members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches (ECC) in Slovakia, i.e. Bishop General of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia Ivan Elko and Secretary General of ECC Laco Krpala, they discussed the key themes of the strategic development plan for 2021-5 and approved them to be worked into the EPS Development Concept.

■ Dedicated to Lt Col Michal Štang who died in the SVK AF Antonov An-24 plane crash in 2006, the 14th Lt Col Michal Štang Memorial Football Tournament was held at Zvolen Garrison. Soldiers from 6 military units battled it out at the tournament. CBRN specialists from Rožňava defended the first place and won the trophy, followed by an AOS cadet team and a 5th SOF Žilina team.

■ The NATO Initial Joint Operations Planning Course

began on 27 Jan 2020 at the International Courses Dept, AOS Education Centre. The course, attended by NATO service personnel and partners from Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Columbia and Pakistan, reflects the military operations planning requirements from respective NATO Standardization Agreements (STANAG), with focus on operations planning at the operational and strategic levels.

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be 24 Allied road movements, mostly involving U.S. and CZE troops escorted by SVK MP, across Slovakia from 3 to 9 Feb 2020. SVK Army convoys will also transport oversized cargo on the following routes: Trebišov – Dobrá Niva, Sered – Dobrá Niva, and Dobrá Niva – Sása – Pliešovce. Also scheduled is a SVK Army rail movement from Trebišov to Sása Pliešovce.

Planning conference

(27 January) HQ 1st Mechanised Brigade Topoľčany hosted the initial planning conference for a battalion-level tactical exercise of the 13th Mechanised Battalion Group with a live exercise (LIVEX) phase, dubbed SLOVAK RIFLES 2020, to be executed at the Training Centre Lešť in June. The conference participants discussed the organisation, training objectives, scenarios, and setting out a timetable for execution of tasks with deadlines. In attendance at the conference were the key leaders of HQ 1st Mech Bde, members of the subordinate units, Self-propelled Battalion Michalovce, ISTAR Battalion Prešov, CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre Martin, Logistics Battalion Topoľčany, Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra, Deployable Communications and Information Systems Base Ružomberok, Military Police, National Support Element, Training Centre Lešť, and the Office of Surgeon General.



Round table on fascism

(29 January) The Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy (AOS) hosted a first round table discussion on the theme 'Radicalism and Extremism – Ideological Basis for Neo-fascism in Slovakia in the 21st Century'. The event, organised by the Committee of the Slovak Anti-Nazi Fighters Union (ANFU) Liptovský Mikuláš in cooperation with AOS, was attended by 15 ANFU specialists and members. The participants were greeted by AOS Commandant Jozef Puttera. During the discussion, they placed emphasis on analysis and description of different forms of radicalism and extremism as an ideological basis of neo-fascism today. The outcome of the round table will be a publicly accessible electronic collection of papers on the subject.

Full Field Kit this week

During our show live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat on Regina Radio we will discuss interesting points from last week's Annual Meeting of Commanders chaired by Chief of Defence (CHOD). We appreciate your comments, suggestions and opinions. Please, write to us at plnapolna@mod.gov.sk.

marked progress was also made in clothing deliveries to soldiers. Put simply, our actions speak for us."

According to General Secretary of the SVK MOD Ján Hofko, the [Active Duty Soldiers State Service] Amendment Act and the respective Service Pay Regulations came into force on Sat 1 Feb 2020. "As a result, the single-component salary will be changed into a two-component one, comprising rank-based pay and appointment-based pay. Appointment-based pay reflects the nature of the appointment held by the soldier. So, this system will be more just," he said, adding that appointment-based pay may be increased by up to 50%. "Let me give you an example, the average salary of a lieutenant will go up from 1,348 euros to nearly 1,900 euros. Needless to say, this will not be the same for all 12,700 service members, but the pay increase averages out at roughly 300 euros," he explained. He further noted that the soldier's average pay in the Slovak Armed Forces will thus be 2,300 euros, including the stabilization allowance.