



Oath of Allegiance at Martin base

(3 Mar) On completion of initial military training (IMT), 178 new Soldiers and Officer Cadets (OCs) of the Armed Forces Academy, including 48 women, swore the Oath of Allegiance during a passing out parade at the Training and Mobilisation Force Generation Base Martin. They were congratulated on by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, DCHOD Maj Gen Peter Babiar, COM SVK ARMY Maj Gen Ivan Pach, and other MOD and Armed Forces officials.

Speaking in front of the gathered military audience, Mr Naď said: "Service in the Armed Forces is the only job where you must pledge to be ready to make the ultimate sacrifice still before joining the armed services. This is not an abstract act, but rather a huge commitment of responsibility. Most importantly, you must swear loyalty to your country, as do the soldiers in Ukraine. Similarly, you must pledge to defend the cause of freedom and the inviolability of your country's borders. Sadly, Ukrainian soldiers are dying these days, every day. Nobody wishes to go through what they are now experiencing. Service to your country offers a lot of professions, but only one mission – to be loyal and ready to put your life on the line in defence of your country."

In his remarks addressed to new Service men and women, DCHOD Maj Gen Peter Babiar said: "The Oath of Allegiance must be fulfilled in all its aspects that one can think of. This is not just about 'business as usual' while on duty. This is also about your relationship with your relatives and family and the people around you, and even about the manner you conduct yourselves in the public – these all must be aligned to the Oath of Allegiance, where you promise to remain loyalty to your country."

After completing the IMT programme, the new soldiers will move on to branch-specialised training at Phase 2 training establishments before reporting to their respective Slovak Armed Forces units and bases, while the OCs will continue the Professionally Qualified Officers (PQO) Course at the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Liptovský Mikuláš.

Blast victims remembered

(2 Mar) Secretary General of the MOD Service Office Peter Kozák paid tribute to the victims of one of the most tragic industrial incidents in the history of Slovakia – the explosion in the munitions decommissioning facility at Military Repair Company Nováky. The 2 March 2007 tragedy claimed the lives of eight employees and another 60 sustained light or serious injuries. Speaking at the Nováky Tragedy Memorial, Secretary General Peter Kozák said: "Even 16 years on, our hearts will never fill the void left by the loss of the relatives of the bereaved families and our colleagues. We remember them with our gratitude and respect, and we vow never to forget them." Immediately after the disaster, the MOD adopted extra safety precautions to minimise potential risks and failures.



20 years of the Bishopric of the Forces and Armed Corps marked

(2 Mar) Top Defence officials led by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď attended the Thanksgiving Holy Mass marking the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Roman Catholic Bishopric of the Forces and Armed Corps of the Slovak Republic at St Martin's Cathedral and the Bishopric's 20th Anniversary Celebration events in Bratislava. Participants in attendance included the Triveneto Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Apostolic Nuncio, the Archbishop for the Military Services, USA, and the Bishops of the AUT, POL and UK Forces. Established as a diocese on 1 Mar 2003, the Bishopric celebrates Holy Masses and other church services, provides preparation for and administers the Sacraments, supports spiritual development, and promotes Christian ethics, social action and charity. The Bishopric is headed by His Excellency Bishop František Rábek, who was officially appointed as first Bishop of the Forces and Armed Corps by Holy Father John Paul II on 20 Jan 2003.



► On 28 Feb, 13 Mech Bn Levice hosted a deployment ceremony for those deploying to Cyprus in support of UNFICYP. Com 13 Mech Bn Lt Col Marián Golis welcomed military leaders and guests to the ceremony, including COM SVK ARMY Maj Gen Ivan Pach, Com 1 Mech Bde Brig Gen Alexander Kollárik, CSEL for 1 Mech Bde Sgt Maj Miroslav Štadler, commanders subordinate to 1 Mech Bde, and Mayor of Levice Ján Krtík.

► On 1 Mar, HQ Bratislava Garrison hosted a change of command ceremony with Col Milos Arnold relinquishing command of HQ BA GAR to Col Jiří Vrchovský, in the presence of DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Peter Babiar, CSEL for the Slovak Armed Forces Sgt Maj Marcel Kaniak, and Com Pres GoH Col Andrej Tvrdoň.

► Members of 1 Mech Coy, part of 21 Mech Bn Trebišov, underwent three-day training across the SVK Army's training ground at Veľké Ozorovce, with a focus on the individual soldier's mission and tasks within the drill activities ahead of Ex Slovak Shield.

► Basic survival skills for individuals and teams during a period of separation from their unit, movement security activities, and medical care for injured or wounded soldiers both day and night were drilled by troops from 3 Mech Coy, part of 11 Mech Bn Martin, at Martin Garrison's training ground in Sučany - Turany. The training culminated with an artillery attack on 3 Mech Coy's positions and a night fast march with wounded soldiers.

► At Topoľčany Garrison on 27 Feb - 3 Mar, members of HQ 1 Mech Bde, supported by command support officers drawn from across 12 Mech Bn Nitra, 13 Mech Bn Levice, 91 Eng Regt Sered, 5 Arty Regt Rožňava, and 14 Tnk Bn Trebišov, engaged in a command post rehearsal well ahead of deploying to Hungary's Székesfehérvár on international Ex Strong Bastion 2023, due to take place in June.

► With 35 years of service in the Slovak Armed Forces, Lt Col Radek Pláčnik, Com 2K12 KUB AD Grp 2, part of 11 SVK AF Bde Nitra, left the Service with effect from 28 Feb.

► The tank firing range at Devičany staged concentrated training for gunners/operators from across the mechanised units subordinate to 1 Mech Bde Topoľčany, 11 Mech Bn Martin, 12 Mech Bn Nitra, and 13 Mech Bn Levice.

► Skimo athlete Marianna Jagerčíková (SVK) of the Dukla Military Sports Centre took the first historic gold for Slovakia in the women's sprint at the International Ski Mountaineering Federation (ISMF) World Championships at Boi Taull in Spain, with Marianne Fatton (SUI) as the defender of the title and Emily Harrop (FRA) taking second and third places. In recent years, Marianna won the 2022 ISMF European Champs and claimed the silver medals at the 2022 and 2021 ISMF World Champs.

► Biathlete Jakub Borguľa (SVK) of the Dukla Military Sports Centre skied to the gold medal in the Youth men's 10km pursuit at the IBU Biathlon Youth & Junior World Champs on 5 Mar in Shchuchinsk, Kazakhstan.

► Judoka Benjamin Maťašeje (SVK) of the Dukla Military Sports Centre beat David Duda (CZE) in the finals and clinched the gold medal at the Junior U21 European Cup in Lignano, Italy.

► The latest edition of *Azimuth 24/7*, available on the SVK Armed Forces YouTube Channel, reports on the Officer Command & Leadership Course (OCLO), delivered by the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT).

SVK and CZE CHODS meet for talks close to SVK-CZE border

(2 Mar) Slovak Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko met with Czech Chief of Defence Maj Gen Karel Řehka close to the SVK -CZE border in Slovakia. As part of the official programme, they paid tribute to General Štefánik at the Štefánik Memorial on Bradlo Hill.

The meeting continued in Myjava where the Generals held talks on closer cooperation in the wake of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the opportunities for military education and training, and the future of the Czech-led NATO MN BG SVK.

The existing mandate allows CZE troops to stay in Slovakia until the end of 2024.

Maj Gen Karel Řehka said: "The Czech Republic fully supports the Multinational Battlegroup in Slovakia and wants to continue contributing to it. The Battlegroup's further direction and future form will be subject to talks at the level of the Alliance and partner states." Alongside this, the SVK and CZE militaries cooperate closely and intensely on joint exercises, promoting



the interoperability of SVK and CZE Army engineers. For example, this year Czechia is to host Ex Clever Bridge 2023 (bridging operations), Ex Engineer Spirit 2023 (combat engineer support to BG), and Ex Tobruq Arrows (LIVEX involving the RBS-70 NG MANPADS systems).

In the final session of their meeting, the Generals discussed military assistance and training for Ukrainian forces. Just as with Slovakia, the Czech Republic responded to Ukraine's request for assistance immediately after Russia's attack and continues to do so.

"Our support is not over yet and the Czech Republic has plans to provide Ukraine with further assistance in the form of military equipment that is urgently needed on the battlefield," Maj Gen Řehka concluded. Both Allied Chiefs of Defence then viewed a display of military equipment and a presentation of the combat vehicles soon to be fielded to the SVK Armed Forces.

New Czech Ambassador to Slovakia

(28 Feb) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď received His Excellency Mr Rudolf Jindrák, the new Czech Ambassador to Slovakia, at the MOD in Bratislava. Apart from SVK assistance to Ukraine, the topics of their conversation included the CZE contribution to the NATO MN BG SVK, closer collaboration between the defence industries, and the upcoming high visibility events. Mr Naď appreciated the two nations' pragmatic cooperation that goes beyond standards, even in the field of our defence and security interests. It is testament to the closeness of the SVK-CZE partnership.

New Austrian DA to Slovakia

(27 Feb) State Secretary Marian Majer received Col Karl Fitsch and Col Franz Josef Madner, the outgoing and incoming AUT Defence Attachés to Slovakia, at the MOD. Mr Majer thanked Col Fitsch for his cooperation, in the spirit of always maintaining very correct relations and a sincere dialogue. The office call also gave Mr Majer a chance to speak with Col Madner about the SVK assistance provided to Ukraine and other MOD priorities. They underlined the regional character of the SVK-AUT relationship as an excellent opportunity for advancing defence and security cooperation.

Tank drivers' skills tested



(28 Feb) Tank drivers of 14 Tank Battalion Trebišov came to perfect their off-road driving skills across the SVK Army's training ground at Veľké Ozorovce on 27-28

Feb. The theme of the training was "Driving Combat Vehicles in Difficult Terrain Conditions: Ex 2 by Day and Ex 6 by Night with Infrared Capability". The training of tank drivers from 1, 2, 3 Tnk Coys was overseen by Com 1 Tnk Coy 1Lt Rastislav Bodnár. Cpl Peter Leško and Cpl Karol Illeš were the best among the tank drivers.

28th Command Staff Course

(27 Feb) The Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Education Centre is hosting the 28th Command Staff Course for 67 officers from 27 Feb to 5 May. On completion of the course, they will qualify for promotion to the rank of Major. The Command Staff Course – delivered by instructors of the AOS Academy, specialists of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, and academic staff from the University of Defence in Brno – integrates social sciences, security and defence studies, logistics, military operations, and command and control.