



An uneasy period with uneasy conditions, yet with excellent results

(29 March) MOD leaders have described the past year in Defence as a success, as they have taken on commitments vis-à-vis SVK security, servicemen and women, and Allies. In the coming period, the MOD plans on reinforcing Slovakia's defence capability, to include weaning itself off dependence on Russia's military equipment. Minister Naď said: "Over their first two years in office, the SVK Government have managed fundamental crises. We took office at a time when the pandemic broke out and we have been grappling with it ever since. Also, there was a period when we assisted with the evacuation from Afghanistan. Currently, we remain intensely focused on taking steps to protect the security of the Slovak Republic in the face of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. My sincere thanks go out to all those across Defence. It's been an uneasy period with uneasy conditions, yet still with excellent results." The MOD's international cooperation has been intense as never before. Slovakia has been an active ally in delivering on its commitments. "When I took over as the Defence Minister, Slovakia's



planned defence budget for 2020 stood at 1.63% of GDP. Yet, we reached the target of 2% of GDP on defence in 2020. Similarly, the defence budget was increased markedly in 2021," said Naď, noting that the MOD also envisages an increase in this year's defence spending. In 2021, the MOD spent 32.6% of its budget on modernising the SVK military's arsenal, which equates to €564m. Over 100 modernisation programmes have been underway, including the SVK Army's leading projects such as the Tracked and Wheeled AFV Programmes. "We have been fielding modern technologies and cutting off dependence on Russia. The two tougher nuts to crack ahead of us are the MiG-29s and the S-300s," the minister said. Last year, more funding – up by 170% went towards maintenance and repairs, and the projects to reduce costs, including through increasing the energy efficiency of buildings and introducing green solutions, were implemented. The availability of military clothing has improved significantly for the past two years, with the MOD spending more than €17.5m on military clothing and launching a project to supply new military uniforms. Historically, most funds have gone towards military R&D, while considerable funding has also been used to promote military history and cultivate military traditions. In his summary of the SVK military's efforts over the past year, CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko highlighted the SVK Military Strategy and the reorganisation of the SVK Armed Forces. "Last year, the Joint Operations Command reached an absolutely essential milestone with the declaration of IOC, which allows it to be fully engaged today in planning and conducting all the core operations of the SVK Armed Forces, including issuing the Orders of Battle for the defence of the Slovak Republic," Gen Zmeko said. He underscored the development of the Special Operations Forces (SOF), the stand-up of the SOF Training Base, the augmentation of information operations capabilities, the establishment of the Engineers Regiment and the preparation for the stand-up of the Artillery Regiment. On the role of the SVK military in the current security situation, Gen Zmeko said: "The fact that the SVK Armed Forces were brought to full combat readiness two days before Russia's aggression against Ukraine speaks volumes for the predictions of our Military Intelligence. In recent weeks, some 700 soldiers have been deployed to the state border and hundreds of personnel have performed assistance tasks. Our core task is to secure the so-called green border to eliminate any threats, but we have not avoided delivering humanitarian tasks such as supporting the arrivals at the border crossings, setting up a camp for refugees, and transporting materiel for Ukraine."

The stability of SVK soldiers has been a success. The number of young soldiers joining the Armed Forces has almost doubled. The current personnel fill rate is at the level of 77%, while the fill rate target of more than 80% is set to be achieved over the next two years. In addition, all MOD-owned defence companies made a profit in 2021. The MOD increased the SNP Museum's budget by 50%. The minister also praised the work of CMH - FH Ružomberok, which has received some of the best ratings and is among the best medical facilities in Slovakia, as is the DUKLA Military Sports Centre among the sports establishments thanks to winning 57 medals at top international events.

Minister receives mandate to buy wheeled AFVs from Finland

(30 March) The Slovak Government has agreed to the SVK MOD's proposal to procure 76 pieces of 8x8 wheeled armoured fighting vehicles through a Government-to-Government (G2G) agreement with the Finnish Government, with the Total Agreement Price of €447m (VAT inclusive), including logistics, munitions and infrastructure. It has done so because Finland's offer of the Patria 8x8 Armoured Modular Vehicle with Extra Payload, Performance and Protection (AMVXP) configuration, incorporating the Turra 30 Remote Controlled Weapon Station (RCWS) and a 30mm cannon, came out as the best fit for the role's requirements. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "This is about the most advantageous comprehensive offer which is fully consistent with the technical and operational requirements of the Slovak Armed Forces and which is fully compatible with NATO systems. The new vehicles are to replace the infantry fighting vehicles that are nearing the end of their service life, not to mention their reduced operability rates at a time when the demands placed on the Slovak Armed Forces' readiness are increasing." He went on to say that, as a core platform, the new Patria 8x8 AMVXPs will see service with the SVK Army's Heavy Mechanised Brigade, which is being stood up under Slovakia's Allied commitments. Under ideal conditions, the first delivery of Patrias is expected as early as next year. The SVK MOD's proposal for the SVK Army's 8x8 Wheeled Armoured Fighting Vehicle (AFV) Programme has secured the SVK Security Council's formal approval following interdepartmental consultations. It has also been reviewed carefully by the Value of Money Unit (VMU) of the SVK Ministry of Finance.



- Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď welcomed Indiana Governor Eric J. Holcomb to the SVK MOD on 29 Mar. Central themes of the meeting included the current security developments in the context of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the bolstering of NATO's eastern flank. Both leaders also discussed Slovak-Indiana cooperation and ties.

- The MOD has repeatedly called on the public not to fly drones over military facilities. The MOD is reminding the public that there has been a ban on taking photos or videos around such sites since 28 Feb. Following reports of drone sightings, Military Police (MP) have gathered evidence and tracked down the drone operators suspected of illegal drone activity. They have conducted drone flights over a military facility at Nitra Garrison. The MOD insists on giving exemplary punishment to the perpetrators.

- 59 members of the Presidential GOH, led by 1Lt Maroš Bejda and 1Lt Jakub Gajarský, have been set aside in support of the Border and Foreign Police as part of Task Force 2.

- On 28 Mar, 103rd CBRND Bn Rožňava launched training for Active Reserves (AR) soldiers. Part 1 of the training, held at TC Lešť until 2 Apr, was focused on developing marksmanship and tactical skills. Part 2 of the training, held at TTC Zemianske Kostolany until 7 Apr, was centred on operating detection and decontamination systems. The reservists practised the procedures for movement in contaminated areas and personal decontamination.

- Teachers Day and the 430th anniversary of J. A. Komenský's birthday were marked by instructors of the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) on 28 Mar. Speaking at the Academy's Lecture Hall, Commandant Jozef Puttner thanked all teachers, he was full of praise for the work of Marián Babjak and Vladimír Papardovský and presented them with the Certificate of Associate Professor in Armaments and Equipment, as well as handing out the Komenský Plaque, the Medal for AOS Development, and the AOS Plaque in Gold and Silver to AOS instructors.

- Four sporting gold legends along with their coaches from the DUKLA Military Sports Centre – Michal Martikán, Elena Kališská, Anastasiya Kuzmina, Matej Tóth, Jozef Martikán and Peter Mráz – have been recognised with the honorary title of Master of Sport.

- Tajmuraz Salkazanov, wrestler of DUKLA VŠC, became the European Champion in the 74kg freestyle wrestling class in Budapest and defended his last year's class win in Poland.

- Benjamin Maťašeje, judo practitioner of DUKLA VŠC, won the European Judo Cup in the Junior 100kg category in Athens.

- It was a good start of the season for racing cyclist Alžbeta Bačíková at the Tel Aviv UCI Open Championships, where she picked up the silver medal in the scratch race and took the bronze medal in the elimination race.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as 45 Allied road movements are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 4 to 10 Apr. Over the same period, the SVK military will conduct road movements from/to: Koliňanský vrch – Nitra and back, Prešov – Michalovce and back, Michalovce – Kamenica nad Cirochou and back, Záhorie – Michalovce, Slovenské Nové Mesto – Trebišov, and Sučany – Liptovský Mikuláš and back. Also planned for next week are military rail movements from/to: Zem. Kostolany – Vlkonová and back, and Zem. Kostolany – Prešov.

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 30th anniversary of the CZE-SVK deployment to UNPROFOR in the Balkans.

18th anniversary of Slovakia's entry into NATO against backdrop Russia's aggression

(29 March) 18 years ago, Slovakia became a full-fledged member of the world's largest and strongest defence alliance. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "Of the past 18 years, especially over the

recent weeks we have increasingly felt how important from the perspective of security guarantees it is that we joined NATO. Although Slovakia is not being threatened directly, it has been confronted with the biggest security challenges since the country's establishment. Ultimately, we and our Allies stand together on the right side of history and our position on the Russian aggressor is clear and united." He emphasised that Slovakia has become a reliable and well-respected NATO Member State, adding: "Under the principle of 'One for All, All for One', for us, NATO is a guarantee that one day we will not wake up in the morning just



like our Ukrainian neighbours did on 24 February. In this spirit, a clear sign of these defensive security guarantees is the stand-up of NATO's multinational eFP battlegroup in Slovak territory, which

demonstrates our cohesion and readiness to defend ourselves together against any threats – and this is consistent with Slovakia's security interests and strategic documents which clearly set out our foreign policy and security direction." Minister Naď thanked the Allies for their willingness and resolve to bolster NATO's eastern flank, stressing that, through its responsible approach and delivery of international commitments, Slovakia has gradually joined other countries in contributing to the collective defence and security of NATO Member States over the past 18 years.

AFRC resort to be refurbished

(1 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď has presented a refurbishment project for the Armed Forces Recreation Centre at Zemplínska Šírava. Mr Naď said: "After years of neglect and absolute disinterest of the former governments that have sold off pieces of land around the Armed Forces Recreation Centre, I'm immensely pleased to announce that we have a concrete vision for what this facility with a unique location will look like in the short future." The hotel of the former AFRC resort has been out of operation since 2019. The refurbishment works for the facility could be launched as early as 2023.



AP against hybrid threats

(31 March) The SVK Government has given its approval to the MOD's proposed Action Plan for the Coordinated Countering of Hybrid Threats for 2022-2024, which sets out Slovakia's ambition to shore up the resilience of the State and society against hybrid threats. Defence Minister Naď said: "The adoption of this Action Plan is of great importance – especially at this time when the Russian aggressor unleashed a brutal and unprecedented war in Ukraine and has been attempting to act against our interests through its network of agents and to exert influence over our security." The document has been developed under the remit of Deputy Defence Minister Marián Majer, with Victor Breiner, the Senior Advisor on Hybrid Threats from the Office of the Defence Minister, being the chief coordinator. Other goals include reinforcing the interdepartmental coordination on and response to hybrid activity against Slovakia, raising societal awareness of hybrid threats, building the system of strategic communications, and strengthening international efforts to counter hybrid threats.

Closer ties with Malaysia

(30 March) Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer has visited the Defence Services Asia (DSA) 2022 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. As well as taking a tour of DSA, he met with his Malaysian counterpart Dato' Sri Ikmal Hisham bin Abdul Aziz. This marked the first highest-level meeting between representatives of the Slovak and Malaysian MODs. Both leaders discussed ways to develop bilateral cooperation between the Slovak and Malaysian Armed Forces, as well as exploring the possibilities for forging defence industry cooperation. 12 Slovak businesses made good use of the joint MOD and SARIO exhibition stand for their presentation. Deputy Defence Minister Majer offered a reciprocal invitation to the Malaysian MOD leaders to attend the 9th edition of IDEB 2022 in Slovakia, which is due in the first half of May. Deputy Defence Minister Majer visited the Science and Technology Research Institute for Defence (STRIDE) and received a tour of the Weapon Systems Laboratory.

