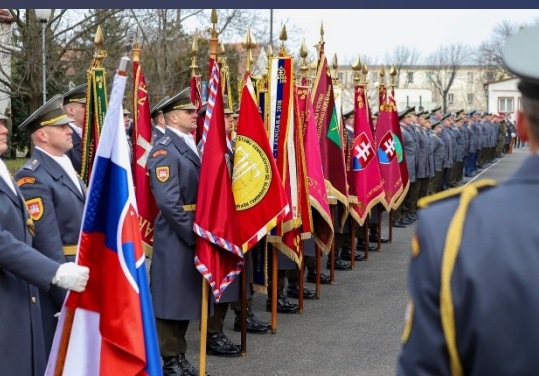




30 years of SVK Defence marked in a ceremony

(29 Jan) Congratulating Slovakia and its Armed Forces on reaching their 30th anniversary, top Defence leaders took part in a ceremony and gathering at the MOD. Among those who accepted the invitation to attend from Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď were President and Commander-in-Chief Zuzana Čaputová, PM Eduard Heger, and a number of former Defence Ministers and Chiefs of Defence. Along with CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko, State Secretary Marian Majer, and Service Chiefs, they took stock of SVK Defence over the past three decades. Minister Naď assessed the past 30 years – the challenges of the transformation processes, the professionalisation of the Slovak military, the suspension of conscription, and the strategic decisions across Defence – as a very successful period, both for the MOD and our country. He thanked all those who have put their best effort into that and expressed hope for the trend of investing into building armed forces to continue into the future.

"Slovakia's entry into NATO represents the most significant milestone in the history of the SVK MOD and the Armed Forces. It has had a major impact on what is of paramount importance – the defence and security of our country and citizens," Mr Naď argued. As he reminded us, Slovakia has been a respected, responsible and full-fledged member of the world's strongest military alliance for 18 years already. He further pointed to Allies' support for Ukraine from the first moment of Russia's aggression and underlined the NATO MN BG's deployment to our country and the protection of the Slovak skies by our CZE and POL Allies, soon to be joined by HUN.

In his remarks, CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko gave thanks to all the men and women of the Armed Forces – whether it be those on active duty, in the Reserves or in retirement – for their dedication to the defence of the state. He made clear that the high dynamics of today's military and non-military security challenges determine the direction Slovakia must take to generate a modern Armed Forces. "Modernisation and building new capabilities, challenging training, and, of course, educated, resilient, disciplined and motivated service personnel are the right answer to the questions associated with Defence's responsiveness and our country's resilience," he emphasised. In her speech, President Čaputová noted the great shift in the quality of service the Slovak Armed Forces deliver for defence and security, saying: "I have clearly witnessed that at our joint meetings and on exercises here in Slovakia as well as during my visits to your fellow colleagues who have performed increasingly challenging tasks on missions and operations abroad." She paid tribute to those who have died in the line of duty. The Slovak Armed Forces have become, in the words of the President, "a firm component and a stabilising element of our homeland". She commended them for the high levels of public trust they enjoy.

Speaking of defence and security in our society, PM Eduard Heger said: "If we want freedom and the rule of law to persist in our country, we need to ensure the security of our citizens. Already at the time when we were preparing to join NATO, our ambition and understanding of the Armed Forces' importance in light of security were key to the transformation of our military. Particularly at the current time, we come to realise that investing in defence and security, which may otherwise seem to be useless in peace time, is inevitable."

Getting the AIT facility ready is the first step to produce CV90s

(1 Feb) As the main industry partner on the SVK Army's tracked armoured capability programme, ZTS - ŠPECIÁL JSC, operating under MOD-run DMD GROUP JSC, is planning to make several major investments in the production and assembly facility for the Slovak CV90 IFVs. One of the main priorities is to build infrastructure for the production of some of the vehicle's systems and for the full assembly, integration and testing (AIT) of the CV90s. The process of preparing the AIT site includes concrete pour across an area of 1,700 square metres, the procurement of lifts and cranes, and the construction of warehouses, offices and lavatories for new employees. So far, up to €0.6m has been spent on getting the AIT site ready for operation. What's more, ZTS - ŠPECIÁL will spend an additional €0.8 or €1m to complete infrastructure works in the coming period. In his statement, Director General of DMD GROUP JSC Štefan Škultéty said: "What ZTS - ŠPECIÁL expects from this unique and financially most significant project in the Slovak Army's history is that its production will be extended and that it will offer more employment opportunities, including in the field of project management and research and development (R&D) on defence and security technology. In addition, the transfer of new technologies to Slovakia will add to the investment possibilities for our new development projects." Working closely with BAE Systems, ZTS - ŠPECIÁL JSC will be responsible for the entire project management process and the full assembly, integration, testing and handover of the CV90s to the SVK MOD and the Armed Forces. Thanks to the tracked armoured capability programme, 50 new jobs will be created, whether it be production and assembly line workers, process engineers, project managers or planners.



► Parliament approved the proposed **extension of NATO's presence** in Slovakia on 2 Feb. The mandate will also apply to Swedish and Finnish armed forces. As a result, the multi-national makeup of the NATO MN BG SVK may change, while the maximum mandated strength remains at 3,000 personnel.

► As preparations for **Ex Slovak Shield 2023** culminate, the Prešov Garrison Club hosted the final exercise coordination conference on 31 Jan - 1 Feb, with participation from members of the SVK Armed Forces and V4 and U.S. INNG partners. They discussed exercise-related issues such as exercise management, logistics, and CIS systems.

► The Polish Military Police Training Base Minsk Mazowiecki hosted **training for the NATO MNMPBAT command staff**. Its goal was to review SOPs, to rehearse the military decision-making process (MDMP), and to start the preparation of the NATO MNMPBAT Commander's Operational Order for Ex Sharp Lynx 2023, which is due to take place in Sept in the Czech Republic.

► At SVK Army HQ, COM SVK ARMY Maj Gen Ivan Pach bid farewell to Lt Col Ján Brezula, Chief of the Information Security Section, during a **farewell ceremony** on 31 Jan. Lt Col Brezula became a member of Slovak Special Operations Forces Command (SOCOM) with effect from 1 Feb. In addition, Maj Slavomír Janeček, Specialist of the Intelligence and Electronic Warfare Section (SVK A HQ), has left the Armed Forces after 26 years of service.

► On 1-2 Feb, members of 14 Tnk Bn Trebišov completed **training on railway movements**. The practical phase of the training took place at the railhead in Trebišov. Military professionals practised ensuring the security of the railhead, protecting forces and assets, taking over heavy duty flatbed wagons, setting up the railhead steel loading ramp, and guiding military drivers and vehicle commanders onto the flatbed wagons.

► In the presence of Director of Training and Planning Lt Col Marek Hušek, the Canine and Training Branch, MP Dept Vikanová - Hronsek, hosted a **farewell ceremony** for Service leaver Maj Jozef Šoltys, Chief of the Special Police Operations Section Vikanová, who was awarded the Military Police Medal 1st Grade for his long-time exemplary service. He is succeeded in his role by Maj Marek Makan. Elsewhere, Lt Jozef Hrivňák took over as Chief of the Facility Operation Centre Topoľčany with effect from 1 Feb.

► Muay Thai fighter **Monika Chochlíková**, member of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, took an amazing 2nd place in the International World Games Athlete (IWGA) of the Year Award for 2022.

► Under the leadership of the MOD Slovak Verification Centre on 1-2 Feb, General M. R. Štefaník Armed Forces Academy (AOS) hosted a **meeting of V4 Armed Forces representatives** to discuss arms control and disarmament.

► On Feb 3, the AOS International Courses Department hosted the **9th Introductory NATO Joint Operations Planning Course (JOPC)** with 20 participants from Tunisia, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Hungary and Slovakia taking part. The aim was to familiarise the course participants with NATO's doctrines, procedures and operations planning process.

MOD to support NGO projects

(1 Feb) The MOD is, once again, to offer grants for interesting projects framed around Slovakia's defence and security narrative. Over the past three years, the MOD has increased the total value of grants from €100,000 up to €500,000. Those eligible for grants are civic associations, foundations, interest groupings, non-investment funds, non-profit organisations, and municipalities. Grant applications close on 31 Mar 2023. The main goal is to support the work of the NGO sector, academia, and local governments to raise public awareness about the priorities of the SVK MOD and the Armed Forces and to encourage public debate. The MOD has published a list of recommended themes and MOD priorities to help guide the applicants. For any enquiry, email us at dotacie@mod.gov.sk.

A new museum hall in Piešťany

(2 Feb) A new modern exhibition hall to house large military exhibits will be constructed in the grounds of the Museum of Military History (VHM) Piešťany to provide an exhibition space befitting the 21st century. Minister Naď along with representatives of the Institute of Military History (VHÚ) and local government tapped the foundation stone. The project also covers the construction of the restorers' workshop with access to visitors, administrative spaces, technical rooms, and toilets. The museum building is the first to be built in Slovakia in more than 30 years. The SVK Cabinet approved the project in June 2022, with the construction works scheduled to be complete in 2024.

Officer Command & Leadership

(1 Feb) COM SVK ARMY Maj Gen Ivan Pach and subordinate commanders visited Turkish Hill MTA to meet the SVK officers on the Officer Command & Leadership Course (OCLC), run by the British Military Advisory



Training Team (BMATT). In winter field conditions, Maj Gen Pach spoke with the SVK lieutenants about specific aspects of the training. He came up with the idea of getting them involved as instructors in initial military training. The course will finish with a graduation ceremony on 10 Feb at 12 Mech Bn Nitra.

Dukla water athletes of 2022

(1 Feb) Slovakia's best canoe & kayak athletes of 2022 come from the Dukla Military Sports Centre. Alexander Slafkovský, who won the silver medal both in the individual and team categories at the Canoe Slalom World Championships in Germany's Augsburg, is the Slalom Canoeist of the Year. Eliška Mintálová and Jakub Grigar (4th at the World Champs) are the Female and Male Kayakers of the Year, Matej Rusnák is the Canoe Sprint Racer of the Year, and Stanislav Gejdoš is the Coach of the Year.

Bishopric of the Forces and Armed Corps Pilgrimages in 2023

• **63rd International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes (FRA)**

Dep & Rtn dates: 10-16 May 2023
Registration closing date: 28 Feb 2023

• **17th National Military Pilgrimage to Rome and the Vatican (ITA)**
Dep & Rtn dates: 17-23 Sept 2023
Registration closing date: 31 May 2023

• **30th International Military Pilgrimage from Warsaw to Czestochowa (POL)**
Uniformed personnel only.
Dep & Rtn dates: 4-14 Aug 2023
Registration closing date: 31 May 2023

• **13th "Sts Cyril and Methodius" Meeting of SVK and HUN Bishoprics of the Forces and Armed Corps in Zalavár (HUN)**
Dep & Rtn date: June 2023
Registration closing date: 31 May 2023

• **25th National Military Pilgrimage to Levoča (SVK)**

Dep & Rtn dates: 1-2 July 2023
Registration closing date: 31 May 2023

• **2nd Slovak Armed Forces Walking Pilgrimage to Levoča (SVK)**
Distance: 50km
Dep & Rtn dates: 30 June - 1 July 2023
Registration closing date: 31 May 2023

• **20th National Military Pilgrimage to Šaštín (SVK)**
Dep & Rtn date: 15 Sept 2023
No official application required. Please, contact the Dean of the SVK Air Force HQ.

Those interested in a pilgrimage, please contact your military chaplain. The application form is accessible via the Bishopric of the Forces and Armed Corps website. In selecting pilgrims, uniformed personnel are given precedence over civilians on the list.

