



Ukraine needs help

(3 March) The SVK Government approved additional aid for Ukraine on day 8 of Russia's unprovoked aggression. As part of the aid package, Slovakia would send €32.2m in military materiel to Ukraine.

Deputy Defence Minister Majer said: "Ukraine has been engaged in fierce fighting in order to defend its country and future. As well as this, it has also been fighting for values that are close to us – democracy and freedom. I am proud that we together with our NATO and EU partners and allies, and across the entirety of Slovakia, take a united and unequivocal position. That's why we have decided to help Ukraine again – of course, in a responsible manner and within our capacity."

Adding, "Through the Defence Ministry, Slovakia is seeking to get some expenses on the military materiel gifted to Ukraine refunded via the European Peace Instrument and on the basis of bilateral agreements."

In light of the security developments in Europe, Deputy Defence Minister Majer asked the SVK Government to endorse the presence of Allied troops in Slovakia. In addition to this, he also proposed allowing Allied air and land movements over and across Slovakia.

The authorisation aims to support NATO forces in Slovakia in order to sustain the peace and stability of Allied territory, to deliver humanitarian missions, to conduct air exercises and refuelling in SVK airspace, to allow for aircraft repairs, and to transport delegations and materiel.



We stand with our Ukrainian friends

(2 March) Through the Head Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, the MOD provided humanitarian aid comprised of 1,000 hygiene packages to Ukraine. In addition to this, the consignment contained the Interior Ministry-donated blankets, sleeping bags and other supplies to support those fleeing the war. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "In these times, we all stand firmly with our Ukrainian friends who are fiercely defending themselves against the Russian aggressor. I'm very pleased that aid directly from the Defence Ministry is heading for Ukraine."

Dispatched from Bratislava, the first truck with humanitarian aid crossed the Slovak-Ukrainian border in Vyšné Nemecké. After arriving in Uzhhorod, the supplies were unloaded and handed over to a local state-run hospital. Another humanitarian shipment for Ukraine is planned to follow soon. As part of Slovak aid for Ukraine, the Head Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service will also supply 5,000 first aid kits worth 23,200 euros. The project is facilitated by the MOD-based Military Support Foundation. This brings the total amount of Slovakia's humanitarian and materiel aid to Ukraine to over €17m.

Slovak Armed Forces deploy additional forces and assets

(5 March) SVK Armed Forces Command has decided to deploy additional forces and assets to Slovakia's border with Ukraine. CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "We are standing up two task forces the mission of which is to protect the so-called green border, as well as supporting the Border and Customs Police directly at the border crossings. We are deploying our reconnaissance and patrol capabilities, so that our border is covered sufficiently from land and from the air. In addition to this, while coordinating with elements of the Interior Ministry, we have been involved in collecting, transporting and distributing humanitarian aid to war refugees, as well as setting up and operating refugee hotspot camps." Both task forces, commanded by DCOM HQ Joint Operations and COM TF Brig Gen Martin Michalko, are ready to deploy almost 1,500 troops from across all Services. In addition to coordinating aid for war refugees at the border crossings and patrolling along the green border, we have also set aside forces and assets to cook meals and set up temporary refugee camps. Working closely with the Czech Army, we are going to set up a camp for 400 refugees where, assisted by humanitarian organisations, we will be ready to provide long-term care for Ukrainian women and children with no contacts to relatives or friends in other European countries. Alongside these efforts, the SVK Armed Forces, especially the Slovak Army has been carrying out tasks on Ex Saber Strike according to plan. In response to the aggression against our eastern neighbour, the entire Armed Forces are at a higher state of readiness and are taking measures to respond to any change in the situation.



- 50 members of the **CZE Armed Forces** along with equipment will arrive in Slovakia as part of humanitarian efforts to help deal with the influx of refugees from Ukraine. The CZE deployment to Slovakia has been approved by the SVK Government. As the author of the CZE deployment proposal, the MOD has clarified that members of the CZE Armed Forces will help relieve the organisational and logistical overstretch on Slovak security forces due to the rising numbers of refugees on the Ukrainian-Slovak border.

- On 28 Feb, the MOD has terminated the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation with the **Slovak War Veterans Union** on the grounds of its activities. These raise serious doubts about the integrity and respect for SVK foreign, security and defence policy, while reducing the social importance of war veterans and the Slovak Armed Forces.

- Due to the current security situation, the Ministry of Defence calls on members of the public **not to fly drones** over military facilities and defence infrastructure.

- With **taking photographs of military sites** strictly prohibited, the MOD calls on the public to refrain from any such unlawful action. The MOD is thus responding to an increased number of incidents involving breaches of bans, most frequently the ban on making audio-visual recordings of military sites.

- The **26th International Staff Officers' Course (ISOC)** has opened at the Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy. It is being attended by 14 SVK officers, ranked from 1st Lieutenant to Major, and six CZE first lieutenants. The course is due to finish on 14 Apr.

- During the Holy Mass on Ash Wednesday, Bishop of the Forces František Rábek appointed Padre František Krušínský STD, a priest of the Spiš Diocese, as the **new staff chaplain of 11 SVK AF Brigade Nitra**. Padre František worked in Canada for 15 years. He also served there as military chaplain for six years.

- Joined by chaplains, deacons, and employees of the Ordinariate of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps as well as by members of the Slovak Armed Forces, the SVK Police Corps and the Prison and Justice Guard Corps, Bishop of the Forces František Rábek marked the **19th anniversary of the establishment of the Ordinariate** with a Holy Mass on 1 Mar.

- Col Andrej Tvrdoň took up the appointment of **Commander Presidential Guard of Honour**, with effect from 1 Mar.

- Patrik Jány, shooter of the **Dukla Military Sports Centre**, won the silver medal in the men's 10m Air Rifle at the ISSF World Cup in Egypt's Cairo, thereby becoming the overall World Cup ranking winner. On Fri 4 Mar, he also won the men's 3x20 free rifle. Paulína Fialková, biathlete of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, placed 12th in the women's 10km pursuit in Kontiolahti, Finland.

Phase I of Ex Saber Strike 22 concluded successfully

(4 March) Phase I of Ex Saber Strike 22 has concluded successfully. Forming a firm part of NATO's MTEP, the Saber Strike series of exercises have been conducted bi-annually. This year U.S. Army troops have joined the exercise running from 1 to 14 March 2022 in Slovakia. Exercise activities are also taking place across Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic and the Baltic states. The exercise venues are located across Slovakia, to include the Training Centre Lešť, Levice Garrison's training ground, and Sliach and Kuchyňa air bases. Mostly SVK Army units from across the Services are involved in the exercise. The main tactical phase will be conducted across MTA Lešť. According to COM CSS Bde Trenčín Col Jozef Ševčík, the preparation phase perfectly tested the Brigade's readiness to conduct RSOL, convoy escorts and logistics



support for U.S. troops. As part of this phase, all SVK units demonstrated a very high level of coordination.

The most important task is now being carried out by members of 22 Mech Bn Michalovce. COM 22 Mech Bn Lt Col Peter Pavlík emphasised that this is also an opportunity for the Battalion's exercising units to prepare for a certification exercise next year. Sgt Maj Martin Bardzák, RSM of the Battalion, praised the efforts of NCOs and soldiers in executing tasks and exchanging expertise with U.S. soldiers.

As well as offering Holy Masses to SVK soldiers at the Lešť Chapel, military chaplain Capt Ján Čupalka is also celebrating Holy Masses for U.S. soldiers in English at the request of the U.S. side. The main phase of Ex Saber Strike is due to start on 5 March.

Nováky tragedy remembered

(2 March) Speaking at the Nováky Tragedy Memorial, Director General of the MOD's Human Resources Dept Mr Jakál said: "Some of the wounds caused by this tragic event will not heal in time. Years have passed since one of the worst industrial accidents in the history of Slovakia occurred, but the memory of those who lost their most precious lives will never disappear. We honour their memory." A series of detonations rocked the company's munitions decommissioning facility on 2 Mar 2007, claiming the lives of eight employees and injuring dozens of others. Immediately after the disaster, the MOD adopted extra safety precautions to minimise potential risks and failures.

Slovakia strengthens Op EUFOR Althea

(3 March) Slovakia will temporarily strengthen its contribution to Op EUFOR Althea by deploying additional 121 SVK military personnel to Bosnia and Herzegovina for up to 30 days. The aim is to prevent the local security situation from worsening. The MOD has thus responded to the request from the Operational Commander for Op EUFOR Althea to bolster the force in BiH with the Intermediate Reserve Force. Among the SVK units to be deployed are: an immediate readiness reserve element and a company from 53 Airborne Battalion Trebišov. The situation across Op EUFOR Althea may worsen, even in connection with the Ukraine crisis. Parliament gave its approval to the earmarking of SVK military personnel to EUFOR's reserve forces for BiH on 27 Jan 2021.



Assistance and pastoral visit

(4 March) Chaplain-in-Chief Col Viktor Sabo took an away-day trip to eastern Slovakia. At CSS Bn Prešov, he met with COM CSS Bn Lt Col Vladimír Sobek, as well as visiting military chaplain Capt Vlasta Kovalová. Then in the afternoon at the Bishopric Office, he met with Bishop Peter Mihoč and Deputy Bishop Marek Cingel who were tasked with coordinating efforts to accommodate war refugees from Ukraine. The Chaplain-in-Chief informed them of the intent to set up a Military Support Foundation tent at the Vyšné Nemecké border crossing. In the evening, he visited HQ Border Police in Sobrance and the Vyšné Nemecké and Velké Slemence border crossings. The tent will be manned by SVK ECAC volunteers, EPS military and police chaplains, and members of the evangelical diaconate.