



Importance of Transatlantic Partnership

(13 January) The discussions of the Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) in France's Brest were dominated by the current developments and security situation on Europe's eastern border.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "Ukraine has our unwavering support for its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. First and foremost, I want to reaffirm the need for constructive dialogue with Russia, which is the only meaningful option for the de-escalation of the situation. At the same time, I vigorously condemn any use of force to change the border, as it is strictly forbidden by international law. There is no doubt that any military aggression against Ukraine would have massive negative consequences and would come at a severe cost."

According to Mr Nad', the ongoing situation confirms the strategic importance of unity amongst EU and NATO Member States and that of the transatlantic partnership, as well as presenting an opportunity for enlarging and deepening operational collaboration among EU Member States and between the EU and NATO. "This gives us the space to use the present situation to improve our capabilities and readiness," the head of the MOD said. This topic resonated with defence ministers at the Bucharest 9 (B9) Defence Ministers Meeting, with the participation of the French Defence Minister as France currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The joint meeting of EU Defence and Foreign Affairs Ministers in Brest saw an in-depth discussion of the first draft of the Strategic Compass. The defence ministers also broached the topic of non-state actors' activity in the areas of EU missions and operations.

"We have recorded an increase in the influence of such actors and in that of disinformation activities which are carried out via media outlets and social networks. There are efforts to undermine the importance and efficiency of the EU as a partner. Therefore, we are proactively strengthening the resilience of specialist personnel and operational activity in the areas of deployment," said Minister Nad'.



CHOD Gen Zmeko in Brussels

(13 January) Chief of Defence Daniel Zmeko took part in the first NATO Military Committee in CHODs Session this year on 12-13 Jan. Topics of discussion included NATO's transformation activities and strategic documents, including the Concept for Deterrence and Defence of the Euro-Atlantic Area and the NATO Warfighting Capstone Concept. In a discussion with SACT Gen Lavigne and SACEUR Gen Wolters, NATO military chiefs paid due attention to the importance of the challenges posed by ongoing global digitalisation. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg updated them on the current issues ahead of the 2022 Madrid NATO Summit. Also discussed were NATO's partner formats with Ukraine and Georgia. On the margins of the NATO MC Session, Gen Zmeko met with Georgian CHOD Maj Gen Matiashvili and Ukrainian CHOD Lt Gen Zaluzhnyi. At the end of their meeting, Gen Zmeko and Lt Gen Zaluzhnyi signed a military training cooperation agreement between the SVK and UKR Armed Forces.

The highest intake of recruits in the past 5 years start basic training

(13 January) The highest intake of new entrants to the Armed Forces (including trainee soldiers and professionally qualified officers) in the past 5 years have reported for basic military training. Due to the available training capacity and organisational constraints, the training of 491 new recruits will be concurrently underway at two training facilities – 4th Czechoslovak Brigade Barracks based in Martin and the Training Centre Lešť. Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "This is good news – after a record number of applications to join the Slovak Armed Forces, we have a record number of suitable candidates who are on the right track to becoming Slovak Armed Forces servicemen and women. I keep my fingers crossed for them as they undergo challenging training for service to the country." The MOD ascribes the increased interest in careers in the Services to improved Service conditions. Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko was appreciative of the promising reinforcement to SVK regular forces. He pointed out that all recruits have been vaccinated against coronavirus and the training at both facilities will be conducted in line with government and public health guidelines. After in-processing paperwork and issuance of military clothing and equipment, the newcomers were assigned to training platoons and started their training according to the training programmes. In the weeks to come, candidates for the Armed Forces will undergo training with focus on developing basic military knowledge and practical skills. Successful graduates will swear the Oath of Allegiance at the passing out parade on 25 February 2022.



- Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' met the **Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden** to Slovakia, HE Ms Annika Markovic at the MOD on 11 Jan. The discussion, which was the first opportunity for the Ambassador to meet the Minister since taking up her Diplomatic Service appointment, sought to explore bilateral cooperation between the countries and ways to take it forward into the future. Mr Nad' was appreciative of the bilateral meeting as preparations are now moving forward for his scheduled visit to Sweden at the invitation of the SWE Defence Minister.

- The SVK Armed Forces are finalising preparations for international **Ex Saber Strike**, designed to practise critical defence capabilities and to facilitate cooperation of military personnel in a multinational task force. Slovakia will join in with the Saber Strike series of exercises as they unfold in the region from the Baltics across Poland, through Czechia to Romania. In Slovakia, Ex Saber Strike is scheduled to run from 1 to 14 Mar 2022 at the TC Lešť, on Levice GAR's training ground and at Sliac Air Base and will involve 3,000 military personnel with some 1,000 pieces of equipment.

- As part of the **Find Your Home** project, members of 91 Engineer Regiment Sereď have donated 100 gift bags with audio fairy tale books and calendars to the Centres for Children and Families in Sereď and Trnava. And another 50 gift bags went to the Social Care Services Home for Children and Adults in Šoporňa - Strkovec.

- Ivona Fialková**, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, placed 31st and earned 10 points at the women's pursuit race at the Biathlon World Cup in Germany's Ruhpolding on 16 Jan.

- Marián Skupek**, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, won the FIL Junior European Luge Championships in Austria's Bludenz on 16 Jan. He has deservingly secured his qualification for the Winter Olympic Games.

- Patrik Jány**, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, and Kamila Novotná placed 3rd in the Air Rifle Mixed Team event at the 2022 ISSF Shooting Grand Prix in Slovenia's Ruše on 14 Jan.

- The Command Support Company, part of the SVK **Presidential Guard of Honour**, has donated clothes, toys, toiletries and food for socially disadvantaged families. The gift was taken over by Marcel Flaga, statutory representative of the Help Foundation and the Let's Inspire the World Civic Association.

- The latest **Azimuth 24/7** edition, available on YouTube, reports on the movement of Slovak-made Zuzana II SpGHs to NATO's eFP in Latvia.

- The MOD has issued a **traffic warning** to motorists as 12 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 17 to 23 Jan 2022. Over the same period, the SVK military will conduct road movements from/to: Hlohovec – Martin, Levice – Hlohovec, Trenčín – Záhorie, Nováky – Lešť, Nitra – Zemianske Kostoľany and back.

FULL FIELD KIT

The Full Field Kit radio programme, featured on Radio Regina live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, presents the life of WW2 hero pilot Otto Smik to celebrate his 100th birthday.

Artillery, Rocket and Missile Forces Day marked in NATO's eFP

(15 January) On Artillery, Rocket and Missile Forces Day, SVK artillerymen deployed to Latvia as part of NATO's eFP marked the 77th anniversary of "Carpatho-Gorlic Operation"

that took place at the town of Jaslo, Poland. This was Czechoslovak artillery's most extensive and successful engagement throughout WW2. Between 10 and 15 January, they also underwent joint multinational artillery training in providing Fire Support (FS), dubbed the Fire Academy. Among the training audience were a SVK Arty Fire Bty, a SVN Arty Fire Trp, SVK, CAN, ESP, SVN and ITA Recce Teams, and the FS Coordination Group led by Capt Marcel Leferovič. The training conditions – a new sandy area with high



fluctuations in temperatures and strong gusts of wind – tested the driving skills of military drivers and the readiness of crews to operate in challenging climate conditions.

The aims of the training activity were met and the deployed artillery force confirmed its readiness to provide effective fire support.

The new ZUZANA 2 SpGHs deployed with the NATO eFP BG Latvia drew a lot of interest. The training event, which culminated with a two-day live fire exercise during which the firing positions were visited by representatives of all the countries participating in NATO's eFP, was concluded on the eve of Artillery, Rocket and Missile Forces Day.

Army HQ marks Slovakia's foundation

(11 January) Army HQ military and civilian staff gathered to commemorate the 29th anniversary of Slovakia's foundation. On this occasion, the Order of the President of the Slovak Republic was read out with the words of gratitude addressed to the military for a job well done in securing Slovakia's defences and delivering NATO's tasks and commitments, as well as for the active role of military medical personnel in protecting public health. Commander of the Slovak Army Maj Gen Ivan Pach handed over the SVK Minister of Defence Commemorative Medal and Armed Forces and Chief of Defence Honorary Badges to selected Army HQ personnel for loyalty to the Armed Forces and special merits. In his remarks, Maj Gen Pach thanked them for their work last year and emphasised the importance of the current tasks, especially those of Ex Saber Strike and Ex Slovak Shield.

Meeting of sports personalities



(14 January) A meeting at the DUKLA Military Sports Centre Banská Bystrica brought together SVK sports personalities associated inseparably with DUKLA, many of whom were involved in DUKLA's emergence in 1967. On the initiative of Lt Col Matej

Tóth, DUKLA Director and member of the SVK Olympic and Sports Committee, and Gen (Rtd) Ivan Čierny, former Chair of the Olympic Clubs Association and honorary member of the SVK Olympic and Sports Committee, distinguished guests Július Nyárjás, Jozef Paršo, Peter Benedik, Zdeněk Michna, Ján Solčáni, Zdeněk Chára and Jirka Vlček took over the accolades they were not able to receive in person due to pandemic restrictions last October in Bratislava.

Course for orderlies in Liptov

(12 January) The Special Medical Activities and Training Branch, part of the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Ružomberok, hosted the 10th Medical Orderlies During State of Emergency Course designed for non-medical military personnel to be deployed to hospitals and social care facilities as part of domestic crisis management operations during the state of emergency. The course was attended by 31 SVK AF and SOF participants. The course graduates, who are to support regular medical orderlies or replace them during staff absences, are now ready to assist with COVID-19 patient care at the hospital wards transformed to function as COVID-19 wards, with the triage process and patient check-ins, and with the disinfection of hospital spaces.