



Transparent purchases

(5 January) Over the past four years, the SVK MOD has made purchases of equipment and materiel in historically largest quantities through the U.S. Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs, and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA), while ensuring maximum transparency. While this type of procurement was applied only to a minimum extent in the past, the volume of such purchases by the MOD's current leadership has amounted to millions of euros.

"In buying the Sikorsky UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, we took advantage of the U.S. Government's FMS program, and obtained the helicopters for the actual purchase price paid by the U.S. Armed Forces. The price was, therefore, lower than that if we had procured them directly from the manufacturer," said SVK Minister of Defence Martin Giváč. He went on to remind that it was not until 2013 that – historically for the first time – the SVK MOD used the opportunity to buy military equipment through the FMS program. Similarly, the SVK MOD purchased SOF weaponry and clothing via the FMS program, mostly for the 5th Special Forces Regiment. "They are fully compatible within NATO and there is no overpricing," emphasized the head of the MOD.

Thanks to purchases made through the FMS program, the SVK MOD is entitled to use the FMF program by way of which it acquires materiel and equipment as a donation, calculated as a certain ratio of its total purchases through the FMS program. These days, a delivery of goods worth some 10 million euros is being processed. Of the total amount, Slovakia will pay only half the price. The materiel is scheduled to be delivered to Slovakia by the end of 2016 and the beginning of 2017.

Under the MOD's current leadership, goods worth approx. US\$ 280 million have so far been contracted via the U.S. Government's programs.

To procure defence equipment under the modernization scheme, the MOD's current leadership has also used the services of the NSPA, where purchases are made directly from defence manufacturers. For example, the purchases of all-terrain vehicles, ammunition, specialized weapons and repair components have been made in this manner. In total, deliveries worth some 16 million euros have so far been contracted.

SVK president grants highest state honours

(7 January) On the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic on Thursday, 7 January, a ceremonial act of granting the highest state honours was marked in the Knight's Hall at Bratislava Castle. The honours ceremony was attended by President of the Slovak Republic Andrej Kiska, Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Peter Pellegrini, Prime Minister Robert Fico, MPs, government members, central and regional government representatives, diplomats, representatives of churches, representatives of the cultural establishment, and other prominent guests. Soňa Szomolányi, sociologist and political scientist, delivered a thank you speech on behalf of the recipients of the state honours. Following the speech, the national anthem of the Slovak Republic was played in the Knight's Hall of Bratislava Castle. The ceremonial act concluded with the sounds of the hymn entitled "He who burns for truth". Military honours during the ceremonial award of state honours were provided by members of the Honour Guard of the President of the Slovak Republic.



- On 4 January, the ceremonial muster of the **Alexander Korda self-propelled artillery division battalion in Michalovce** took place on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic. During the muster, the order of the President on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic was read out. In his speech, Col Pavol Barančík, Commander of the battalion, expressed his thanks to the subordinates for the work done in 2015. By the personnel order of the Director of the Personnel Office of the SVK Armed Forces, Lt Lenka Adamčíková was promoted to the rank of First Lieutenant and assigned to the position of Chief of the financial and economical service of the division.

- On the first working day of the new training year 2016, the members of the **Training battalion Martin** took part in the ceremonial muster on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic. After reading out the order of the President on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, commander of the battalion presented the members of the battalion with military medals and military badges of the Minister of the Slovak Republic and Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces as a token of appreciation of their service in the SVK Armed Forces. On behalf of the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic, he also handed out letters of appreciation for the activities in support of the positive presentation of the SVK Armed Forces in the eyes of a wide public, organized by the SVK MOD in the training year 2015. At the end of the ceremonial muster, certificates of merit were awarded to those members of the battalion who achieved the overall rating in the three disciplines of the yearly test of the physical fitness of the professional soldiers that exceeded 25% of the rating prescribed to be considered as excellent in the training year 2015.

- On 4 January, the members of the **2nd mechanized brigade** headquarters commemorated the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic by the national anthem and reading out the order of the President of the Slovak Republic. After reading out the order of the Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces on awarding military medals, the new members of the 2nd mb HQs were introduced. Col Ján Parimucha, Deputy Commander of the 2nd mb HQs, introduced the priorities of the Commander of the 2nd mechanized brigade and the top tasks and objectives in the training year 2016.

- In the Hall of Fame of the SVK MOD, in the presence of the 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Lt Gen Peter Gajdoš, President of the Soldiers' Union Col (Ret) Tomáš Švec presented Lt Col Julius Bala, Commander of the military unit 1056 Zemianske Kostolany, with the award **Star of the Soldiers' Union** for active cooperation with the Soldiers' Union, for supporting the Union's activities, for its promotion in the wide public and for active cooperation with the club Horná Nitra. Lt Gen Gajdoš congratulated Lt Col Bala and thanked him for the deserving work and all the effort put in to create good conditions for the activities of the club Horná Nitra working at the SVK Soldiers' Union.

New Year in the Armed Forces

(5 January) On the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic, the solemn gathering of the members of the SVK General Staff was held on 5 January on the premises of the General Staff. Minister of Defence and Chief of the General Staff awarded medals and badges to the selected members of the General Staff. In his address, First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Lt Gen Peter Gajdoš pointed out the changed conditions of the state service, introduction of the voluntary military service and the current security challenges.

On the first working day of the year, the members of the SVK Land Forces HQs took part in a ceremonial muster, commemorating the significant events linked with 1 January. On this occasion, the order of the President of the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic was read out. After awarding medals and badges of the Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, it was Deputy Commander of the SVK Land Forces Brig Gen Juraj Kríštofovič, who addressed the present guests in his speech. On behalf of the Commander of the SVK Land Forces he expressed his appreciation and many thanks for the tasks performed in the training year 2015 and wished all the present guests every personal and professional success in the new training year 2016. He also congratulated them on the anniversary of the establishment of the SVK Armed Forces and on the 16th anniversary of the establishment of the Land Forces HQs.

For the members of the SVK Air Force HQs, the calendar year 2016 began with a ceremonial muster that took place on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic on 5 January. After reading out the order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic and President of the Slovak Republic, Brig Gen Miroslav Korba, Commander of the SVK Air Force, made a speech in which he addressed all the present guests. He pointed out that all the tasks set for the past year were performed in an excellent manner and he expressed his belief that the tasks set for the new training year would equally be successfully accomplished. He extended his appreciation to the members of the Land Forces Headquarters for having carried out the challenging tasks in 2015 in a highly responsible manner and wished them sound health and every success in the new year.



Soldiers await changes in 2016 arising out of the new Professional Soldiers' State Service Act

(10 January) The new Professional Soldiers' State Service Act took effect as of 1 January 2016, primarily designed to make the military job more attractive and, simultaneously, life-long.

"The drafting of the Professional Soldiers' State Service Bill was greatly aided by Servicemen and women, since we sought to have as many of their requirements as possible worked into it. The outcome is a law which aims to stabilize Service personnel. It sets up a new, more transparent and flexible career progression system for active duty soldiers," explained SVK Minister of Defence Martin Giváč.

Commenting on the Act, Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim emphasized that the new legislation will contribute to better performance of active duty service by professional soldiers. "The positive news for all soldiers is that, under the social welfare scheme, all the other important salary entitlements for professional soldiers, such as bonuses and allowances, are to be preserved," he said.



The Act adopts a new approach to the personnel management system by instituting the Permanent State Service (PSS). It represents a change in the philosophy of the professional soldiers' state service insofar as it offers a life-long job to best quality and highly qualified Service personnel. To join the PSS, it is necessary to complete 17 years of active duty service, and Servicemen and women will thereupon be allowed to serve until the age of 55.

As regards military salaries, the new military pay scale chart has been enhanced by two pay grades. Compared with the past arrangements, this means that increases in military salaries will be distributed over a longer period of time. Pay increases are to affect even those pay grades in the pay scale chart that have reached the ceiling limit under the past system.

Also, new rules for the career progression system of professional soldiers have been laid down, abolishing the hugely unpopular competitive selection as a precondition for promoting Service personnel to higher ranks.

Moreover, the status and authority of commanders within the career progression of active duty soldiers will be reinforced, and this also applies to guarantors of military occupational specialties. Furthermore, the changes have seen active duty soldiers in the Warrant Officer ranks being transferred to the Non-Commissioned Officers Corps, while their previous salary terms remain unchanged.

Yet another change in the active duty career system is a more flexible approach to replenishment of the Officers' Corps, insofar as the possibility for educated and skilled active duty personnel in the NCO ranks to transfer to the Officers' Corps is now emerging under certain conditions.

For all Servicemen and women, the new Act guarantees to preserve the entitlements existing under the previous legislation, and for those who disagree with the duration of the state service in accordance with the new Act, it guarantees that they will remain in active duty service, at a minimum, by the period stipulated in the original legislation.