



One year of Russia's aggression marked

(22 Feb) Russia's aggression against Ukraine has fundamentally changed our perception of security. Slovakia has strongly condemned all the violations by Russia of international law and Ukraine's territorial integrity. It is, therefore, our duty to give our backing to Ukraine as the attacked side.

"No country has the right to occupy another country's territory by force or blackmail. By refusing to help Ukraine, the probability of a far greater conflict would increase in the future. Anyone who thinks that Russia's ambitions reach only as far as Ukraine's borders is wrong. Delivering aid to Ukraine is an investment in our security too," Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said. Even as early as 2014, Slovakia clearly sided with Ukraine and condemned the illegal annexation of Crimea. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 Feb 2022, Slovakia has backed Ukraine politically, economically, militarily, and with humanitarian assistance by donating some €168m in aid to Ukraine.

Slovak military aid to Ukraine has so far included the S-300 air defence system, BOŽENA mine-clearing UGVs, five transport helicopters, munitions and fuel. Another aid project has seen 30 tracked BVP-1s transferred to Ukraine in exchange for 15 Leopard 244 MBTs which are being delivered from Germany. In addition, Germany has pledged to provide Slovakia with two modern MANTIS C-RAM systems for free and permanently to boost Slovak air defences on its eastern border with Ukraine. As well as this, Slovakia provides a logistics hub for coordinating materiel and military aid from other allied countries, supporting the movements of millions of tonnes of arms supplies across Slovak territory to Ukraine.

Working with the Slovak defence industry, Slovakia has supported Ukraine with ZUZANA 2 howitzers, BOŽENA mine-clearing UGVs, and a military equipment battle damage repair (BDR) programme. To ramp up our defence industrial capacity, we are an active member of the Copenhagen Conference for Ukraine. Our partners have created this international fund to plus up Allied defence industrial bases. Approx. 400 Ukrainian citizens went through the SVK-led basic military training programme in Slovakia during 2022. Organised under EUMAM UA, the training operation for Ukrainian forces by the Slovak Armed Forces has been underway in our country this year too.

For its willingness to help Ukraine, Slovakia has received €82m in partial reimbursements for its arms deliveries to Ukraine through the European Peace Facility (EPF), the EU's off-budget instrument, to be reinvested in our defence. In addition, the United States has committed US\$205.8m in aid to Slovakia to replace its aging Soviet-era equipment.

Slovak-operated, Soviet-made assets and materiel have been transferred to Ukraine, because such equipment would have no future prospect of further use by our armed forces other than replacement. Yet, at no point and at no time have we weakened SVK Defence's responsiveness. On the contrary, our Allies are supplying us with more advanced systems. With access to EU and U.S. funding, we are buying new needed capabilities.

Over the past year, Slovakia has seen its political and defence engagement with Allies and other countries in the Euro-Atlantic area deepening. Most importantly, our Allies have strengthened our security through the NATO MN BG SVK, which, side by side with the Slovak Armed Forces, is ready to defend our country. Bilaterally, the United States, Germany and the Czech Republic have been our key partners on security and defence.

NATO Multinational Battlegroup strengthens Slovakia's defence capability

(23 Feb) In response to Russia's unprecedented steps of engaging in military aggression against Ukraine, the NATO Alliance has significantly scaled up Eastern Flank defence. Thanks to the NATO MN BG SVK, this defensive umbrella has reinforced Slovakia's defence capability. Since March 2022, nearly 2,000 Allied troops have rotated on NATO duties in the country. Thanks to putting Allied troops and defence systems into Slovakia, NATO has made Slovakia better protected than ever before. Allied troops and their state-of-the-art equipment have strengthened the capacities and capabilities of the Slovak Armed Force.

As part of the deployment of Patriot air defence capabilities to Slovakia, the Bundeswehr Patriot air defence battery is based at Sliach AB, and while the Dutch Patriot air defence battery has been withdrawn from there recently, the U.S. Patriot battery remains operational at Malacky AB. Among the combat equipment deployed to the TC Lešť are Patria 8x8 AMVs (SVN), Boxer 8x8 AFVs (DEU), Pandur II 8x8 APCs (CZE), as well as Iveco LMVs (e.g. CBRN variant), Tatra 810 trucks, and U.S. Army Humvee vehicles. Over 1,000 Allied troops are currently serving in the NATO MN BG SVK. The Czech Republic leads the Battlegroup, with Slovenia, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States and Slovakia as contributing nations. Yet, more Allies have expressed interest in joining the Battlegroup. The existing Parliament-approved mandate allows for up to 3,000 NATO troops to serve on the ground in the country.



► The first meeting of **COM SVK AF's Military Council** took place on 21 Feb, with participation from senior officers of SVK AF HQ and subordinate units and facilities, MOD Military Aviation Office, and Joint Operations Command (JOCOM). The meeting was chaired by COM SVK AF Maj Gen Róbert Tóth. He awarded the 30th Anniversary Slovak Armed Forces Medal to Col Miroslav Mišovic and Col Peter Prokop for their work.

► The **Visegrad Military Medicine (VIMIMED) Conference 2023** was held at the Granite Hotels in Tatranské Zruby and Nová Polianka. Also in attendance were representatives of the NATO Centre of Excellence for Military Medicine (NATO MILMED COE) Budapest and the Multinational Medical Coordination Centre/ European Medical Command (MMCC/EMC) Koblenz.

► The Training and MWD Branch of the MP Dept Vikanová - Hronek hosted a **workshop for dog handler trainers** from the SVK and CZE armed forces and armed corps, including from the CZE Military Police, the SVK Financial Administration Authority, and the SVK Justice and Prison Security Service. They all came together to work with their dogs on sniffing out threats and to improve their readiness in near real conditions.

► A **farewell ceremony** was hosted for Commander Presidential Guard of Honour Lt Col Ján Krajčovič on 23 Feb. The Service leaver was awarded the Slovak Chief of Defence Commemorative Cross 3rd Grade for his service.

► Service members of the **U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division** were welcomed by Com 5 Arty Regt Rožňava Col Ján Hric to HQ 5 Arty Regt Rožňava. The U.S. Army personnel briefed SVK Army soldiers from 5 Arty Regt Rožňava, SVK Army HQ Trenčín, 21 Sp Arty Bn Rožňava, and JOCOM Banská Bystrica on the standard operating procedures (SOPs) that support 101st Abn Div on operations.

► As part of the process of fielding the Belgian-made **FN MINIMI 5.56mm Light Machine Gun (LMG)** to SVK Army units, members of 11 Mech Bn Martin received weapon handling instruction on the new FN MINIMI LMG at the Kamenná Poruba firing range on 22 Feb. The aim was to train selected mechanised troops and members of the Battalion's CSS Coy on how to get the gun ready and shoot. Among those taking part were members of 12 Mech Bn Nitra. The training was inspected by Com 1 Mech Bde Col Štefan Leja. After the shoots, the participants praised the new LMG on reliability and comfortable handling.

► 21 Sp Arty Bn Michalovce is hosting SVK Army artillerymen from 54 MLRS Bn Rožňava, 21 Sp Arty Bn Michalovce, and one future artillery instructor of TMFGB Martin on the **155mm Zuzana 2 Self-propelled Howitzer Gun System Commander/Operator Course**, while concurrently running another training course on field artillery (FA).

► Six Officer Cadets from the Defence University of Brno undertook the **Basic ATC Procedure Course II** at the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Simulation Centre. In a synthetic environment, they practised the basics of Area Control Service (ACS) and Air Traffic Control (ATC).

Yet another disinformation wave

(23 Feb) There have been attempts to spread malicious disinformation on alleged preparation of SVK military personnel's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, whereas the conspirators are misusing an official online document to present a false interpretation of the situation, the Ministry of Defence has reported. The draft document for the deployment of SVK military personnel in support of the European Union Assistance Mission Ukraine (EUMAM UA) is, indeed, about SVK service personnel joining the EUMAM UA training mission, but not in Ukraine. As early as 22 Dec 2022, the MOD released information on this mission and has provided regular updates. The EU announced the establishment of EUMAM UA, focused on training Ukrainian forces for combat to defend themselves against Russia's aggression, in the autumn of 2022. The training programme for Ukrainian forces is underway across EU territory, not in Ukraine.

Snow-blanketed test for SOF



(23 Feb) After four months, the Special Operations Qualification Course culminated with a three-week exercise dubbed Ex Zniev 2023 in the surroundings of Žilina and

Martin. After a week of isolation and planning, the course participants – involving soldiers from 5 SOF Regt Žilina, SOCOM Trenčín, 11 Mech Bn Martin, 51 Wng Prešov, 51 Tng Base Žilina, 52 Abn Bn Trebišov, and 57 Sp Arty Bn Martin – spent two weeks in the field without using mobile phones. Prešov-based airmen supported the exercise with a UH-60M helicopter and their fellow colleagues acted out as aircrew downed over enemy territory. The scenarios included negotiating with representatives of fictitious civil groups, and planning and executing missions in the enemy's rear area as required of service personnel to meet the demands of the SOF Qualification Course.

Winter mountain training

(21 Feb) Members of 11 Mech Bn Martin underwent winter mountain training. Part 1 of the training took place between Mt Chleb and Mt Veľký Kriváň in the Small Fatra Mountains, covering movement in difficult mountainous terrain. Troops moved safely on skis and snow shoes. Alongside that, they tried out avalanche safety techniques. Part 2 of the training took place in the Lúčanská Fatra Mountains, where they crossed artificial and natural obstacles with the use of different rock climbing techniques.

Armed Forces Academy Open Doors Day



(24 Feb) The Liptovský Mikuláš-based Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Open Doors Day attracted almost 650 visitors. Male and female students of secondary schools along with their parents from across the whole of Slovakia visited the Academy's

premises and received more information on the Academy's selection process and study programmes. Deputy Commandant for Education Col Aurel Sabó opened the official programme with a presentation of the AOS study programmes and the steps to be followed before the selection process. The candidates had the opportunity to meet with instructors and Officer Cadets (OCs) of the four study programmes, officials of the AOS Academic Studies, and representatives of the Aviation Faculty of the Technical University of Košice (TUK) and the Faculty of Public Healthcare from Hradec Králové. To live up to the atmosphere, there were also demonstrations by AOS OCs of hand-to-hand combat and PT requirements, as well as static and dynamic displays of military equipment. The visitors spoke with instructors of the AOS Departments about all aspects of military education and roles for commissioned OCs in the Armed Forces and chatted with OCs to gain a more complete picture of military education at AOS Liptovský Mikuláš.