



Talks in Brussels

(15 June) NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg commended the SVK Armed Forces for their assistance provided so far to Ukraine, especially in the field of EOD specialists training. "I am very much grateful to you for your real help," said the NATO Secretary General at the meeting with SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, following the NATO Defence Ministers' meeting in Brussels. Minister Gajdoš presented the intention to deploy a V4 training unit to the Baltics. They discussed, among others, defence spending, the SVK MOD's modernisation plans, and further involvement of NATO troops in Afghanistan. "You can continue counting on our troops and their capabilities in Afghanistan," emphasised the Minister. He confirmed that the Slovak Republic is ready to become involved in a potential training of the Iraqi Security Forces, should such an operation come into existence under the umbrella of NATO in the future. A topic of discussion was also the building of the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU) in Slovakia. Having met the NATO Secretary General, Peter Gajdoš concluded the two-day talks at the defence ministerial in Brussels. NATO Defence Ministers also spoke of the possibilities of cooperation between NATO and the EU in countering hybrid threats, the assistance being delivered to Iraq, and the future of the Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, which should go on even beyond 2016. With the Ukrainian Minister of Defence, they discussed the progress of reforms, the defence industry, as well as further options for NATO's assistance to the reform process. The meeting of NATO Defence Ministers was dominated by measures to strengthen the Alliance's deterrence and defence on the eastern flank, which represents a joint response to the negative developments of the security environment in NATO's neighbourhood.

Minister Gajdoš introduces his priorities to SVK MOD employees in Brussels

(14 June) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš introduced the priorities for the upcoming four years to the SVK MOD employees working in Brussels with the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO and the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU. In Belgium, he participated in the meeting of NATO Defence Ministers on 14-15 June.

"What I expect from you is professionalism, subject matter expertise, and responsible work. On the other hand, I want to reassure you that if you have a problem I can help you with, you can turn to me for advice. I know many of you in person from the time I served as the Military Representative in Brussels or as a professional soldier of the SVK Armed Forces," he said.

To members of the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO, the Minister introduced the SVK MOD's priorities, arising out of the SVK Government's Manifesto Commitments. He informed them of the efforts to update the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic, as well as of the SVK MOD's ambition to update its strategic documents. In this respect, the SVK MOD will participate in updating the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic in

SVK President meets with international cyber exercise winners

(14 June) SVK President Andrej Kiska, who also acts in the capacity of Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces, received the winning team of the largest international cyber exercise Locked Shields 2016 at the Presidential Palace. Of the 26 participating countries from around the globe, the Slovak soldiers were the best. During Exercise Locked Shields 2016, teams of experts were tasked to fend off thousands of cyber attacks. The specialists practised delivering solutions to incidents, incident reporting, analysis and adequate response. "The exercise is among the largest ones with the participation of the world's best performers, and you won it. So you are the absolute champions. Thank you for making an excellent name for Slovakia," said the President. "We are rightly proud of our soldiers' success at this exercise. Their work confirmed the good name of our Armed Forces in the international environment," concluded the SVK MOD State Secretary, Marián Saloň. Earlier in April, the successful soldiers were also recognised by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš for their performance at the international military exercise Locked Shields 2016.



- On 17 June, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway Inga Magstad. Among the issues they raised during the meeting was the current security situation in Europe, the upcoming NATO Summit in Warsaw or bilateral defence cooperation. The Head of the Defence Department provided the Ambassador also with the information on the ongoing modernization projects and on Slovakia meeting its obligations and commitments made at NATO Summit in Wales.

- On 16 June, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš appointed Col GS Ing. Radoslav Ivančík, PhD, to the position of a new Director General of the Human Resources Department.

- On 17 June, a **muster ceremony** was held on the premises of the Training Battalion Martin on the occasion of welcoming the members of the SVK Armed Forces coming home from their tour of duty in the international crisis management operations. Present at the event was also State Secretary Ivan Máčovsky. Within a regular rotation, altogether 61 soldiers came home from the operations Resolute Support in Afghanistan, EUFOR-ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina and EUMM in Georgia. The State Secretary expressed his acknowledgement to them for representing Slovakia in an excellent manner. He also extended his thanks to the families and relatives of the soldiers for the support provided. The ceremony was also graced with the presence of Michael Longstaff, Defence Attaché of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It was the British Royal Air Force that provided for transportation of our troops from Afghanistan.

- On 15 June, the Presidential Palace saw the visitors eager to be there again on the occasion of the **Open Day**. They had an opportunity to see the representation premises of the Palace, the exhibition performances of the Honour Guard and the military music bands, concert of the Military Music Band Banská Bystrica, ceremonial Guard Mounting, displays of the equipment used by the Honour Guard of the President of the Slovak Republic or dynamic demonstrations of self-defence, all of that taking place in the seat of the Head of the State.

- On 9 - 12 June, the **Tactical Wing Sliac** presented two aircraft MiG-29AS at the International Air Show in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. The Air Base saw representation from 16 countries and more than 300,000 spectators. They could see the aircraft C-17A Globemaster III, C-16 Typhoon, Supermarine Spitfire, E-3A Sentry AWACS, Eurofighter Typhoon and Saab JAS-39C Gripen. Introduced for the first time in Europe was Lockheed Martin F-35A Lightning II. The visitors could see the aerobatic performance by Deputy Commander of the Tactical Wing Sliac Lt Col Martin Kuterka, flying MiG-29AS, and other dynamic demonstrations. The visitors also took great interest in static displays of the aircraft.

- Slovak troops operating in UNFICYP operation in Cyprus, won the **Military Skills Competition**, an international competition aimed at military skills. The summer round of the competition was held in Nicosia and saw participation of eight teams. The individual disciplines put to the test their fitness and physical condition, as well as their knowledge. The Slovak team was evaluated as the best one in 5 out of 9 disciplines. Even Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš expressed his satisfaction with their performance: "I am most pleased to see that when it comes to the performance of tasks and duties our troops proved to be highly responsible and well-prepared and as such they can do well in a competition in a multinational environment."

- On 8 - 10 June, the **inter-departmental workshop** of the Labour Inspection and Fire Control authorities was held, attended also by the representatives of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, the National Labour Inspectorate, Financial Administration of the Slovak Republic and the Corps of Prison and Court Guard. Its objective was to define priorities in the field of specialized labour inspection and fire control. The participants were introduced to the conditions of everyday life and training in the Tactical Wing Sliac, with a focus on the issues of health protection and work safety, as well as on control of safety of the technical devices and fire control.

M. Kostarakos on visit



(16 June) Based on invitation of Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic Gen Milan Maxim, Chair of the EU Military Committee Gen Mikhail Kostarakos made a visit to the Slovak Republic. Gen Maxim and State Secretary Máčovsky

introduced him to the structure of the SVK Armed Forces. Among the issues raised in their discussion was the EU Battle Group formed by the Visegrad countries, which will remain in the state of readiness until the end of June 2016. They also talked about a project of another battle group that should be in the state of readiness in 2019. The Chairman of the EU Military Committee was also informed of the military priorities during Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. In this respect, Gen Kostarakos expressed his commitment to strongly support the declared priorities of Slovakia with a view to our Presidency of the Council of the EU.

Congratulations to winner



(18 June) Whitewater canoeist Alexander Slafkovský from the Military Sport Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica won the World Cup, being the best in men's C1, in Pau, France. It is the second competition he has won so far out of the three rounds of the World Cup. One week ago, he won Canoe Slalom World Cup in La Seu d'Urgell, Spain. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš extended to him congratulations on telephone. "It's a shame that he cannot represent Slovakia at the summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro. I am convinced, though, that on many other occasions and sporting events we will hear a lot about him," he said.

Meeting with Ambassador



(15 June) State Secretary Ivan Máčovsky received in audience Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland Andrew John Garth. In their discussion, they raised the topical issues of bilateral cooperation and talked also about

the programme priorities of the Defence Department and preparation of the practicable plan of construction and modernization. They concurred that cooperation between our countries can be viewed, in the long term, as excellent. What Ambassador Garth appreciated in particular was increased cooperation in the field of education and training. However, he sees more room for cooperation in the field of sharing experience and lessons learned as to active reserves as well as Presidency of the Council of the EU. "We will very much appreciate Britain's willingness to share their experience in the field of active reserves," stated State Secretary Ivan Máčovsky and he highlighted the secondment of the British expert at the SVK Ministry of Defence during Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the EU.



cooperation with the SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, update the Defence Strategy of the Slovak Republic, and create a military strategy.

At the North Atlantic Council's meeting at the level of NATO Defence Ministers, the Visegrad Group countries presented their intention to deploy training units to the Baltics in 2017. Each V4 country will commit a company-sized unit, to be rotated every three months. The first to operate in Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia will be

Czech soldiers, followed by Slovak, Hungarian, and, finally, Polish troops. Commenting on this, the SVK Minister said: "On defence and protection of the Alliance's eastern flank, the V4 has adopted an important decision. It is our joint contribution to security and, at the same time, an example of outstanding regional cooperation." The North Atlantic Council's meeting was, for the first time, attended by Montenegrin Defence Minister Prof Milica Pejanović Đurišić, PhD, who was greeted also by the SVK Minister of Defence. He informed her of the SVK National Council's consent to the ratification of the Protocol on the Accession of Montenegro to NATO. As a result, the Slovak Republic became the fourth Ally to do so. The ratification of the Accession Protocol for Montenegro at the Slovak Parliament is a confirmation of our long-term foreign policy, in which the integration of the Western Balkans into the Euro-Atlantic structures is an important priority," emphasised the Minister. Apart from the official discussions, Peter Gajdoš also met with the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini to discuss the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union.