



Republic Day

(3 January) Service personnel and MOD civilian employees came together for a ceremony to commemorate the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and its Armed Forces. Speaking on this occasion the head of the MOD, Peter Gajdoš announced his New Year's resolution for 2017: to create the best conditions for active duty soldiers ever. "So that we can achieve the maximum for the security of Slovakia and its citizens," he said. He went on to emphasise that 1 January is a day of great significance for each citizen of the Slovak Republic and for the Slovak Armed Forces.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Gajdoš said: "There is a large number of challenges ahead of us and perhaps the greatest one this year is, apart from finalising the strategic documents and the Armed Forces Building and Development Plan, the stand-up of a mechanised brigade as a national commitment in favour of NATO." He further signalled that the Armed Forces are awaiting a multitude of changes. "New assets are expected to gradually enter service and our Armed Forces should finally start changing into a modern force through slow steps," he remarked. In this respect, the priority is to continue delivering the much-needed equipment and adequate training. Also, he pointed to the deteriorated security environment, plus terrorism which has come to affect Europe and the whole world.

In his statement, Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim warned of the changing security environment which touches us directly, while maintaining that the responsibility for taking adequate action in response to it rests with the Armed Forces. Whether by way of implementing modernisation measures, investing increased training efforts or developing the Active Reserves and Voluntary Military Training schemes. "Our common goal is to protect and defend the interests of the Slovak Republic and its citizens at home and abroad, and we need to concentrate all our efforts towards this end," he said.

The anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic is set as a traditional date for the awarding of military medals and badges. Therefore, service personnel and MOD civilian employees received accolades from the hands of the Minister of Defence and the Chief of the General Staff.

MOD managed the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU at a high standard

(3 January) Over the course of the 6-month Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the SVK Ministry of Defence played a responsible role in bringing important tasks to completion. The MOD organised the Informal Meeting of European Union Ministers of Defence in September in Bratislava and held a wide range of EU-related activities, while the SVK Armed Forces and other components partook in facilitating the smooth passage of the Slovak EU Presidency.

The MOD was entrusted with hosting 1 'Category A' event at the highest level, 11 'Category B' events, 3 special activities, and 6 informal social events. In his statement on this matter, Minister Gajdoš highlighted the smooth course of all of the events held under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence. "We managed the historically first EU Presidency at a high standard. And when it comes to the MOD's themes, we have shifted them forward considerably. Also, I highly appreciated the presence of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the Informal Meeting in Bratislava. We followed up on the debated themes at the November Summit in Brussels," reflected the Minister. Finally, he used the opportunity to extend his thanks to everyone involved in the EU events for accomplishing the tasks professionally. For the MOD, the key priorities of the Slovak Presidency of the

Velez-Zuzulová and Vihová dominate slalom at Zagreb

(3 January) The skiers of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica Veronika Velez-Zuzulová and Petra Vihová achieved fantastic success in the women's slalom race at the Alpine Skiing World Cup, which took place on 3 January in Croatia's Zagreb. Veronika Velez-Zuzulová won the competition and Petra Vihová placed 2nd right behind her. On the triumph of the representatives of the MSC Dukla Banská Bystrica, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš commented: "The stamina of our skiers was unbelievable. That of Veronika's was even greater as she achieved the much-wanted victory in spite of her illness she had been grappling with. So on behalf of the entire MOD, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to them."



- To mark the establishment of the Slovak Republic on Republic Day, Deputy Commander **SVK Land Forces** Brig Gen Juraj Krištofovič opened a gathering of the SVK Land Forces HQ active duty soldiers and civilian employees on 2 Jan. In connection with the personnel changes, he introduced new HQ staffers and wished them all much success in performing demanding tasks which are awaiting the Land Forces in 2017.

- On Tue, 3 Jan, the **SVK Air Force's** HQ Air Command staffers attended a ceremony commemorating the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic. In his statement, Commander SVK Air Force Maj Gen Miroslav Korba summarised the 2016 SVK AF tasks and thanked the SVK AF personnel and civilian employees for their job well done. Then the Chief of the Personnel Support Section briefed them on the personnel changes at the HQ Air Command. With effect from 1 Jan, Col Slavomír Milde took up the appointment of Chief of Logistics Branch, Lt Col Peter Baliak assumed the appointment of Chief of Air Force Employment and Development Planning Branch, and Maj František Pytlík was appointed as Chief of Flight Training Section. Capt Evald Černák and Capt Vladimír Smolej were promoted to the rank of Major.

- On 3 Jan, the Commander of the **SVK Armed Forces Logistics Support Office**, General Staff (GS) Col Ján Žarnovický opened a gathering of active duty soldiers and civilian employees on the occasion of Republic Day. After the Slovak National Anthem was played and the Order of the President of the Slovak Republic on the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and the Personnel Appointment Orders were read out, the Logistics Office Commander advanced Capt Juraj Olos and Capt Rastislav Gebauer to the rank of Major.

- The members of the **Tactical Wing Sliach**, too, commemorated Republic Day on 3 Jan during a ceremony marking the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic. After the playing of the National Anthem, Deputy Commander Tactical Wing Sliach Lt Col Martin Kuterka read out the Order of the President of the Slovak Republic. He went on to thank the 80-time free blood donor, Maj (Rtd) Dušan Jencík, a member of the Wing, who was awarded the Janský Diamond Plaque by the Slovak Red Cross Branch on 2 Dec 2016.

- A ceremony marking the New Year was held on Thur, 4 Jan, in the presence of the **Bratislava Garrison Command** active duty soldiers and civilian employees at Vajnory Barracks. Medals and badges were awarded during the ceremony.

NFIU declares Initial Capability



(2 January) The NATO unit located in Slovakia – NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) Slovakia – achieved its Initial Capability on Sunday, 1 January 2017. From this day on, it meets all the required organisational, administrative and technical criteria. The NFIU Slovakia is scheduled to achieve its Full Capability on 1 June 2017. The main tasks include supporting

NATO's collective defence in the planning process, rendering assistance to joint training and exercises, and, if needed, supporting and coordinating the Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) of Allied forces in a given region. "This, too, is another step which will contribute to strengthening the security of our country and its citizens, which is an absolute priority for us," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. The NFIU SVK is based at Vajnory Barracks. Since 1 September 2016 it has officially been under the command of the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE), based in Szczecin.

MILPOL reaches internationally



(3 January) The process of the Slovak Military Police's entry into the NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence (NATO MP COE), based in Poland's Bydgoszcz, was concluded on 20 December 2016 with a signature being appended to the Notes of Joining by the acting Chief of Staff of the NATO Allied Command Transformation, Norfolk, VA, USA. Consequently, through the Slovakian Military Police, the Slovak Republic became the 10th Sponsoring Nation (SN) of the NATO MP COE in Poland's Bydgoszcz and thereby joined the other SN countries, including Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Romania, the Netherlands, Italy, Poland and Germany, which had been active at the NATO MP COE already before. The Military Police of the SVK Ministry of Defence will be engaging in the NATO MP COE's operations through the posting of 1 officer. Maj Jozef Šoltýs is already working with the team of the Lessons Learned Branch. Being represented at the establishment allows the Military Police to gain access to MP education capacities and doctrines, as well as taking advantage of the opportunity to formulate new doctrines related to the scope of activities undertaken by the Military Police forces of all NATO countries.

Separately, the MOD hosted another two specialist conferences with the participation of international experts, including EU and NATO representatives, addressing cyber security issues and hybrid threats. On the premises of both international organisations during the SK PRES, Slovakia, too, played a part in preparing a package of measures to translate the Joint Declaration on EU-NATO cooperation into practice. The MOD also delivered two courses on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) defence for participants from the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries, and together with Serbia it conducted a workshop aimed at commanders of mechanised elements.

Over the course of our presidency, the SVK Armed Forces carried out supporting tasks for the Police Corps of the Slovak Republic in protecting public order and buildings. Additionally, they performed assistance tasks during the Bratislava Summit and the Informal Meeting of the Speakers of the EU Parliaments – Bratislava Parliamentary Summit. The security measures also involved CBRN specialists and bomb disposal officers. Members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina made a valuable contribution as well. Among other tasks was the provision of dispatchers, the coordination of minivan drivers, and other activities. In total, the SVK Armed Forces deployed over 4,500 active duty soldiers during the 6-month Slovak EU Presidency.