



Defence Ministers meet in Brussels

(11 Oct) Defence Minister Martin Sklenár attended a meeting of Allied Defence Ministers at NATO HQ. The NATO ministerial began with the first formal meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council (NUC) at ministerial level since its creation at the NATO summit in Vilnius in July 2023. Ukraine was represented at the NUC meeting by Defence Minister Rustom Umerov. The 16th meeting of the Ukraine Defence Contact Group, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in attendance, was held ahead of the official start of the NATO ministerial in Brussels. Given that the Slovak Embassy in Tel Aviv serves as the NATO Contact Embassy in Israel, Defence Minister Martin Sklenár made a statement on behalf of Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Romania, saying that NATO condemns the terrorist attacks by Hamas against Israel and stands with Israel. The central theme of the second part of today's discussions was the Alliance's deterrence and defence, with the emphasis on NATO's eastern flank. During the final meeting, Ministers addressed NATO missions and operations. Along with EU representatives, they discussed current security challenges in the Western Balkans and in other strategically important regions. On NATO's new defence plans, Minister Sklenár emphasised the need to assign and regularly exercise forces. "NATO membership gives Slovakia the best security and defence guarantees. All NATO member countries are ready to provide the necessary forces and assets, ensuring that the collective defence system functions fully, even in the changed security situation," Mr Sklenár said. During the discussion on Ukraine, Allied Defence Ministers focused on developing lines of support for Ukraine in the transformation process for its future NATO membership. They clearly expressed the necessity to continue with the steps agreed. "We are witnessing new security challenges – in our immediate neighbourhood and, most recently, in the Middle East. Yet, for understandable reasons, the situation in Ukraine continues to be at the centre of our attention," Mr Sklenár stated, presenting Slovakia's continued assistance to Ukraine bilaterally and at Alliance level, which includes, for example, the Slovak defence industry's intensified production of artillery munitions as well as Slovakia's humanitarian demining efforts. Allies along with their Ukrainian counterparts also discussed Ukraine's reform plans in the security sector, in the fight against corruption, and in the field of strengthening transparency, as well as other reforming measures conditioning Ukraine's future NATO membership.

Armed Forces Academy celebrates 50th anniversary

(12 Oct) General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy is the only military tertiary education institution in Slovakia to provide education and training to future officers and SMEs for the needs of the Slovak Armed Forces and other security forces. To mark the 50th anniversary of the Armed Forces Academy, official celebrations were held at Liptovský Mikuláš. Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer and Secretary General of the MOD Service Office Peter Kozák joined in with the anniversary celebrations on behalf of the Ministry of Defence.

In his keynote speech, Mr Majer said: "Over the past 50 years of its existence, this military institution in the Liptov region has trained hundreds, even thousands of professionals who have worked not only in the Slovak Armed Forces, but also in the civilian sector. To a significant extent, the Academy and its Alumni have contributed to building the security of our country, for which they deserve a big thank you."

The Academy's Commandant, Assoc Prof Jozef Puttera, said that the Academy is not just a military education establishment. "Equally important, it is a place where character is formed. Here, Officer Cadets learn loyalty to Command, courage for combat, and commitment to the democratic values that are part of the foundations on which our State stands. And it is a place where awareness about the importance and value of peace and security for our country and the whole world is spread," he said, while noting that the Academy will continue to develop as an "international military training centre". "Now, more than ever, Slovakia needs qualified and well-trained service personnel," he added.

► Delivering the keynote lecture, Deputy Defence Minister Marian Majer opened the 3rd edition of the **Security Academy**, organised by the analytical think-tank Adapt Institute in close cooperation with the SVK MOD and the SVK representation of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. After the lecture, Mr Majer discussed the "Pillars of SVK Defence Policy" with 12 university students from across Slovakia. The event took place under the auspices of Defence Minister Martin Sklenár.

► The Bishopric of the Forces, led by Bishop František Rábek, has announced a fundraiser for the construction of the **National Memorial dedicated to the members of the Armed and Rescue Services who have died in the line of duty**. In this way, he wants to recognise their service to Slovakia. The project is supported by civil associations such as the SVK Generals Club, the SVK Police History Club Lučenec, and the SVK Despatch Riders LE MC. The Memorial will be installed at the Bishopric Cathedral in Bratislava. The fundraising efforts will continue until 15 Nov. Donations can be made into the following transparent bank account: SK86 0900 0000 0052 0812 2843.

► **Aircraft Repair Company Trenčín (LOTN)** has put a photovoltaic power system into operation. With 219 solar panels and an output of 99,645 kW, it is expected to generate 97,652 kWh/year, which equates to 10% of LOTN's annual energy consumption. The return on the investment made is due from 4 to 5 years.

► Working closely with the Fire and Rescue Service Prešov, pilots from 51 Wing Prešov completed **intensive training** with UH-60M Black Hawk and Mil Mi-17 helicopters in the municipality of Spišská Bystrá. The helicopter crews practiced filling Bambi buckets from a mobile water tank. The last phase of the training was conducting a rescue mission, including the insertion and extraction of firefighters. The exercising crews completed a total of 26 sorties.

► Members of 11 Mech Bn Martin, supplemented by a Combat Support Service (CSS) unit, participated in **Ex Czech Lion 2023**, which took place on Hradiště Training Area and at the Simulation Technology Centre Vyškov in Czechia, with the aim of practicing and testing the capabilities of planning and conducting operations in an international environment, as well as coordinating the multinational brigade's manoeuvre units. The training unit was visited by COM SVK ARMY Maj Gen Ivan Pach.

► At the 3rd iteration of the **Dušan Fatrsík Memorial Shooting Competition**, 24 SVK and 4 U.S. SOF operatives met to battle it out and determine the fastest shooter on the shooting range of 5 SOF Regt Žilina. The competition was opened by Comdr 5 SOF Regt Col Peter Zochňák, who, after the exciting individual finals, presented the fastest shooter trophy to the winner, a SVK SOF operative.

► The work of the **MOD Forestry Department** will be made easier with a fleet of new electric motorbikes. With low operational costs, they are fast, silent, ecological, and ideal for the use in the woodlands.

► **The NATO Battlegroup Slovakia** has been visited by members of the Dukla Military Sports Centre. After a discussion with soldiers, they got a taste of a day out on operations, tried shooting small arms, and went for a ride in a main battle tank.

► Eliška Mintálová and Jakub Grigar, slalom canoeists of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, picked up their **nominations for the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics** at the SVK Olympic and Sports Committee Museum.

Bishop of the Forces František Rábek visits SVK soldiers in BiH

(12 Oct) Bishop of the Forces František Rábek, accompanied by Vicar General of the Forces Col Jozef Michalov and Dean of the SVK Army Capt Stanislav Dulák, visited SVK soldiers deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) in support of EUFOR Op Althea. While at NATO HQ (NHQ) Sarajevo, the Bishop of the Forces had an office call with the Commander of the 52-strong Slovak Contingent, Lt Col Ľubomír Mizerák, and met other NHQ staff to discuss the conditions of their service. He also visited Novo Sarajevo, Focha and Visegrad, where SVK soldiers are deployed. Bishop Rábek also met Archbishop of Sarajevo and Bishop of



the BiH Forces Tomo Vukčić before meeting Vicar General of the BiH Forces Željko Čuturić to address the optimisation of chaplaincy services for soldiers on EUFOR's Op Althea. At Camp Butmir II in Sarajevo, he celebrated the Holy Mass for SVK military personnel. Earlier on 10 Oct, on his way to Sarajevo, Bishop Rábek called on Bishop Emeritus of Hungary László Bíró in Pécs, presenting him with the Bishopric of the SVK Forces Memorial Plaque. Bishop Emeritus László Bíró is credited with initiating an annual military pilgrimage to Zalavár (HUN) in recognition of St Cyril and St Methodius, involving the SVK and HUN Bishopric communities.

Ex Sharp Lynx ends



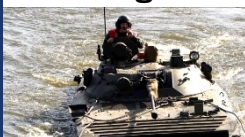
(11 Oct) Sharp Lynx 2023, a NATO MNMPBAT exercise, finished on Libavá Military Training Area (MTA) in Czechia, with participation from over 300 troops and 18 evaluators from 6 countries. Slovakia was represented by 37 military policemen. The organisers prepared five related themes and designed 45 incident scenarios.

The SVK Military Police demonstrated high professionalism on the exercise, both collectively and individually. In the shooting competition of the six countries, Sgt 1C Halecký, MSgt Foltá and Sgt Mesiarkin placed first, second and fourth, respectively, as well as winning the Team category.

SF Mission Training

(13 Oct) Working closely with the Security Forces Air Advisor 435 CRSS/AAF Ramstein Air Base, 81 Wing Sliach hosted the Security Forces (SF) Mission Training #2 and the Mobile Training Team Assistance programme for the Wing's Protection and Defence Battalion. The instructors remained intensely focused on the practical modules, with members of the Battalion practicing basic Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC) procedures and SOPs for entering the F-16 facilities. During Week 2, they went through patrol procedures and Close Quarters Battle (CQB) training. The training culminated with a comprehensive test of all procedures to support the F-16 programme. The MTT team presented the certificates of completion to 68 successful graduates at the graduation ceremony. In attendance were Comdr 81 Wing Sliach Col František Pylík, Col Róbert Tibenský, U.S. Air Force Attaché Lt Col Mark Ely, and Mr Matthew Bailey, a security officer responsible for the certification of the F-16 programme.

Swimming and fording at Lešt'



(9 Oct) Overseen by Lt Col Miroslav Osif, Slovak Army service personnel conducted deep water fording and swimming with IFVs across the deep water training area of the Training Centre Lešt' on 2-12 Oct. The aim of the training was to maintain the commanders' and drivers' ability to conduct water crossings, with the emphasis on the new drivers' practical skills. The training was preceded by the Rescue and Recovery Group's joint preparation, which concluded with a readiness check exercise on 28 Sept and which was followed by instructive methodological guidance for commanders of the SVK Army's battalions.