



V4 brings results

(24 June) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' participated in the Visegrad Group (V4) Defence Ministers Meeting in Prague. This was the final meeting of the defence ministers under the Czech V4 Presidency, to be taken over by the Republic of Poland on 1 July 2020. Therefore, central themes of the meeting included taking stock of the CZE V4 Presidency results and the upcoming POL V4 Presidency priorities and activities.

At the meeting, the heads of the V4 MODs underlined the importance of the revised strategic document "Long Term Vision of Visegrad Group Countries on their Defence Cooperation", which they affirmed with their signatures. "Regional cooperation in the V4 format brings concrete results and has added value. Our goal is, therefore, to preserve the current dynamics of cooperation and projects development, which is beneficial not just to the Slovak Armed Forces, but also to SVK citizens," said Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad', adding that his V4 partners can count on his full support in the coming period.

The V4 defence ministers also paid close attention to the conclusions of the recent NATO and EU defence ministerials and the V4 countries' contribution to new defence initiatives and overall resilience and readiness. "It is important for us to preserve continuity and communicate the unity of the Alliance strategically, even in these difficult times of the pandemic. Given the expected negative influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on our defence budgets, we support the coherence of defence initiatives to the maximum extent possible," said Minister Nad'.

At the same time, he acknowledged that Slovakia remains fully committed to delivering on its commitments vis-à-vis its partners. "I am doing my best I can to reach the 2 % defence expenditure target. Despite this, we cannot predict with certainty how hard our economies will be hit by the coronavirus pandemic and what the nominal value of our contributions will be. Beyond any doubt, some budget cuts must be expected," he explained.

Additionally, Minister Nad' updated his colleagues on the current and planned deployments of SVK military personnel on international crisis management missions and operations. "Slovakia wants to be part of building security in the world and hence confirm that we are a reliable partner, both in the NATO Alliance and in the European Union," he said.

On bolstering the EU's engagement in the world, the V4 defence ministers focused on further progress in the stand-up of the V4 EU Battlegroup. "For the EU, the joint V4 EU Battlegroup means an important operational capability and I am immensely pleased that our countries have unanimously declared their interest in standing up the V4 EU Battlegroup in the first half of 2023. At the military level, military recommendations on the parameters for the stand-up of the Battlegroup have already been approved," he said.

The official programme of the V4 defence ministers in Prague continued on Thursday with their speeches and panel discussion at the Czech Republic's 7th National Conference titled "Our Security Cannot Be Taken for Granted".

Minister Nad' awards medals to former political prisoners

(22 June) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' welcomed members of the SVK Political Prisoners Confederation to the Ministry of Defence. He is the first Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic to have awarded them the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Medal, 3rd Grade. Along with Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, Minister Nad' expressed his respect for their determination not to give in to the pressure of the totalitarian regime.

The head of the MOD emphasised the significance of passing the legacy of the political prisoners on to other generations. "If we, as a society, want to move forward, we must first learn from the wrongs of the past by becoming familiar with the stories of these men. Today's award will not right the wrongs of the past, but it attests to the fact that we do not want to turn a blind eye to them and that we want to learn from them," he emphasised.

On behalf of the awardees, Ján Pecz, member of the SVK Political Prisoners Confederation, thanked the MOD leaders for their time and interest and expressed his belief that the wrongs of the past will not be forgotten in this way. "We, political prisoners, wish to see the truth and love win over lies and hatred," he emphasised.

Over 70,000 citizens were unlawfully convicted of alleged political crimes in Slovakia, whereas 120 innocent citizens were executed, shot dead and tortured to death between 1948 and 1989.



■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' received the **Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of the Netherlands**, HE Mr Henk Cor van der Kwast, at the MOD on 23 June. He cited the joint deployments of SVK and Dutch forces as part of international crisis management, their participation in joint international exercises and education and training activities as examples of the successful cooperation between Slovakia and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Minister Nad' underpinned the role of the NFIU SVK and the potential area of cooperation on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence.

■ State Secretary Marian Majer along with Chairman of the SVK Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Juraj Krúpa and Director General of the Human Resources Department Martin Jakál visited the **Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy (AOS)** in Liptovský Mikuláš on 23 June. The AOS Simulation Centre will deliver training for air traffic controllers for civil aviation.

■ The nearly 3-week-long initial planning process for **Ex Slovak Shield 2020** is over. Members of the SVK Defence Staff, the SVK Army, the SVK Air Force, the SVK Special Operations Forces prepared a plan of this year's largest exercise with the participation of multinational troops. Units of the SVK Armed Forces will exercise not only at the Training Centre Lešť and also across all training areas and at home bases.

■ This year, too, members of the Slovak Air Force Headquarters Zvolen remember the children undergoing treatment behind the gates of the **Children's Faculty Hospital with Outpatient Clinic in Banská Bystrica**. For the 19th time, they have organised a fund-raising event and purchased learning aids for pupils of the hospital's primary school.

■ The Institute of Military History announces that the **Dukla Lookout Tower** will reopen to the public on 1 July. However, only the exhibition on the lower deck will be available to the visitors due to ongoing refurbishment work until 31 July. Individuals and groups up to 20 visitors will be allowed to enter the premises with face coverings only.

■ Members of the Reconnaissance Diving Team, **Sered'-based Engineer Battalion**, practised underwater orienteering at Lake Black Water, a dredging lake close to Galanta. They swam towards a set target 32m deep in the water, focusing on the azimuth.

■ Live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, Regina Radio's next **Full Field Kit**, covering security and defence issues, will focus on what's on offer for visitors to the Military Museums in Piešťany and Svidník and the Dukla Battlefield.

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be a **road movement** of US, HRV and HUN troops across Slovakia from 29 June to 5 July. Over the same period, there will be several SVK Army round trip convoys on the following routes: Martin – Turecký vrch, Poprad – Nemecká, Sliac – Martin, Nemecká – Martin, as well as railway movements on the following routes: Piešťany – Michalovce, Kuchyňa – Zemianske Kostoľany, Prešov – Z. Kostoľany and Z. Kostoľany – Vlkovná.

100 days in office



(27 June) Reflecting on his first 100 days in office, Jaroslav Nad' remarked that it has been a "demanding period full of challenges and a good basis for the future of Defence". His first decisions and measures were

intended to provide assistance to the State in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on introducing and applying the principles of subject matter expertise, open communications and transparency. In his assessment of the 1st wave of the pandemic, he said: "The pandemic period was demanding not only for the incoming government, but also for the whole of Slovakia. At the same time, this provided excellent evidence of how well the Armed Forces operate within the domestic crisis management structures. Our soldiers did an amazing job and, as the Defence Minister, I am duly proud of their achievements." Statistically, 1,500 soldiers a day were deployed on the ground to halt the spread of the pandemic. A total of 33,895 people and 1,965,239 tonnes of material were transported, 1,278,884.90kms were covered, 418:59:00 driving hours were completed, and 282:30:00 flying hours were clocked.

The state of play of Defence, too, compelled the attention of Minister Nad' on taking up his appointment as Defence Minister, prompting measures to review the ongoing modernisation programmes – the purchase of the 4x4 Multitrole Tactical Vehicles and the 8x8 Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicles was reviewed. Equally important, the Minister wants to see classified contracts declassified where possible and make them available to the public.

Moreover, along with State Secretary Marian Majer, he has also addressed the process of formulating the new SVK Security and Defence Strategies and drafting the Action Plan for the Fight Against Hybrid Threats. The head of the MOD has approached cooperation with foreign political leaders proactively, thus acknowledging our responsible membership in NATO and the EU. One of the main goals of the acting MOD leadership is to determine the real state of armed forces, military equipment, infrastructure, and Service conditions. As a result, Minister Nad' has visited over 40 military units over the past four months.

Ride for Forgotten Heroes

(26 June) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' along with State Secretary Marian Majer and MOD employees attended a commemorative ceremony at the MOD Reconciliation Memorial to pay tribute to the members of the Armed Forces and Rescue Corps who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. As a side event, the 11th Ride for Forgotten Heroes was organised by the SVK Generals Club in close cooperation with Dispatch Riders LE MC Slovak Republic, a civic association. As part of the bike ride, the dispatch riders visited the Institute of Military History in Piešťany, the village of Bošáca where a show of military historic vehicles, escorted by SVK Police Corps motorcycle riders, took place.

Soldiers help clean up in the aftermath of floods

(27 June) Operators of heavy engineering equipment from the Engineer Company Michalovce and the CBRN Battalion Rožňava, joined by 28 soldiers from Michalovce-, Rožňava- and Prešov-based military units, removed the accumulated debris in the local stream in the village of Pichne, as well as reinforcing the stream's banks.

Based on a request for assistance from the local crisis staff, the SVK Armed Forces provided personnel and assets to alleviate the effects of the repeated torrential waves that hit the village in Eastern Slovakia during the weekend of 20-21 June 2020. Additionally, specialists of the SVK Army and the Military Movements National Centre, working in close cooperation with the SVK Roads Authority, prepared the movement of an armoured

vehicle-launched bridge (AVLB) tank and bridge decks from the Engineer Company Michalovce, thanks to which a temporary bridge was created and traffic was restored



between two parts of the village of Zubné. Additionally, soldiers, local firefighters and water management experts carried out banks improvement work and repaired the bases of the washed-away bridge.

On 22 June, the Self-propelled Artillery Battalion Michalovce provided assistance to flood-affected villages as well. For example, a team, led by Cpt Tomáš Queck, assisted in removing layers of mud, stones and debris from the local water ditch, moving heavy concrete lintels, as well as reinforcing the stream's banks to bridge the stream in Zubné.