



Award to the most successful team at cyber exercise

(28 April) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš awarded the members of the Slovak team taking part in the international cyber exercise **Locked Shields 2016**, who conquered all the competitors, to include the best teams from 26 countries of the world. The Minister of Defence handed out letters of acknowledgement to the sixteen members of the SVK Armed Forces. "These professional soldiers represented the SVK Armed Forces in an honourable manner, which is a cause for pride and I would very much like to express my thanks to them," said the Minister. He emphasized that the issue of cyber security is one of the security priorities of the Slovak Republic. "I am glad that it is our soldiers who show the way ahead in this field," stated the Head of the Defence Department. In particular he appreciated the dedication of Lt Bohumil Cervenka, a creator of special defence software which significantly contributed to the victory of the SVK team. The importance of cyber security was accentuated also by the 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Maj Gen Pavel Macko: "If we are unable to defend the cyberspace we will be susceptible to damage that would be significantly larger than the damage possibly incurred by reason of the conventional armed forces." The exercise Locked Shields was organized by the NATO Centre of Excellence Cooperative Cyber Defence. The organizers of the exercise were based in Tallinn and the other teams took part in the exercise directly from their workplaces in their native countries.



Defence being a matter of honour

(26 April) The constructive approach of the politicians who, during the plenary session of the SVK National Council, contributed to the discussion on the state defence, is to be attributed to the defence department's new administration and their commitment to integrate into this part of the Government's programme declaration of intents everything that might be beneficial for the defence of the Slovak Republic. This is the point made by the SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš in his speech within the parliamentary discussion on the draft SVK Government's programme declaration of intents. He noted that to achieve a real progress in this field it is crucial to ensure a long-term continuity of solutions and accentuated that the state defence is neither the right-wing nor the left-wing issue, it cannot be viewed as the coalition or opposition issue, but we need to understand that this issue is the vital one for everyone. "As a matter of fact, Article 25 Section 1 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic clearly defines that the defence of the Slovak Republic is a duty of its citizens as well as a matter of honour." The issue of defence and security should not be made a subject of a political fight, just the opposite, we should strive to achieve the widest possible political and public support," said the Minister. What he appreciated in particular was that the members of parliament, in their plenary appearances, had expressed the overwhelming support for pro-European and pro-Transatlantic orientation. He assured those present in the plenary session that all the efforts in this electoral terms will be aimed at increasing the level of defence capability of the Slovak Republic.



Visit to the missile brigade

(27 April) Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic Peter Gajdoš and President Andrej Kiska made a visit to the anti-aircraft missile brigade based in Nitra. They saw dynamic demonstrations and the equipment in the inventory of the brigade. "The assets and capabilities of the anti-aircraft missile brigade are unique in terms of ensuring protection of the Slovak Republic and enabling combat activities. That is why I will do my best to ensure that in the future, the members of the brigade will, as part of their training, take part in more tactical exercises organized jointly with the land forces, and, depending on the circumstances and available resources, also in more live-firing exercises," said the Minister. During his visit to Nitra-based anti-aircraft missile brigade, the SVK President was accompanied by 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Maj Gen Pavel Macko.

- On 26 April, a joint working session of the North Atlantic Council and NATO Military Committee took place on the island of L'Île Longue, a nuclear submarine base of the French Navy. The Slovak Republic was represented at the event by the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO, Mr Tomáš Valášek, and the Military Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO, Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian. They familiarised themselves with the structure and tasks of the Strategic Oceanic Force (FOST), the French Navy component based at L'Île Longue; received a tour of several nuclear submarines; and saw demonstrations of munitions maintenance, control and handling.

- Members of the 1st Mechanised Company, of the 22nd Mechanised Battalion, underwent a synchronisation control check of mechanised sections during their daytime and nighttime operations on 27-28 April. The exercise tested the level of coordination between the mechanised sections in conducting combat preparation drills and combat missions. It also validated the abilities of the section chiefs to exercise control of the sections' pre-combat drills and combat missions, and the abilities of drivers to drive combat vehicles across terrain in near-combat conditions, as well as testing the soldiers' physical and mental resistance levels.

- On 18-22 April, the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Office conducted a joint specialist training for dressing stations and H-10 military occupational specialties (MOSs) involving personnel from across the SVK Armed Forces and the Integrated Rescue Service of the Slovak Republic. The training was attended by 44 soldiers, 43 members of the Medical Rescue Service (IRS) Bratislava, and 17 attendees of the Slovak Medical University (SMU) of Bratislava. The exercise was aimed at providing a complex management response in day and night conditions during a mass casualty event and setting up individual command positions during a medical incident response.

- A Combat Lifesaver Course (CLS) – Advanced First Aid in Combat Conditions was held on 18-22 April at the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Office Ružomberok's Detached Workstation in Liptovský Mikuláš. The course was attended by members of the 11th Mechanised Battalion Martin and the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina. The aim of the course was to teach advanced first aid skills to non-medical staff during a tactical situation. The course has been available since 2013. A total of 109 members of the SVK Armed Forces have graduated successfully from the course.

- On 26-28 April, the SVK Air Force Headquarters Zvolen (SVK AF HQ) hosted a **TOBRUQ LEGACY 2016** exercise planning conference to work out plans for an international exercise of Ground Based Air Defence (GBAD) units with GBAD assets. In attendance at the conference were representatives of the SVK Air Force and military representatives of the USA, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria and Poland. In 2015, a TOBRUQ LEGACY series exercise was held on Boletice Training Area (Czech Republic). The Slovak Republic has taken over the patronage of the exercise for this year.

- Members of the Military Police Crisis Management Section (MP CMS) Vikanová Hronsek attended a concentrated **marksmanship and tactical training exercise** on 25-29 April. The main objectives included synchronising tactics in conducting MP specific drills supported by sniper operations, and enhancing marksmanship skills in harsh and challenging conditions and firing from military occupational specific vehicles on the move. The concentrated training validated the physical and mental condition of the MP CMS personnel.

Gen Maxim in Serbia

(26 April) At the invitation of his Serbian counterpart Gen Ljubiš Diković, SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim visited the Republic of Serbia. While in Belgrade, the SVK CHOD and the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Republic of Serbia, Her Excellency Dagmar Repčėková, presented the film premier of Soldier Alone in the Field, a documentary on the engagement of SVK soldiers on ISAF operations in Afghanistan. Gen Maxim then laid a wreath at the Grave of the Unknown Soldier in the town of Avala, toured the grounds of the Special Forces Brigade, and discussed defence-related issues with cadets of the Serbian Military Academy. The second leg of his working trip continued in Macedonia. During their talks, the SVK CHOD and Macedonian CHOD Lt Gen Metodija Veličkovski concurred that the defence relationship between the countries is at a very high level and has a great potential to develop further. Gen Maxim also held a meeting with the President of the Republic of Macedonia, HE Dr Gorge Ivanov, and the Macedonian Minister of Defence, Zoran Jovelski. He reassured them that Slovakia's support for Macedonia's accession process to the Euro-Atlantic structures remains unchanged. At the conclusion of his trip, he visited the Air Force Training Centre where he familiarised himself with the current status of developments at the Macedonian-Greek border.



UH-60M now in production

(1 May) In the United States of America, the production of the first batch of the 9 Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters, which the SVK MOD purchased under the US Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme for the SVK Armed Forces, has already been launched. "The production has been in progress according to the plan. And so is true of the pilots and technicians training at a U.S. Armed Forces training facility," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. The purchase of the Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters is the largest modernisation project in the history of the SVK Armed Forces. The US machines are set to gradually replace the Slovak military's Mi-17 helicopter fleet which is nearing the end of its life cycle. The helicopter fleet replacement process was initiated by the previous MOD leadership. As Minister Gajdoš emphasised on several occasions, he is committed to implementing the modernisation projects launched earlier in a most transparent manner.

Minister reviews preparations for the series of exercise Slovak Shield

(25 April) On Monday, after the government session, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš carried out inspection of the comprehensive staff rehearsal under the auspices of the SVK General Staff, whereby the series of the exercise Slovak Shield continues. The individual stages of the exercise will put to the test the ability and preparedness of the troops to respond to the different types of threats, starting from the non-military threats to the need to deploy multinational task force to defend the territorial integrity of any one of the allies. "I do believe that the goals and objectives will translate into the real-life tasks. Naturally, I will do my best to ensure that your needs and requirements are met," the Minister told the members of the SVK Armed Forces. "In comparison to the previous year, we have taken a step forward

and are now able to respond to the most recent security trends and the rehearsal is simultaneously carried out on different levels.



Together with the General Staff, also the Headquarters of the subordinated forces take part in the exercise," added the 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff Maj Gen Pavel Macko. The series of the exercise Slovak Shield will focus on the two activities this year: the Blue Wave to be held at the end of May and the Slovak Shield, planned to be held at the end of September and the beginning of October. In addition, the unscheduled exercise dubbed New Horizon and the international air defence units exercise called Tobruq Legacy will be held. Most of the training exercises will be held in the Training Centre Lešt, but the training facilities of the other units on the whole territory of Slovakia will be used as well. This year, participation of the troops from the V4 countries and other partners from abroad is planned for the autumn exercise.