



Challenge and opportunity

(1 July) At the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, the solemn ceremony with full military honours was held on the occasion of Slovakia assuming Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Minister Peter Gajdoš introduced the Defence Department's priorities to professional soldiers and employees and informed of the level of preparedness to meet the same. "I am convinced that the Department of Defence is well-prepared to meet the tasks following from Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Our ambitions reach far beyond just that, though. Holding the Presidency will require enhanced effort and dedication to ensure accomplishment of all the related tasks, which is a prerequisite to a successful course of our Presidency," he said.

What can be viewed as a major challenge is organization of events and activities linked with our Presidency, both in Slovakia and in Brussels, as well as a more intense engagement in development of the EU agenda, to include a flexible approach to the unscheduled themes and a pro-active presentation of the European themes home and abroad.

"In the Defence Department, we have had experience with organizing big events. However, the Presidency of the Council of the European Union is not just a one shot event; it is a continuous responsibility for the series of events to be held within the period of six months. It is an unprecedented experience in nature, and a unique opportunity for the Slovak Republic and its Department of Defence," accentuated the Minister of Defence.

The preparations for the Presidency in the EU Council stemmed from the priorities that had been defined yet back in 2014 and stipulated in the national programme of the Presidency. "In the months to come, we will significantly contribute to the implementation of the Presidency also on the national level. We will provide for transportation of the ministerial delegations and we will implement the security measures during the top-level negotiations. Equally, we will participate in preparations for certain events organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," highlighted the Head of the Defence Department.

The SVK Armed Forces will also earmark up to 200 soldiers for the SVK Police Corps for the period of Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Furthermore, there are soldiers earmarked for the positions of drivers to provide transportation of delegations. Military Police will perform the tasks of the VIPs protection and many other.

One thousand troops participate in LIVE SHIELD 2016

(1 July) In the period from 6 June to 1 July, the 11th mechanized battalion group, which had been declared as the SVK Armed Forces' contribution to the NATO very high readiness force, underwent intensive training in the Training Area of the Military District Lešť. Part of the training cycle was the battalion's tactical exercise LIVE SHIELD 2016 held from 21 to 24 June. From 27 – 30 June, it was followed by the national certification of the mechanized battalion group in accordance with NATO standards. Nearly one thousand professional soldiers with 330 pcs of the tracked and wheeled equipment and 2.700 weapons continuously performed their tasks during the three-month deployment. The battalion's tactical exercise LIVE SHIELD 2016 was a conclusion of the six-month series of exercises dubbed LITTLE SHIELD 2016. Its aim was to accomplish the required tactical tasks in accordance with NATO standards and to confirm and demonstrate the 11th mechanized battalion group's combat readiness to operate within the NATO very high readiness joint task force under the



Soldiers to augment SVK Police Corps during SVK Presidency of EU Council

(30 June) SVK Armed Forces earmarked up to 200 soldiers for the SVK Police Corps for the period of Slovakia's Presidency of the Council of the EU. These will be available to Police to ensure that the security requirements will be met before and after the events held within the framework of our Presidency, should the security situation require such augmentation. Such arrangement will be subject to mutual agreement of the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Defence. The foregoing was endorsed by the SVK Government on Wednesday.

"The earmarked soldiers will perform the tasks following from the current requirements of the SVK Police Corps. Furthermore, there are soldiers earmarked for the positions of drivers to provide for transportation of delegations. Military Police will perform the tasks of the VIPs protection and many other. We view the issue of Slovakia's Presidency as a top responsibility and a top priority for the upcoming six months," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

Up to 50 members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment will augment the Special Purpose Unit of the Presidium of the SVK Police Force to perform the tasks of protecting the selected installations and counterterrorism tasks. The other soldiers, up to 150, will be deployed to secure the state borders, to protect the other guarded installations, to enforce public order, to fight terrorism and organized crime, etc.



As of 1 July 2016, based upon instruction from the Chief of the Service Office at the SVK MOD, a new logo of the SVK MOD comes into effect. In using the new logo, it is necessary to proceed in compliance with the design manual which provides guidance for full implementation of the SVK MOD's joint visual identity and sets out the rules for the logo's application. The logo design manual with its respective annexes in digital format is available at the MOD's intranet website under the Economic Management's Publishing Activities Division.

- On 1 July, Minister Peter Gajdoš, along with other members of the SVK Government led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, participated in a meeting with the European Union's College of Commissioners to mark the beginning of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. They also held talks in a close circle with the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini. The meeting was followed by a ceremonial lunch.

- SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš spoke by telephone with his Hungarian counterpart István Simicskó to express his sincere condolences for the deaths of Hungarian Armed Forces ammunition technicians. At the same time, he sent a letter of condolence to him. The tragic incident probably occurred during a mine disposal operation in the Hortobágy National Park, located in eastern Hungary.

- The Visegrad 4 EU Battle Group (V4 EU BG) successfully concluded its half-year stand-by alert status last week. Assigned to the V4 EU BG were SVK, CZ, HUN, and POL soldiers who, in the period from 1 January to 30 June 2016, were on stand-by for possible response to potential crisis situations. Towards this end, the Slovak Republic had assigned a total of 560 troops to the V4 EU BG, including a Mechanised Company, a CBRN Company, a Transportation Company, an EOD team, Military Police teams, as well as ROLE 1 and ROLE 2 Mobile Medical Units.

- Col Ján Marek finished his assignment as Commander of Bratislava Garrison Headquarters on 30 June. On this occasion, the Military Facility Bratislava-Vajnory hosted a command handover ceremony with the participation of the 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, Maj Gen Pavel Macko. Col Ján Marek will assume the duties of Deputy Commander of the Strategic Crisis Management Centre at the SVK MOD.

- The last weekend of June saw a ceremony in Darney, France, marking the 97th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Regiment flag handover by the then President of France, Mr Raymond Poincaré. The SVK MOD was represented at the event by the 2nd Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, Brig Gen Jindřich Joch. The ceremony was also attended by the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to France, His Excellency Mr Marek Eštok, the Defence Attaché of the Slovak Republic to France, Col Peter Knáň, and members of the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour and the Army Band Banská Bystrica, as well as others.

- As of 1 July 2016, Col Milan Hamar, PhD, took up the appointment of Director General of the Control Department at the SVK MOD.

- The commandant of the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy, Command Sergeant Major Richard Fabricius bid his farewell to the co-founder of the Non-Commissioned Officers Academy, MSgt Attila Mező. To recognise his outstanding long-term results in discharging his duties, the commander of the Training Battalion Martin had his name entered in the Chronicle of the Unit as a disciplinary reward. As of 1 July 2016, MSgt Mező was assigned to the Organisation Section of the Planning and Coordination Division operating under the Training Centre Lešť Directorate.

Concert for SVK EU PRES

(28 June) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and SVK MOD State Secretary Ivan Mačovský participated in a concert by the Staff Band of the Bundeswehr, based in Berlin, which was organised by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bratislava. The concert was held on Main Square in Bratislava to mark the upcoming Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

"I highly appreciate this gesture of support by our German partners. Having done so, they expressed their backing to us, which I value very much," said the head of the SVK MOD.

According to the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr Thomas Götz, by putting on a musical performance, Germany wanted to convey how important the unity of Europe is. "I would like to wish much luck and success to Slovakia for the upcoming six months," he said. He went on to remind that, in a few hours, the Slovak Republic would be the centrepiece and centre of events for the whole of European politics.

Minister visits Tank Days

(2 July) On Saturday, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited Tank Days Laugaricio – an open day event with the SVK Armed Forces in Trenčianske Stankovce. On this occasion, he apologised to the local residents for the inconvenience caused to them by an emergency landing of an Mi-17 military helicopter, which had collided with the power lines a day earlier. He also visited the site where the power lines had been brought down. In this respect, he kindly asked the mayor of the municipality to pass on his apologies to all residents, and thanked the employees of the regional electric utility for their response and the policemen for controlling the flow of traffic in the area. Speaking about Tank Days Laugaricio, he emphasised that the SVK MOD is working to give pupils and students the opportunity to attend open day events across military units and garrisons. The aim is to enable them to try out basic military service skills and familiarise them with the job of professional soldiers. As part of the 4th Tank Days Laugaricio event, the SVK Armed Forces showcased today's defence trends and equipment by staging static displays and dynamic demonstrations.



Slovenians on training

(1 July) The CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostolany hosted a training of 22 Slovenian Armed Forces specialists with real toxic chemical substances the last week of June. Under the training programme, they improved their knowledge in the field of toxic chemicals detection and decontamination, deepened their psychological resistance in demanding situations, and strengthened their confidence in individual CBRN protective equipment and in the performance parameters of detection and decontamination systems and materiel.

Training by dog handlers

(1 July) Krpáčovo, Brezno and Osrblie hosted a national cooperation training event from 27 June to 1 July for Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers and MWDs drawn from armed components and the Military Police. The training event was attended by representatives of the SVK MOD, the Interior Ministry, the Justice Ministry, and the Czech Military Police, bringing together a total of 56 MWD handlers and 70 MWDs. The MWDs were divided into three groups, depending on their specialisation: all-purpose dogs (patrol, sentry, multipurpose, defensive); poisonous and psychotropic substances detecting dogs; and explosives search dogs. Aided by them, MWD handlers conducted a variety of tasks in different types of environments. The participants benefited from an exchange of expertise, the participation of helpers, and the use of sample materiel for specialised missions. Among the MWD handlers were also several female dog handlers.