



A strong alliance

(17 July) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď met Minister of Defence of the Federal Republic of Germany Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer for talks on current issues of security and defence and strengthening mutual cooperation during her first official visit to Slovakia.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Naď said: "12 years have passed since the last official bilateral visit of the German Defence Minister to Bratislava. I highly value that Madam Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer has come for a visit to Slovakia exactly today on her first anniversary in office. During the meeting, I clearly stated the Slovak Government's positions on the defence and security of our country and opinions on the future of European and Euro-Atlantic defence policy." He continued: "The Federal Republic of Germany is, undoubtedly, one of our most important partners and allies in the international community, both politically and economically." He went on to highlight the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union and its initiatives on defence and security, such as the Strategic Compass, Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and deepening EU-NATO cooperation.

"The bilateral engagement between Slovakia and Germany is at a very good level and has proved effective in the past. That is why I have made the decision to keep the Office of German Defence Attaché to Slovakia open," said the head of the German Ministry of Defence. The Minister also underlined the role of the SVK Military Police Boarding Team aboard a German frigate on Op Sophia in the Mediterranean. According to her, the pandemic has demonstrated the need for European countries to cooperate closely on bolstering resilience and responsiveness. Praising the participation of SVK Military Police personnel in Op Sophia, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "It was the most successful project of the SVK-DEU bilateral defence cooperation." For this reason, the Ministers focused on the continuity of this cooperation as part of Op Irini, starting in August.

Minister Naď appreciated the participation of German representatives in the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK) at Vajnory Barracks. He invited representatives of the Federal Ministry of Defence to the International Defence Exhibition Bratislava (IDEB) to be held on 28-30 October 2020.

Minister inspects munitions depot

(15 July) On their away day to Trenčín, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, Defence State Secretary Marian Majer and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko inspected the Trenčín – Kubrá Munitions Depot in response to the information released by media on the petition urging the closure of the defence munitions storage facility.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "After my personal visit to the Trenčín – Kubrá Munitions Depot, I can confirm that the storage of munitions at the site complies with all the internal and statutory regulations and standards. The depot is safe, and while the safety zones around the facility are in place, the risk of a negative impact on the surrounding areas is really minimal."

The head of the MOD also visited the Slovak Armed Forces Logistics Office. He was keen to find out more about how to streamline the logistic processes across Defence.

While still in Trenčín, the Minister observed a minute of silence in tribute to WW1 heroes at the Trenčín – Kubrá War Cemetery. On this occasion, he appreciated the initiative of the Slovak Generals Club thanks to which the cemetery had been fully restored.

Slovak President Zuzana Čaputová starts new tradition

(14 July) A farewell meeting between President and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces Zuzana Čaputová and former Commander of the SVK Army Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, retiring from active service, took place at the Grassalkovich Palace in Bratislava. This is a new tradition of a formal military ceremony for senior military leaders retiring from the Slovak Armed Forces. The farewell ceremony was attended by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď. Speaking on the occasion, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "I am very delighted that Madam President and I once again thanked Maj Gen Jindřich Joch for his life-long and highly valued contribution to the Slovak Armed Forces and that, even in this way, we expressed our recognition and admiration for his job well done." At the same time, the Minister appreciated the initiative of President and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces Zuzana Čaputová to set up a new tradition of a formal military ceremony for senior military leaders as they retire from Service.

Former Commander of the SVK Army Maj Gen Jindřich Joch concluded his military career after 38 years of service. As part of his military career, he held several senior positions, for example, Commander of the Strategic Crisis Management Centre and 2nd Deputy Chief of Defence. His last senior appointment was Commander of the SVK Army from 1 April 2017 to 9 July 2020.



■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, Commander of the Slovak Air Force Maj Gen Lubomír Svoboda and Chief Inspector of Flight Safety Col Ján Salaj presented the **conclusions of the inquiry into the MiG-29 crash** of Sept 2019. The crash was caused by several factors, including the bad weather, the humidity sensor deviation and the wrong decision to land at Sliach Air Base.

■ During a farewell meeting on 13 July, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď received **UK Ambassador Andrew Garth** as Ambassador Garth's Diplomatic Service appointment in Slovakia comes to an end and presented him with the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Medal, 1st Grade. The following day, he held talks with Greek Ambassador Georgios Dimitriadis.

■ On 10 July, Director General of the MOD's Modernisation Department/National Armaments Director Jozef Zekucia and Italian Defence Attaché Brig Gen Giuseppe Gimondo met to discuss ways of **modernising the SVK Air Force fleet of subsonic aircraft**.

■ On 16 July, kids from the Children's Homes in Necpaly and Martin participated in the **Military Day** organised by the Head Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps as part of the Military Christian Camp 2020 at the Havranovo Cottage. The kids were visited by Defence Minister Naď and DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Lorinc.

■ On 17 July, a **change of command (COC) ceremony for commanders of the Slovak SOF establishments** took place in Martin, with Maj Marcel Lukáč taking up the appointment of Commander of the SVK SOF Training Base and Lt Col Branislav Krajčík that of Commander of the CIMIC and PSYOPS Centre.

■ The Czechoslovak Legion Train, known as "**Legiotrén**", a genuine replica of the period train carriages used by Czech and Slovak legionaries in 1918-20, will be on display in Tisovec, starting from 18 July. On 21 July, the train will call at Rimavská Sobota Railway Station and will be visited by State Secretary Marian Majer. On 25 July, the train will be on display in Kremnica.

■ A total of 11 soldiers and a Tatra 815 truck, of the Michalovce-based Self-propelled Artillery Battalion, deployed to **mitigate the effects of the landslide** in the village of Nagov in Medzilaborce County.

■ Col Marián Filip succeeded Col Ondrej Bagačko as **Commander of the Supply Base II Martin** with effect from 15 July.

■ The 5th Special Forces Regiment is organising the 12th **Gabčík Drop of Blood** event. Blood can be donated on 20-24 July, 10-14 and 17-21 Aug at the National Transfusion Station, Žilina Hospital. The date can be arranged on 041 700 11 83.

■ Drivers are advised by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be **9 Allied road movements** involving US, CZE, DEU and POL troops across Slovakia from 20 to 26 July. Over the same period, there will be several SVK Army round trip convoys on the following routes: Martin – Sučany, Martin – Levice, Kuchyňa – Nitra, Nitra – Nemecká, Nemecká – Kuchyňa, Levice – Devičany, Sliach – Kuchyňa, Zemianske Kostolany – Sliach, Prešov – Z. Kostolany, Nitra – Z. Kostolany, Z. Kostolany – Rožňava, Z. Kostolany – Martin, Z. Kostolany – Michalovce and Z. Kostolany – Trenčín. There will also be a SVK Army rail movement from Z. Kostolany to Vlkánová.

VLM to repair fish ponds



(16 July) Military Forests and Estates (VLM), the state-owned enterprise (SOE), wants to reconstruct nearly 100-year-old fish ponds on the Malina River and the Balázov Stream in the Military District Záhorie.

The aim of the projects is to protect the residents of Malacky and the defence estate from the effects of floods. The requests for non-refundable subsidies from the Quality of Environment Operational Programme for the repairs are being currently assessed by the SVK Ministry of Environment. Military Forests and Estates has built 11 flood polders and implemented 230 technical and biological measures to date. VLM wants to continue extending the existing flood defences and building dry polders on the Jakubianka River and the Lúbrica River.

A step closer to modern airport

(15 July) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď provided an update to the SVK Cabinet on the next steps to complete the refurbishment and upgrade of Sliach Air Base, which must be ready by 2023 to support the arrival and operational service of new F-16 fighter jets.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "We have decided to implement this procurement through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). This choice guarantees maximum transparency as the Agency operates on a "no profit – no loss" basis and applies the rules of international competitive bidding in procurement."

Thanks to the international tender, SVK firms and companies, too, will be able to participate in the base renovations. The MOD insists on preserving the dual military and civilian use of the air base. The costs are estimated at €69 million, VAT excluded. Funding for the project is secured from the defence budget.

UNFICYP training at TC Lešť



(18 July) Between 6 and 24 July, the Training Centre Lešť is hosting training for troops to serve as the 39th rotation of SLOVCON UNFICYP in Cyprus in 2020-2021. 275 soldiers (27 servicewomen) from 38 SVK

Armed Forces service establishments are undertaking the training, which consists of theoretical and practical phases and which allows them to familiarise themselves with the operational tasks of the SLOVCON and UNFICYP units.

The training for the peacekeeping mission, the SVK component of which is now being led by the SVK Air Force (to be taken over by the SVK Army), will culminate with a final tactical exercise on 20-21 July. Subsequently, the selection board will choose the personnel to deploy to Cyprus this September and October.

Military policemen practise rescue procedures at Lake Gulashka

(16 July) Two specialist courses for members of the SVK Military Police have been underway throughout July at Lake Gulashka, located at the Sunny Lakes Resort in Senec and organised by the Training Centre Lešť in cooperation with the SVK Military Police. Chief Diving Instructor SSgt Vladimír Penička, the course leader of the TC Lešť, explained that they are focused on the rescue procedures and behaviour of people who suddenly or unexpectedly fall into the water. Maj Jozef Šoltýs, Chief of Section, Crisis Management, Training and K9 Branch, MP Dept Vlkánová – Hronsek, made it clear that the course is designed for members of the MP crisis management teams from Vlkánová, Prešov and Topoľčany and takes advantage of the skills the MP personnel acquired while serving as part of two rotations of Op Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea. If deployed on



a similar operation, they must be prepared to execute operational tasks. The course is supervised by Chief of the Topoľčany-based Crisis Management Group Cpt Martin Urban.

"A soldier with the full field kit of over 20kg can fall into the water from a boat and the life-saving vest may malfunction for different reasons. That is why under the water he must be able to remove everything he is carrying. This means the bullet-proof vest, the weapons, the magazines, the helmet, etc. And the uniform which can get wet very quickly and drag him under the water. If so, he

can use a small oxygen bottle which is available to every soldier in the boat and which can sustain him for up to 10 minutes or only 1-2 minutes when under stress or panicking. As a result, he must be able to remove all of the heaviest items within the time limit," said Cpt Urban, describing one of the tasks.