



NATO Summit in Warsaw

(9 July) Slovak soldiers will continue to operate in Afghanistan even beyond 2016. This was confirmed by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš after the working sessions at the NATO Warsaw Summit. For NATO's Resolute Support Mission, Slovakia has an approved mandate to deploy up to 66 service personnel. As the Minister went on to explain, today the situation in Afghanistan does not allow soldiers to leave the country. At the summit, Slovakia also affirmed that it will contribute financial resources to the sustenance of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces.

The Visegrad 4 countries will deploy joint training units to the Baltics in 2017. The units will take turns on a rotational basis every 3 months, whereas each country is to contribute a 150-strong unit. This is meant to be a joint V4 contribution to bolstering the Alliance's presence alongside NATO's eastern border. Under the initiative, Slovak soldiers will be operationally assigned to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia from April to June.

"When it comes to the training mission, this is an exemplary demonstration of the Visegrad 4 countries' cooperation. Besides this, we reiterated that we will meet our commitments unreservedly as pledged at the Wales Summit," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš after the final working session, and noted that the defence budget will be increased to 1.16 per cent of GDP in 2017. Joint NATO and EU exercises was a topic discussed at the summit as well.

According to SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska, the NATO Summit is a contribution to the reinforcement of security and peace. "It is about all NATO members conveying their mutual reassurances that they are ready to deliver on their commitments," he emphasised. As he further mentioned, topics of discussion included the developments in Iraq, Syria, NATO's further engagement in Afghanistan, as well as migration and assistance to Ukraine.

SVK Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajčák reminded that the summit was unique insofar as Montenegro participated in it for the first time. He stressed that a Joint Declaration outlining concrete areas of cooperation was signed between the European Union and NATO shortly before the beginning of the Warsaw Summit. In this regard, he separately underscored the joint EU-NATO commitment to intensifying their cooperation in the field of migration in the Mediterranean Sea.

While in Warsaw, Peter Gajdoš met with United Kingdom Defence Secretary Michael Fallon. They discussed Brexit and the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. "We also talked about the visit of the United Kingdom Minister for Reserves to Slovakia, which is planned for this summer. I am convinced that in the field of the Active Reserve (i.e. Army Reserve) we can draw a lot of expertise from the UK," said Minister Gajdoš. British Defence Secretary Fallon assured Peter Gajdoš that Brexit will have no impact on the commitments of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland vis-à-vis the North Atlantic Alliance.

On the margins of the summit, Minister Gajdoš met with German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen and thanked her for Germany's support to the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. As part of unofficial talks on topics of current relevance, Peter Gajdoš also met with Macedonian Defence Minister Zoran Jolevski and Serbian Defence Minister Zoran Djordjevic.

Public debate on proposal of updated White Paper on Defence of Slovak Republic

(7 July) The Ministry of Defence is fulfilling its pledge from the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments to intensify its communications with the public even via cooperation with non-governmental organisations and the professional experts' community. Towards this end, on Thursday, 7 July, it introduced a draft proposal of the updated White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic to the Slovak NGO community. Among those invited to attend the working session on the introduction of the draft document with follow-up informal discussions were two former State Secretaries of the SVK Ministry of Defence and two former Chiefs of Defence who had served the previous two terms of office, as well as representatives of the Security and Defence Industry Association of the Slovak Republic. The draft document had also been submitted to the members of the SVK Parliament's Defence and Security Committee, along with an invitation to attend the event. In the interest of ensuring continuities in defence policy, the draft document had, as well, been delivered to two former defence ministers who had served the previous two terms of office. The Ministry of Defence put the document to public debate still before releasing it for the interdepartmental review process. The document is expected to be tabled for consideration by the SVK Government by the end of July. Formulated in today's fundamentally changed security environment, the draft proposal of the updated White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic highlights the Slovak Republic's primary responsibility for the delivery of its own security and comprehensive approach to defence and to the development of the State's defence system, and places particular emphasis on increasing the readiness of the SVK Armed Forces. In the field of modernisation, the priorities have been re-set, and so has the order of armaments projects in favour of heavier armaments and equipment, featuring higher levels of resistance and firepower capabilities.



- On 6 July, 1st Deputy ChD Maj Gen Pavel Macko received in audience Defence Attaché (on a non-resident basis) of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Slovakia Lt Col Jan Willem de Wolf. On the same day, he bid farewell to Lt Col Goran Jeremic, the outgoing Defence Attaché of the Republic of Serbia to the Slovak Republic.

- On 4 July, the workshop aimed at preparations for the exercise **New Horizon 2016** was held on the premises of the 13th mechanized battalion based in Levice. Its focus was on preparations to perform the assistance tasks of the SVK Land Forces units to help and support the Police Corps, Firefighting and Rescue Corps and the SVK Red Cross in implementing the measures to be taken during the state of war. Later on, nearly 40 participants moved to the tank infantry firing range in Devičany, where the individual components will, on 13 – 14 July, within the framework of the exercise, present their respective activities.

- On 7 July, SVK Land Forces Commander Maj Gen Ondrej Novosad approved the exercise **New Horizon 2016** – related documentation. It stems from the exercise held in the past year and its focus is on the assistance tasks in response to a non-military threat. The units and formations of the Land Forces, Air Force, Surgeon General Office and Military Police will take part in the exercise, along with the District Office Levice, Police Corps, Firefighting and Rescue Corps and the SVK Red Cross.

- On 4 July, cadets from the **US Reserve Officers' Training Centre** made a visit to the Dukla barracks. They were introduced to the role and tasks of the unit and saw a display of the equipment and armaments of the Honour Guard of the President of the Slovak Republic. As part of the programme, a musical performance of Sgt Ondrej Slávik was put on, and a demonstration of non-traditional combat techniques with a weapon and self-defence techniques was held.

- On 4 July, a ceremonial muster was held on the occasion of the **14th anniversary of the establishment of the engineering battalion** in Sereď garrison. On this occasion, Deputy Commander of the battalion Maj Jozef Kasl welcomed 46 young sappers – participants of the Engineering Camp 2016 – and nine recent graduates of the SVK Armed Forces Academy. The muster ceremony was concluded by a military parade.

- On Monday, 4 July, on the premises of the military area Bratislava – Vajnory, in the presence of the 1st Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Maj Gen Pavel Macko, Col Ján Marek handed over the **command of Bratislava garrison** to Col Igor Jančovič. Maj Gen Macko extended his acknowledgement to Col Marek and expressed his belief that the newly appointed commander will build on success achieved so far.

- For more than ten years, the SVK Armed Forces have cooperated with the SVK association whose aim is the care for the German war graves. On 6 July, on the initiative of the latter, 20 professional soldiers from the 21st combined mechanized battalion Trebišov and 17 German soldiers met together to carry out **voluntary works** at the Dukla Memorial. Equipped with chain saws, axes and spades they volunteered their time to beautify the appearance of the cemetery and improve the condition of a nearby forest track leading from the Memorial to the observation tower.

- Lt Col Dušan Michálek handed over his **position of Levice – based 13th mechanized battalion Commander** to Lt Col Nikola Viena, who thereby assumed the command of the battalion. On the occasion of his retirement as a professional soldier, Lt Col Michálek was awarded the Commemorative Medal of Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces for his contribution to the development of the Armed Forces.

Ceremonial muster in Trebišov

(6 July) On the premises of the 21st combined mechanized battalion in Trebišov, in the presence of State Secretary Ivan Máčovič, a ceremonial muster was held on the occasion of the end of stand-by of the V4 EU Battle Group. The SVK Armed Forces, together with their partners from the V4 countries, had been on stand-by from 1 January until 30 June 2016, ready to be deployed within the distance of 6 thousand kilometres of Brussels, as required. The Slovak Republic made a contribution of 560 troops to the V4 EU Battle Group.

Newly graduated officers

(8 July) In the presence of State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Marián Saloň, the passing out ceremony and the graduation ceremony were held for the graduates of the bachelor studies of the Milan Rastislav Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš. Altogether 63 newly graduated lieutenants have completed their three years of study. The passing out ceremony was also graced with the presence of Jozef Hudák, Head of the Service Office of the SVK MOD, Rudolf Urbanovič, State Secretary of the Ministry of Interior and the other representatives of the Department of Defence and Armed Forces, as well as the representatives of the academia and public life.

Slovak Warthog 2016

(4 July) The Slovak troops along with the members of the Indiana National Guard train together, within the framework of the exercise **Slovak Warthog 2016**. The focus of the exercise is on the joint flight activities. The members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina and the members of the Indiana National Guard will be guiding the Slovak L-39 aircraft and the US A-10C Thunderbolt to the ground targets. The exercise will be held from 6 July to 2 August at the airport Sliac and in the Training Centre Lešť.

EU Military Committee

(6 July) In the presence of Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim, the opening ceremony of the EU Military Committee was held in Brussels to mark the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Among the invited guests was Gen Mikhail Kostarakos, Chairman of the EU Military Committee, and Gen Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee. Gen Maxim introduced Slovakia's priorities, namely enhancing security and stability and strengthening cooperation with NATO and Partners. He also advised the present guests of the whole range of activities scheduled for the period of Slovakia's Presidency 2016. Two days later, Head of the Office of Military Representative to the Military Committee Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian attended the first session of the EUMC held on the premises of the Council of the European Union during Slovakia's Presidency. He introduced Partners to the programme and main goals of Slovakia's Presidency and invited the military representatives to the away day meeting of the EUMC to be held in the beginning of October in Bratislava.

Martin hosts training for first voluntary soldiers

(6 July) The Training Battalion Martin launched training for the first batch of voluntary soldiers. The training will last until 30 September

2016. Under this pilot project, 37 volunteers, of whom 13 are women, will undergo basic military training with follow-on specialised training. A total of 129 candidates initially applied for the voluntary military training (VMT) project, however, some of them failed either medical requirements or psychological tests, or were rejected on administrative grounds.

"For sure we would be happy if there were more candidates for voluntary military training, however, this is a pilot project and we need to give it a chance. In the future we want to see voluntary military training to be one of the sources of the Active Reserve (i.e. Army Reserve), and Reserves as such. Upon completion of the first voluntary soldiers' training, we will determine further steps and adopt measures so as to make this form of military service more attractive to young people. We cannot rule out

changes in legislation to deliver the right systemic solution," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.



"Apart from the VMT soldiers being trained in basic combat skills, there are obvious merits of voluntary military service in shaping the moral values of individuals – discipline, teamwork development, stress and demanding situations management. Through specialised training, the VMT soldier acquires specific knowledge, habits and skills necessary in performance of the tasks typically undertaken by the SVK Armed Forces," accentuated Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim. As part of the first 9-week training stage, the VMT graduate will gain knowledge of and skills

in tactics, firing personal weapons, orienteering in terrain, medical and topographic training. During the 3-week-long specialised training, they will acquire expertise in one of the four Military Occupational Specialties (MOs): marksman, engineer, decontamination specialist, and signaller.