



Dukla's best sportspeople

(26 January) The Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (MSC DBB) has awarded the best 2016 sportspeople in Defence, adding more names to the MSC DBB's Hall of Fame. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš came to the awards ceremony to congratulate the sportsmen and women. In his address, he emphasised that only the best can belong to the highest echelon of sports. "And you – the members of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica – are among them. This is not to be said of the sportsmen and women only, but this also applies to coaches, doctors, physiotherapists and team support staff," said the Minister. He went on to say that the sportspeople can rest assured they can always rely on the SVK MOD's support.

Last year the MSC DBB sportsmen and women claimed 37 medals at the world's most prestigious events. Matej Tóth (race walker) became the winner of the Olympic Disciplines category. Among those nominated and awarded in this category were Juraj Tužinský (sport shooter), Marcel Lomnický (hammer thrower) Peter Gelle (canoeist), Ingrida Suchánková and Dominika Tatárová (karate fighters), and Alexander Sľafkovský, Tomáš Kučera, Ján Bábik and Michal Martikán (whitewater canoeists). Among those awarded were also our skiers Veronika Velez-Zuzulová and Petra Vlhová, and Paulína Fialková (biathlete).

Whitewater canoeist Jakub Grigar became the most successful young sports achiever. Among those nominated and awarded were also Marko Mirgorodský and Simona Maceková, both whitewater canoeists. Sport shooter Ondrej Holko and weight lifter Tomáš Romaňák, too, joined last year's successful performers. Biathlete Martin Otčenáš won the Non-Olympic Sports and Disciplines category. The other nominated and awarded sportsmen in this category included body builder Igor Kočíš and powerboat driver Marián Jung.

Matej Spišiak, Matej Tóth's coach, became the 2016 Coach of the Year in Defence. The Best Coach of Young Sports Personalities is Tomáš Mráz, the coach of our successful whitewater canoeists. The Best Military Performance category was won by judo fighter Milan Randl. Of the collectives, the mixed biathlon relay team of Paulína Fialková, Jana Gereková, Matej Kazár and Martin Otčenáš was recognised as well. The Extraordinary Contribution to Media Promotion Award went to Ivor Lehoňan, the editor of the Sports Daily.

Order of the Legion of Honour (not only) for Gen Milan Maxim

(23 January) Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim received the highest French state decoration – L'ordre national de la Légion d'honneur (National Order of the Legion of Honour) – at the French Ambassador's residence. On behalf of the President of the French Republic, the French Ambassador to Slovakia, HE Mr Christophe Léonzi, handed over the Order to the Chief of the General Staff. "General Milan Maxim, Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, has contributed to developing joint activities between France and Slovakia. France appreciates his commitment to building cooperation, peace and security in the world," he remarked. Speaking about the Légion d'honneur, Gen Maxim said: "I perceive the Order of the Legion of Honour not only as a personal recognition but, above all, as a recognition of the work achievements of all members of our Armed Forces." Gen Maxim has joined another 21 Slovaks who have so far been awarded the accolade, alongside such prominent figures of the Slovak nation as General Milan Rastislav Štefánik. At the same time, he is the 9th Slovak serviceman whose military merits have been recognised by the President of the French Republic. The National Order of the Legion of Honour was instituted in 1802 by Napoleon Bonaparte. It may be awarded to foreign nationals for their service in favour of France or for the ideals it upholds. Annually, the Légion d'honneur is awarded to approx. 400 foreign nationals.



- The key SVK Armed Forces officials' posts will be renamed with effect from 1 Feb 2017: "1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces" will change to "Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces" (SVK DCHOD), and "2nd Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces" will change to "Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces – Chief of Staff" (SVK DCHOD-COS).

- The Commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment has announced a selection process for the 5th Special Forces Regiment from among Regular soldiers. The open competitive screening will take place in the form of a concentrated unit-level training, due to take place between 3-13 Apr for the combat arms and between 3-6 Apr for the combat support arms at the 5th Special Forces Regiment base, 18 Rajecká Street, Žilina. More information is available on the SVK military's website at <http://www.mil.sk/67143/?pg=1>.

- The SVK Land Forces HQ Trenčín hosted a complex command staff rehearsal on 23-27 Jan. Brig Gen Daniel Zmeko, DCOM SVK LF, was the Officer in Command of the Exercise. The aim of the exercise was to increase the readiness of the senior staff to be assigned to the operational-planning team to handle operational planning and exercise control documentation processing. The rehearsal came part of the training activities being conducted under the Slovak Shield 2017 series.

- On 25 Jan, Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, DCOM SVK AF, opened an initial planning conference for Ex AIR SHIELD 2017. Alongside SVK AF personnel, the conference was attended by representatives of the Topographic Institute and the CIS Mobile Base. The aim of the conference was to introduce the exercise's objectives and scenario, to confirm its training tasks, and to set its specific conditions. The exercise, which builds on the continuation of Ex AIR SHIELD 2015 and Ex BLUE WAVE 2016, will be held in Apr 2017.

- Taking place at the Sereď Cemetery on 23 Jan, a service of remembrance was held in honour of the 42 SVK Armed Forces personnel who died in the Antonov An-24 crash near the village of Hejce. Among the victims was Col Štefan Ivan, a resident of Sereď, a long-time member of the Sereď-based Engineer Units, and a war veteran. Also in attendance at the ceremony were Mons František Rábek, Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, Brig Gen Juraj Krištofčík, DCOM SVK LF, and other guests. The ceremony continued with a Festive Holy Mass celebrated by Mons Rábek.

- The planning conference for the international exercise TOBRUQ LEGACY 2017 was attended by SVK AF staffers and Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra personnel on 18-20 Jan. The exercise will see the participation of 28 countries. Troops will focus on upgrading interoperability and standard operational procedures (SOPs). This most extensive NATO Ground-Based Air Defence (GBAD) exercise will be unfolding concurrently in the CZE REP, Romania and Lithuania, with sharing of all information and control exercised from one centre. As part of the exercise, the CZE REP will host a live-fire exercise involving GBAD assets from 6 NATO countries.

MP marks its anniversary

(26 January) Trenčín's Slovak National Uprising (SNU) Barracks hosted a ceremony to mark the 26th anniversary of the SVK Military Police's formation. Speaking at the occasion, Col Michal Migát, MP Director, thanked the Military Police personnel and civilian employees for their work. In his speech, the State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence, Marián Saloň, commended the work of the MP staff in support of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Selected MP members were then recognised for their achievements. At the conclusion of the ceremony, Col Migát reminded of the challenges awaiting the SVK Military Police as part of the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (MNPBAT) this year, as well as those on operations and missions such as EUNAVFOR MED SOFIA, RESOLUTE SUPPORT in Afghanistan, UNFICYP in Cyprus, and ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

St Barbara's patrol

(26 January) The National Centre EOD and CBRN Nováky has organised the first edition of a new competition for reconnaissance patrols – St Barbara's Patrol, with the aim of comparing the SVK Armed Forces components' pyrotechnical and tactical expertise. Representatives of the SVK Interior Ministry enriched the competition by demonstrating their police-specific approach, which differs from the military one. The participating three-member teams went through the competition's theoretical and practical phases. The team from the Border Control Branch, Police Corps of SVK REP Bratislava, was named the winner of the first edition of the competition, followed by the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina team and the team from the Special Purpose Unit, Police Corps of SVK REP Bratislava. The teams received accolades from Lt Col Róbert Császár, COM NC EOD and CBRN Nováky. Working in collaboration with the NC EOD and CBRN command staff, the organisers want to build a new tradition out of St Barbara's Patrol in Nováky.

MOD to support projects

(28 January) The SVK MOD is to support projects by non-profit organisations with 100,000 euros. Based in Slovakia, civic associations, foundations, interest associations of legal entities, non-investment funds and non-profit organisations offering generally beneficial services are all welcome to apply for grants no later than 31 March. To be considered for grants, the projects must be aimed at promoting the awareness of patriotism; training the SVK citizens for the defence of the SVK REP; presenting the SVK Armed Forces in public; facilitating recruitment for the SVK Armed Forces; addressing soldiers' cultural and spiritual needs; informing the public of NATO- and EU-related events; and supporting sporting talents and top sports performers. The projects may also be focused on developing the military's historical and cultural heritage, with emphasis on military history. The minimum amount of a grant is €500, with the maximum amount at €50,000. More information is available on the MOD website at <http://www.mosr.sk/20263/ziadosti-odotacie/>.

The seat of NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia inaugurated at Vajnory Barracks



(24 January) Bratislava's Vajnory Barracks hosted the inauguration ceremony for the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK). The Slovak Republic has thus delivered on its

commitment which it pledged at the NATO Wales Summit and which it reiterated on submitting a request for the establishment of the NFIU in Slovakia at the NATO defence ministers' meeting in Brussels in February 2015. The stand-up of the NFIU has also been endorsed by the National Council of the Slovak Republic. The NATO Force Integration Unit will assist Allies in working more efficiently towards their goal: to keep the populations of NATO Member States safe. Alongside SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, the opening ceremony was attended by the NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Ambassador Tacan Ildem, the Depu-

ty Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, Lieutenant General Steven M. Shepro, and the Commander of NATO's Joint Force Command Brunssum, General Salvatore Farina.

In his statement at the inauguration ceremony, the head of the SVK MOD reminded that the concept of setting up NATO Force Integration Units is integral to the Readiness Action Plan (RAP), which the Alliance approved in response to the changing security environment on NATO's borders. "We have perceived this organisational element as a contribution to national and collective defence in light of the security developments that have been going on since the NATO Wales Summit," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, while noting that the primary task of the NFIU is, if needed, to ensure NATO forces' smooth deployment across the territory of the Alliance's eastern flank. At the same time, he stressed that in no way is the NFIU, as is often misinterpreted, a NATO base.

During his address, Ambassador Tacan Ildem, NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, took the opportunity to thank, on behalf of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, the Slovak government and citizens for their support. "It's the notion of 'one for all and all for one' that has kept NATO strong, our citizens safe, and our countries at peace for nearly 70 years," he remarked.

He stressed that NATO has always been, and will always be a defensive alliance, and that NATO forces do not pose a threat to any country. "Our goal is to prevent conflict, not to provoke conflict," he emphasised.

In his speech, General Salvatore Farina, Commander Joint Force Command Brunssum, highlighted the importance of Slovakia's strategic location and reminded that the NFIUs are now present in 8 countries: Slovakia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. The main task of the NFIU Slovakia is to support NATO's collective defence in the planning process, to provide assistance in joint training and exercises, and if needed, to coordinate the reception, staging and onward movement (RSOM) of Allied forces in the region.

The Slovak NFIU will be staffed by 41 service personnel, of whom 21 positions have been allocated for Slovakia and 20 positions for international staff from NATO Member States. The NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia reached Initial Operational Capability (IOC) on 1 January 2017. In practice, this means since then it has operated in compliance with all the organisational, administrative and technical requirements. The NFIU SVK is due to achieve Full Operational Capability (FOC) on 1 June 2017.