

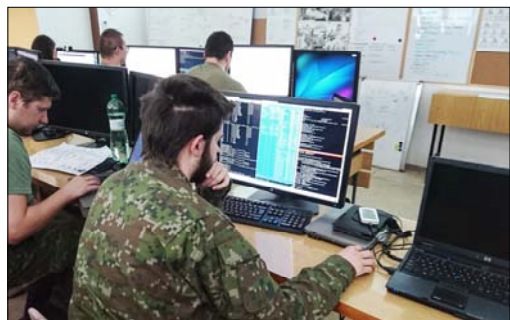


New Generals' stars

(19 April) President of the Slovak Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska appointed two new Brigadier Generals of the SVK Armed Forces and promoted three officers to the rank of Major General.

"A General's star is a recognition of your long-term work achievements. I have no doubt that the latest addition of the star you have received today will be a motivation to you so as to perform tasks in the SVK Armed Forces, just as until now, to the best of your ability," emphasised Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. He remembered to extend his thanks also to the families of the generals for their life-long support.

Advanced to the rank of Major General were the Commander of the SVK Land Forces, Ondřej Novosad, the Commander of the SVK Air Force, Miroslav Korba, and the Director of Military Intelligence, Ján Balciar. Promoted to the rank of Brigadier General were the Chief of the Strategic Planning Staff at the General Staff of the Slovak Armed Forces, Ivan Pach, and the Chief of the Military Office of the President of the Slovak Republic, Vladimír Šimko. Brig Gen Ivan Pach thanked the SVK President and the Minister of Defence on behalf of the newly promoted generals.



Training for contemporary threats

(22 April) A SVK Armed Forces cyber defence team achieved the best results at Exercise Locked Shields 2016, an international cyber defence exercise, organized by the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (NATO CCD COE). "The fact that members of the SVK Armed Forces were evaluated as the most capable team is a proof that we have been paying adequate attention to cyber operations in cyberspace. It is a great success they performed extremely well amid intense international competition, and this proves our soldiers have a good reputation abroad," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. "The change of the security reality and the new forms of threats connected with them call for measures to be taken even at the level of the SVK Armed Forces. They must be capable of responding to contemporary threats emanating from cyberspace," noted the Minister. "The exercise is aimed at training cyber security specialists who are entrusted with protecting national IT systems on a day-to-day basis," added SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim. A total of 19 countries participated in the exercise. As part of the exercise scenarios, the teams of cyber specialists were tasked to fend off myriads of attacks. Also, the specialists rehearsed handling incidents, sending incident reports, making analyses, and providing adequate responses.

Minister of Defence introduces MOD priorities

(23 April) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with representatives of the defence and security community in Beladice to introduce the MOD 2016-2020 programme priorities. In his presentation, he emphasised that he wishes to see broader social and political consensus on the long-term priorities of delivering the defence of the State. He called on non-governmental organisations to assist in bringing the State defence issues closer to the public, to create platforms for organizing meetings and discussions with representatives of the coalition and opposition parties, as well as with members of the professional experts community. The main priority of the MOD leadership is to enhance the defence capabilities of the Slovak Republic. "The basic premise for the systemic measures to be taken in view of our main objective is the update of the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic. At the same time, we would welcome a new defence strategy," explained the Minister. In meeting with representatives of the defence and security community, the Minister confirmed the MOD's continuity in performance of our international and NATO obligations. Another key task and priority is the transformation of the SVK Armed Forces, with a focus on purposeful and sustainable modernisation in the long term. "Increased attention will be paid to modernising the weaponry and equipment in service with the SVK Land Forces, preferably in favour of mechanised brigade elements. In the past, the focus of modernisation was on the SVK Air Force. That is why we now need to achieve a balance," clarified the head of the MOD. The right balance also needs to be restored between modernisation and soldiers' training. The meeting of the security and defence community representatives in Beladice was supported by the presence of the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Ivan Máčovský, and the 1st Deputy Chief of Defence, Maj Gen Pavel Macko.



- Within **Exercise Toxic Valley 2016** to be organized this fall at the CBRN Training and Testing Centre based in Zemianske Kostofany, military CBRN specialists will rehearse techniques and procedures together with other international teams composed of soldiers from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Belgium, as well as experts of the National Crime Agency. A planning conference focused on the exercise took place at the SVK General Staff.

- Battalions subordinate to the 2nd Mechanized Brigade underwent a **training designated for recovery teams**. The training was executed on 11 – 15 April at Ruská Nová Ves Garrison Training Ground and Firing Range, and the participants rehearsed recovery of sunken tracked and wheeled vehicles, as well as their evacuation from various terrains using the armoured recovery vehicle VT-72B, a tracked recovery vehicle and the AV-15 recovery automobile.

- On 4 – 15 April, a **seasonal cleaning and maintenance of the area**, connected with the clearance of remains of exploded ordnance, took place at the Training Area based in Kamenica nad Cirochou. The task was performed by a subordinate unit to Sereď Sapper Battalion – Michalovce Sapper Company.

- At UNFICYP HQ in Nicosia, members of the Sector 4 participated in an exercise focused on **crowd and riot control** organized on 14 April as part of the initial training for instructors of separate sectors. Its goal was to rehearse and co-ordinate activities of emergency units of all sectors, members of the Mobile Force Reserve (MFR) of the UNFICYP Force Commander and UN Police operating in Cyprus. The exercise served as an illustration for new unit commanders of the March 2016 rotation of how to respond to potential incidents occurring on the service territory, and was performed by SLOVCON members.

- On 11 April, the First Centre of the CIS Base headquartered in Ružomberok carried out a **marksmanship drill** at the Garrison Firing Range Kamenná Poruba. 69 soldiers approached the firing line to fire the assigned vz.82 semi-automatic pistol at a static target. The live fire exercise took place in the daytime and tested firing techniques and rules, as well as observance of safety rules.

- In presence of all participating troops of the SVK AF, the SVK Land Forces, the Military Police, and other participants, a **main planning conference on the exercise dubbed Blue Wave 2016** (MOVA 16), which is organized as part of Exercise Slovak Shield, took place on 18 – 19 April at the SVK Land Forces HQ in Zvolen. The aim of the conference was to write down a list of participants, make preparations for the exercise opening, and deal with logistics support issues and requirements. Following the main part of the programme, the participants held discussions within smaller work groups and reconnoitered the area where the exercise is to be carried out.

- On 20 April, an **inauguration ceremony** of NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) took place in the town of Bydgoszcz in presence of highest representatives of Poland and high NATO officials. MNC NE Commander, Lt Gen Manfred Hofmann expressed his appreciation of the work the new unit had done so far. At the ceremony, the SVK Armed Forces were represented by the Commander of the Slovak NFIU, Col Jozef Zekucia.

Staff exercise in Brno

(22 April) A staff exercise for members of NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNMPBAT) Staff took place on 18 – 22 April on the grounds of the University of Defence in Brno, Czech Republic. Military policemen from Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovakia rehearsed also at the Centre of Simulation and Trainer Technologies subordinate to the Training Command – Military Academy based in Vyškov. Simultaneously, a work meeting of a leading multinational planning team on the planned international exercise dubbed Anaconda 16, which is to be carried out in June in Poland, took place. The exercise saw participants from both the Nebraska National Guard and the Texas Army National Guard.



Aviation specialists in Sliac

(14 April) On 12 – 14 April, the Specialized Air Accidents Investigation Course took place at the Trainer Centre subordinate to Sliac Tactical Wing. The course was prepared by the Military Aviation Authority (MAA) of the SVK MOD, and it was focused on standard air accidents investigation procedures followed by EU and NATO member states. The course was participated by aviation safety inspectors of the MAA, the SVK General Staff, the SVK AF HQ, troops subordinate to the SVK AF, as well as members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment. Among the participants were also representatives of the Military Aviation Department of the Czech MOD, representatives of the Transport Authority of the SVK Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development (SVK MTCRD), as well as representatives of the Aviation and Maritime Investigation Authority of the SVK MTCRD. The theoretical part was directed at the analysis of aviation training of the SVK Armed Forces and the Army of the Czech Republic, as well as at the exchange of experience obtained from the investigation of air accidents that occurred in 2015. As part of the practical part of the course, rehearsal of land search and rescue service was carried out.

EU Ministers of Defence meet for talks in Luxembourg

(19 April) The current developments in Libya, hybrid threats, defence cooperation and EU-NATO partnership. Even these were among the

topics of discussion on the agenda of EU Defence Ministers in Luxembourg. Deputising at the meeting for the SVK Minister of Defence, who was participating, at the time of the event, in a meeting on the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments, was the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Ivan Máčovský.

That hybrid threats are among the mainstream security issues is clearly evidenced by the presentation of the European Union's long-awaited strategy on countering hybrid threats. The Joint Framework on countering hybrid threats was presented by the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. The document contains specific measures for EU institutions and EU Member States in the fields of defence, internal affairs, finances,

economy, transport, etc. In it, particular emphasis is placed on the need for the EU and NATO to achieve concerted efforts, a common comprehensive approach, and close cooperation in this area of interest.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg expressed his appreciation for the hybrid threat exercises that have been organised to date. A number of EU Member States highlighted the necessity of continuing such exercises, as well as the need to set a timetable for them into the future.

The NATO Secretary General informed Ministers of Defence of the current developments in Afghanistan, as well as of the duration, focus and level of NATO's engagement in the country in 2016. In the field of defence cooperation, the European Defence Agency (EDA) submitted the interim report on the implementation of the Policy Framework for Systematic and Long-Term Defence Cooperation.

