



Remembering WWII victims in Klak and Ostrý Grúň

(21 Jan) Deputy Defence Minister Igor Melicher honoured the victims of the 21 Jan 1945 Nazi rampage on the villages of Klak and Ostrý Grúň. The foothill villages, small settlements and isolated homes across the Klakovská valley formed a large partisan base for the Slovak National Uprising. As well as providing accommodation, clothes and food, local people were helping WWII Resistance fighters with intelligence and reconnaissance.

As a reprisal for their actions, on 21 Jan 1945 Nazi troops and their Slovak collaborators killed 64 and 84 villagers in Ostrý Grúň and Klak, respectively. Among the victims were mostly elderly people, women and children. Two days later, the German troops stormed the already depopulated valley, burning down the remaining houses. People were prohibited from entering the valley until liberation.

"This day must forever remind us that the thoughts of hatred and supremacy can plunge the world into darkness," Mr Melicher said, adding: "We must be vigilant, because evil of similar magnitude does not show its face directly. It is often hidden behind innocent and universal words and other people's pawns. But the result is always the same, as could be witnessed in Klak and Ostrý Grúň 79 years ago."



A fond farewell to Maj Gen Kocian

(24 Jan) On the parade square of the Presidential Palace in Bratislava, as Slovak Armed Forces service members stood in formation in a farewell ceremony to mark Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian's retirement after over 42 years of service, President and Commander-in-Chief Zuzana Čaputová, Deputy Defence Minister Igor Melicher and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko thanked him for his responsible role in developing the Slovak Armed Forces.

Museum of Military History gives an unconventional lesson on WWII

(22 Jan) After the successful first year of the 'History Lesson' event, primary school pupils in Svidník were treated to another 'History Lesson' by the Museum of Military History - Museum Dept Svidník, Institute of Military History. In collaboration with Svidník Town Council, the Museum Dept Svidník staff presented the Battle of the Dukla Pass and Svidník's liberation in a very engaging and non-traditional way. The pupils first watched Part 2 of the WWII documentary 'Dukla - Blood and Myth: Agony and Victory', gaining quite a lot of information on the Battle of the Dukla Pass in today's Poland and Slovakia. The unconventional 'History Lesson' then continued with a guided tour of the 1914-45 Slovak Military History Gallery and concluded with a guided tour of the Museum's vehicle collection and the Soviet Army Memorial.

- At a medal presentation at the **Joint Operations Command Banská Bystrica** (JOCOM BB) Hall of Honour and Fame on 25 Jan, Capt Martin Chovanec received the EU Military Assistance Mission in Support of Ukraine (EUMAM UA) Medal from the hands of Maj Gen Martin Michalka, Commander JOCOM BB, for his exemplary service with EUMAM UA.
- The Flight Training Dept, Aviation Faculty, Technical University of Košice (TUKE), has been hosting the certified **Basic Air Traffic Controller (ATC) Theory Training Course** for OCs of the Military Academy Liptovský Mikuláš. The course, supported by the ATC training simulators, covers ATC communications and radar SOPs.
- SLOVCON service personnel of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) took part in the annual **UNFICYP Military Skills Competition**.
- A brief on the core tasks assigned to the commanders of HQ 1 MECH BDE Topoľčany, 103 COM SPT COY, and the Brigade's subordinate units took place at Topoľčany-based Jaselské Barracks on 22 Jan. Lt Col Igor Štefko, DCOS OPS, was the officer in charge of the brief. The commanders learned about the specific tasks ahead of them in 2024.

- 1Lt Peter Baláz, full-time PhD student at the Military Academy Liptovský Mikuláš (AOS)'s Engineering Dept, won two **air pistol shooting** disciplines in the third round of the Slovak Shooting Association's Extra League and qualified for the European Championships to be held on 24 Feb - 3 Mar in Hungary's Győr.

- The **Slovak National Uprising Museum Banská Bystrica** has announced that the WWII Tokajik Tragedy Museum, located in the village of Tokajik, has been closed to the public due to technical issues.

- As part of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the Chapel of St Michael the Archangel at SVK AF HQ Zvolen hosted the **first ecumenical worship service**. Members of the congregation were addressed by Dean of the Slovak Air Force Deanary Pavel Lukáč and Dean of the Central Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service Katarína Zatková.

- The Liptovský Mikuláš-based Defence Language Institute (DLI) held an **English Language Teaching (ELT) Methodology Seminar** for teachers of the DLI Detachments, with the aim of sharing ELT methodology tips and activities with the teaching staff ahead of the intensive military English language courses starting in the first half of 2024. The seminar also explored the use of technology and artificial intelligence (AI) in ELT as a special topic.

- **Marianna Jagerčíková**, skimo athlete of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, who claimed the 2022 European Champion and 2023 World Champion titles, placed 2nd behind Emily Harrop with a loss of 0.13sec and won the silver medal at the Ski Mountaineering World Cup in Spain's Boi Taüll. Marianna Jagerčíková and Jakub Šiarnik finished 6th in the mixed relay race.

- **Ema Kapustová**, biathlete of the Dukla Military Sports Centre, won the bronze medal for Slovakia after competing in the women's 15km Individual race at the European Biathlon Championships held on 24 Jan at the SVK National Biathlon Centre Osrbie.

FULL FIELD KIT

Radio Regina's Full Field Kit programme presents the MANTIS air defence system on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat.

Central Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service (EPS) Activities in 2024

MAY

7-13 May: Gen M. R. Štefánik Bench Unveiling Ceremony in France (Meudon, Chamonix), and commemoration and remembrance events (FRA)

22-24 May: 6th Spiritual March in the Footsteps of Heroes with WWII remembrance services

JUNE

19-23 Jun: 73rd International Military Protestant Convention (Rassemblement International Militaire Protestant (RIMP)) (FRA)

17-18 Jun: Heydrichade Anniversary Events, Prague (CZE)

JULY

A worship service to mark the 17th anniversary of the establishment of the Central Office of Ecumenical



CHOD praises courage



(23 Jan) CHOD Gen Daniel Zmeko received Sgt Kamil Kelbel, section leader of 2 SVK AF Bde, to recognise his professionalism and resolute courage when face to face with danger. Sgt Kelbel rushed to defend

an injured elderly man who was being harassed by a group of aggressive youths. In a statement, Gen Zmeko emphasised that the public can rely on SVK soldiers throughout their service, both on and off duty.

Hejce tragedy remembered



(22 Jan) In Sereď, a special remembrance service for Col Štefan Ivan and other Hejce air disaster victims was marked with a wreath-laying ceremony, remembrance speeches by President of

the UN Veteran Slovakia Association Col (Ret'd) Štefan Jangl and Bishop of the Forces and Armed Corps František Rábek, and the celebration of a Holy Mass. Also in attendance were family members of Col Štefan Ivan, representatives of the MOD, SVK Army HQ, SVK Generals' Club, Mayor of Sereď, members of the UN Veteran Slovakia and SVK Soldiers Associations, soldiers of 91 Engr Regt, and other guests.

OCs at Kaleník TA



(23 Jan) 2nd-year Officer Cadets (OCs) of the General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Armed Forces Academy practiced mounting an attack with full preparation at Kaleník Training Area (TA). A French Military Academy OC of L'École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr (ESM Saint-Cyr) was embedded with a SVK infantry section as a section leader. This gave our OCs a chance to compare the section-level

leadership between the SVK and FRA Armies and to speak a foreign language.



Pastoral Service (CO ESP) in the Slovak Armed Forces and Armed Corps (1 Jul 2006) at CO EPS Chapel

JULY/AUGUST

Bible summer camps for children

17-20 Aug: Holy Hill Grabarka Pilgrimage – Feast of the Transfiguration (POL)

SEPTEMBER

20 Sep: An ecumenical worship service to mark Slovak Armed Forces Day at CO EPS and MOD Chapels

OCTOBER

31 Oct: Worship service in remembrance of Reformation at CO EPS Chapel

NOVEMBER

A pre-Advent 'Through the Eyes of the Heart' meeting of ESP chaplains and employees with invited guests