



Musical dream fulfilled

(3 January) What was once 93-year-old WW2 veteran Vladimír Strmeň's dream of singing and recording his partisan songs with professional musicians has now become a reality thanks to the Slovak Armed Forces Band Banská Bystrica in close cooperation with Slovak Radio and Television (RTVS) and the Military Support Foundation (MSF).

Based on Vladimír Strmeň's personal notes and singing, the two WW2 songs were put to music by composer Cpl Jakub Laco and recorded in the autumn of 2021 by the Slovak Armed Forces Band Banská Bystrica with Capt Ján Goliaš as conductor. Post-production work was done by Ľuboš Kovačech of RTVS Banská Bystrica. The project was initiated and supported by the Military Support Foundation. Both songs made their debut in a joint show entitled 'The Band, Start Playing!' by Radio Regina's three studios at 20:05 on 3 January 2022.

Speaking after the recording session, Vladimír Strmeň said: "I recorded the songs in memory of all those who had courage to fight against the Nazis. And what a tremendous experience singing with such wonderful musicians as those in the Slovak Armed Forces Band Banská Bystrica that was for me!" Speaking on the occasion, Capt Ján Goliaš said: "For us, it was a great honour to have accompanied such a great legend as Vladimír Strmeň."

For Vladimír Strmeň, music has been his life-long love. In 1942, he joined the Army Band Banská Bystrica as a 14-year old minor recruit and learned to play the bass horn and the trombone. After the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising (SNP) he was sent home because he was a minor. However, no sooner had he come to his native village of Staré Hory than he joined a partisan group on 1 Sept 1944. As the partisan group was pushed back into the mountains, he was wounded in fighting. He remained with the partisan group in the mountains until they linked up with the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps. After WW2 Vladimír Strmeň played with the Tesla Band Banská Bystrica for many years. Until recently, he showcased his accordion musicianship in front of residents of care homes in Banská Bystrica.



Bids for 8x8 vehicles

(3 January) The Ministry of Defence received bids for the Slovak Armed Forces' 8x8 Wheeled Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) Programme. Czechia, Finland, Romania, Spain and the US submitted their bids by the official deadline of 31 Dec 2021, with some countries offering several technical solutions.

The bids are now coming up for evaluation by a 70-member project team comprising experts from across Defence and the Ministry of Economy to help assess the level of Slovak industry content.

The project team will now analyse the bids in detail, whereas testing and trials on individual vehicles are expected soon after. Following the evaluation process, the expert team will finalise a feasibility study and related documents. The recommendation for the SVK Cabinet to procure the 8x8 AFVs is due by the end of March 2022.

The bids will be assessed on their merits against the scoring criteria. Out of 100% of the total score, the total Agreement price is worth 35%, the technical specifications 30%, logistics support across all stages of the vehicle's life cycle 10%, and the SVK defence industry's role in the programme 25%.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "We are a step closer to getting the new vehicles for our soldiers to meet their needs of the 21st century. It applies that the level of Slovak industry content is an important criterion and must account for at least 40% of the total acquisition price – and we insist on this. For this reason, the bids are in the hands of not only experts from across Defence, but also those from the Ministry of Economy."

Due to the sensitivity of information and in the interests of objectivity, the MOD will provide additional information on the bids only to a limited extent until the official evaluation process has been concluded.

New Year welcomed with gun salute after festive break

(1 January) Soldiers marked the 29th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and the independent Slovak Armed Forces with firing a 20-round gun salute from the Danube embankment in Bratislava. They resumed the tradition of the New Year's Gun Salute after last year's suspension of this activity due to the unfavourable pandemic situation. 29 members of 54 Multi Rocket Launch System (MRLS) Battalion Rožňava, commanded by S-in-C of 1 MRLS Battery 1Lt Jaroslav Šimčík, fired 20 rounds from six 122 mm D-30 gun howitzers. To make sure everything's ready, the event was rigorously rehearsed at the Gemerská Hôrka training facility in Rožňava on 28 Dec. The New Year's Gun Salute was attended by Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, Commander of the SVK Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach and Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer. The artillerymen involved were addressed by Bishop of the Forces František Rábek. In his remarks, he highlighted the role of soldiers as servicemen of peace, as World Peace Day is marked on the New Year's day.



- 5th Special Forces Regiment personnel raised money to gift toys, books, clothes and sporting equipment to more than four dozen kids living at the Children's Home in Bytča. The activity was also supported by CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko. Thanks to the Military Support Foundation, the kids received books of fairy tales with audio recordings. In turn, they gave soldiers their drawings and paintings to put them on display at Žilina Barracks over the festive season.

- Maj Richard Škuta left the Service on 31 Dec 2021. In attendance at the farewell ceremony were Deputy Commander of the Slovak Air Force Brig Gen Ladislav Dvorník, Chief of the Air Force Planning, Deployment and Development Branch Col Martin Kuterka, Commander of 81 Wing Sliach Col Josef Hausner, Deputy Commander of 81 Wing Sliach Lt Col Dušan Tichý, and Maj Škuta's longtime colleagues and friends.

- Ivona Fialková and Michal Šima, biathletes of the Dukla Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica, achieved a historical success by placing 9th in mixed relay doubles in this year's Biathlon World Cup in Oberhof, Germany.

- As part of Covid restrictions easing, the study room of the Military History Archives in Bratislava will reopen to the vaccinated and recovered members of the public, and so will the Military History Museums Piešťany and Svidník. For more information, go to the Institute of Military History website.

- During Pope Francis's visit to Cyprus, Slovak UNFICYP soldiers attended the Holy Mass celebrated by the Pope at the GSP Stadium in Nicosia. They were seated next to soldiers from the Pope's native Argentina.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as 13 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 10 to 16 Jan 2022. Over the same period, the SVK military will conduct road movements from/to: Kamenica nad Cirochou – Michalovce and back, Michalovce – Lešť, Zvolen – Martin and back, Lešť – Topoľčany, Sučany – Martin, Topoľčany – Michalovce, Martin – Prešov, Prešov – Michalovce, Michalovce – Martin, Poprad – Rožňava and back, Nemšová – Ružomberok, Nemšová – Žilina, Liptovský Mikuláš – Nemšová, Ružomberok – Liptovský Mikuláš, within the cities of Prešov and Martin, Prešov – Nemšová and back, Martin – Sklené, Sklené – Nemšová, Martin – Nemšová and back, Poprad – Nemšová, Žilina – Martin, Martin – Poprad, Nemšová – Zvolen and back, Bratislava – Martin and back, Lešť – Nemšová and back, Zemianske Kostolany – Nováky and back, Zemianske Kostolany – Bratislava and back, Zemianske Kostolany – Prešov and back, and Zemianske Kostolany – Žilina and back.

FULL FIELD KIT

The show, featured on Radio Regina live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, presents the latest intake of recruits as they undergo the first Initial Military Training (IMT) in 2022.

VHÚ marks its most successful year of infrastructure investment and maintenance

(3 January) The Institute of Military History (VHÚ) Bratislava, an MOD budgetary entity, has 152 buildings and structures located across Bratislava, Piešťany, Svidník, Vyšný Komárnik and Tokajik. Given their age, obsolescence and wear and tear, some of them no longer meet the requirements for safe and economical operation. But thanks to the MOD's funding, the Institute repaired, reconstructed and upgraded a large number of its real estate assets as part of its infrastructure investment and routine and standard maintenance throughout 2021.

The VHÚ, located at 27 Krajná Street in Bratislava, had its windows replaced by new ones with reflexive foils. The Military History Museum Piešťany saw several changes to its buildings, including the demolition of its old and unsuitable buildings, the installation of new windows, the replacement of low-voltage cables, the extension of the security camera system, the repair and insulation of the facades, shells and roofs, and the application of protective paint to buildings.



At Dukla, focus of the refurbishment and upgrade works to the Dukla Lookout Tower was on repairing the building's shell,

replacing windows, making adjustments to the ground floor and the cupolas, building a wheelchair-friendly zone, and reconstructing toilets. Just below the lookout tower there is the Dukla Memorial and War Cemetery dedicated to the 1st Czechoslovak Army Corps, which needed replacing weathered basalt stones and glass panes and reconstructing the iron bar gate to the columbarium. Also installed was a new lighting system at the site.

The VHÚ's exhibition pavilion in Vyšný Komárnik was refurbished last August. Reconstruction works to the VHÚ's facility in Svidník were also completed last year, while the revitalisation of the Memorial and War Cemetery dedicated to the Soviet Army in Svidník continued. It is also worth mentioning that the Tokajik tragedy site underwent an extensive revitalisation with construction and reconstruction works and garden improvements.

Phenomenal Petra



(9 January) Skier Petra Vlhová (SVK) triumphed in Sunday's slalom race on the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup circuit in Kranjska Gora, Slovenia. She claimed her 25th victory and 52nd podium

placement in this prestigious race series. She came in 0.23 seconds ahead of Wendy Holdener (CHE) and Anna Swenn Larsson (SWE) placed 3rd with a significant gap of 1.06 seconds. Mikaela Shiffrin did not finish the second round. The 20-year-old skier of the DUKLA Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica won her fifth out of the six races this season. Of the 600 points, she has gained 580 and is at the top of the slalom World Cup standings.

Remembering friends



(27 December) At its Special Operations Forces Memorial, the 5th Special Forces Regiment based in Žilina hosted an Act of Remembrance in memory of Capt (Posth) Edmund Makovník, Sgt 1C (Posth)

Patrik Fraštia and U.S. Air Force Capt David Lyon who died in the line of duty while serving with ISAF in Afghanistan on 27 Dec 2013. In attendance were Acting Commander 5th SOF Regt Lt Col Miroslav Modročík, former Commander Col Pavol Šebík, Deputy Commander Col Pavel Švelka, CSELS of SVK SOCOM and 5th SOF Regt Sgt Maj Martin Boháčik and Sgt Maj Radoslav Žitník, respectively.

Elena Kaliská remains with Dukla



(7 January) Canoe slalom queen Elena Kaliská announced her retirement at the Canoe Slalom World Championships in Čunovo in Sept 2021. During her career she notched up two gold medals at Athens 2004 OG and Beijing 2008 OG,

won the World Champion title in 2005, claimed five European Champion and six World Cup titles, as well as recording many other successes. She has continued working at the Dukla Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica, where she took on the role of Chief of the Public Communications and Marketing Group on 3 Jan 2022.