



Conference reviews 2016

(16 March) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš participated in the Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic for 2016. Slovak President Andrej Kiska and Prime Minister Robert Fico delivered their statements at the event too. Slovak President Kiska noted that Slovakia's foreign policy along with its prosperity and security have, in the long term, been anchored in our EU and NATO membership. "Without the two pillars Slovakia would not be a successful country, as we know it. These are the pillars that cannot fall victim to any political interests and ambitions," he emphasised. According to him, it is inevitable for our security and Slovakia's trustworthiness to prove that we care no less than our Allies about collective defence.

Prime Minister Robert Fico named the historically first Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union as last year's most important event. In his statement, he pointed to the fragility of international relations. "I wish to see the year 2017 to be the year of the comeback for the spirit of cooperation and dialogue in international relations, and Slovakia to be at the core of making decisions in furthering common values and interests in Europe and to approach global challenges in the world actively," he said. He also took the opportunity to thank Slovak soldiers for their work on operations and missions abroad and for earning a good name for Slovakia.

The already 17th edition of the Review Conference on the Foreign and European Policy of the Slovak Republic was organised by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. A panel discussion was dedicated to the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the EU's future. During a second panel, on which State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic Róbert Ondrejcsák and State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic Lukáš Parížek appeared as well, subject matter specialists paid attention to current security challenges and the drafting of the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic.

Minister Gajdoš holds talks with Ukrainian Ambassador Y. Mushka

(14 March) At the Ministry of Defence, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met for talks with the Ukrainian Ambassador to the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr Yuri Mushka, who has held his Diplomatic Service appointment in Slovakia since February 2017. The current security situation in Ukraine and further continuity of bilateral cooperation on several projects were on the agenda.

The Head of the SVK MOD noted that Slovakia took over the role of the Lead Nation for the NATO Trust Fund for Ukraine in the area of EOD/C-IED at the NATO Summit in Warsaw. Addressing the flashpoints in Ukraine, the Minister underscored that he considers the situation in East Ukraine and Crimea to be a serious violation of the security environment.

On cooperation with Ukraine, he highlighted the joint engagement of SVK and UKR troops in UNFICYP, the TISA engineering project, Ukraine's participation in the EU V4 Battlegroup last year, as well as its planned involvement in the EU V4 BG 2019. The Ukrainian Ambassador conveyed his appreciation for mutual cooperation and Slovakia's concrete steps towards aiding their country.



- Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces Gen Milan Maxim visited 13th Mech Bn Levice on 15 Mar to inspect the readiness of the unit to be deployed to the Baltics for three months under the initiative of the V4 countries, which are deploying their training units to the Baltic States on a rotational basis this year. He expressed his encouragement to everyone and wished them much success in performing their duties in Latvia.

- An **autonomous staff rehearsal** involving the units declared for participation in NATO LRF NC 2013 – Mech Bde got underway at Mech Bde Prešov on 14 Mar. The aim of the rehearsal was to ensure the coordination of the service personnel to be assigned to NC 2013 – Mech Bde HQ and Staff; to practise and improve NC 2013 – Mech Bde HQ and Staff's ability to plan operations; and to go ahead with the planning process for Exercise Slovak Shield 2017. The rehearsal, which lasted until 16 Mar, tested the brigade's material and technical support capabilities as well.

- On 13 Mar, the Bratislava Garrison Club hosted a ceremonial vernissage of the travelling exhibition titled **Jan Žižka – Pola Partisan Brigade in the Slovak National Uprising 1944-45**. The engaging presentation captured the interest of the audiences thanks to Ján Holička, a co-organiser of the event, from the Regional Committee of the Slovak Anti-Nazi Fighters' Association Trenčín. The exhibition will be open until 30 May.

- State Secretary **Róbert Ondrejcsák** paid a visit to the Repairs Battalion in Martin on 15 Mar. He familiarised himself with its tasks, mission and structure, viewed the demonstrations of the mobile repair workshop assets and military repair activity. Inside a repair hall, he learned about repair tools and how the overall system of regular repairs works.

- The International **Exercise Toxic Lance TOLE 2017**, bringing together CBRN troops from the Slovak, Czech and US Armed Forces, was launched at the CBRND Training and Testing Centre on 13 Mar. A total of 160 troops with 50 pieces of equipment made up an international company-sized task force. Their readiness and coordination was tested in a range of missions, including survey of grounds, toxic chemical substances detection and identification, extraction of injured personnel, equipment and personnel decontamination. The exercise, held under the auspices of the SVK Land Forces, continued on the grounds of the National Centre EOD and CBRND until 18 Mar, however, more extensive and tactically more demanding talks are being tested on Lešť Training Area well until 24 Mar.

- Trenčín's M-Sports Hall hosted the **7th Annual SVK Armed Forces Floorball Championships** on 16-17 Mar. The competition was organised by the SVK Land Forces HQ Trenčín in collaboration with the Command Support Battalion Trenčín. It was attended by 20 teams. After the elimination matches, the Combined Team Trenčín and the MOKIS Base Team Ružomberok fought their way to the finals, with the latter team coming out victorious. The winners received medals and took over the trophy and challenge cup from the hands of Brig Gen Juraj Krištofič, Commander SVK Land Forces. The combined team of the SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office and AOS Liptovský Mikuláš placed third.

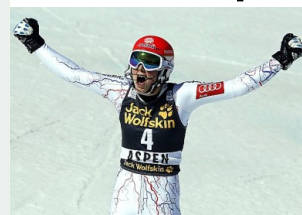
- On 14-16 Mar, a **first aid course**, aimed at delivering first aid, practical rehearsals of bandaging techniques and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), was held at the Liptovský Mikuláš-based Detached Workstation operating under the Training, Education and Specialised Preparation Section, Specialized Medical Activities and Training Division, Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Ružomberok. On 14-15 Mar 2017, the facility also hosted a **CPR course**, aimed at SVK Armed Forces medical staff.

Live firings in Poland



(18 March) Military pilots from Sliach Air Base and members of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra will once again practise live firings in Poland. They are now gearing up for the tactical exercise BALT 2017. As part of the exercise, which will take place on Ustka Training Area in May, they will practise attacking and destroying targets over the Baltic Sea. The live fire exercise will see MiG-29 pilots of the "Major General Otto Smik" Tactical Wing Sliach employed in their role in Phase 1 of the exercise, dubbed Ex Missile I. They will be succeeded in Phase 2 of the exercise, codenamed Ex Missile II, by Nitra-based 2K12 KUB Air Defence System operators. For members of the SVK Air Force and Ground-Based Air Defence (GBAD), live firings are the most important form of training thanks to which they can improve their skills and readiness and test the coordination of their units and systems.

Vlhová's triumph in slalom



(18 March) Petra Vlhová, of the Military Sports Club Dukla Banská Bystrica, triumphed in the women's slalom race at the Alpine Skiing World Cup Finals in Aspen, USA. Veronika Velez – Zuzulová achieved an excellent fourth place and made her fans happy with her decision to stay and compete next season. "We could not have wished for a better finale of the races. I extend my congratulations to both ladies, I am proud that they are part of the Dukla Military Sports Club, and I want to thank them for their brilliant representation during the entire season. Today Petra Vlhová proved the impossible was possible and I am sincerely glad that Veronika has decided to stay," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

Complex staff rehearsal



(13 March) A four-day complex staff rehearsal was launched on the premises of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff. Its opening ceremony was attended by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff Gen Milan Maxim. The aim of the complex rehearsal, which is the first activity of its kind to take place at the strategic level, is to set and align, under the leadership of EXDIR Lt Gen Pavel Macko, the internal processes within the operational planning of the General Staff and its components; to align the processes and coordination links with subordinate forces and MOD elements; and to set the reciprocal processes and coordination links with the NFUI SVK and to create the conditions for its certification.

Boosting morale before mission



(15 March) 82 Slovak service personnel flew out of Sliach Air Base to Cyprus as part of the 33rd rotation in UNFICYP. In spite of an early morning flight, the soldiers' families came to the airport to say good-bye to their loved ones before their year-long deployment abroad. "The flight with a stopover at Budapest Airport, where we picked up Hungarian and Serbian soldiers, went off smoothly and the entire troop rotation arrived in UNFICYP safely," reported Lt Col Andrej Čučvara, the movement control chief officer, upon landing. After the touchdown, the SVK service personnel, led by Lt Col Rudolf Eštok, SLOVCON Commander, and Lt Col Peter Kovács, Commander of the Control Group at the SVK Armed Forces General Staff, took over vehicles, equipment and positions, as well as familiarising themselves with the area of responsibility.

5th Special Forces Regiment takes stock of results

(13 March) A meeting, with the participation of Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, to assess the overall performance of the 5th Special Forces Regiment's tasks in the Training Year (TY) 2016 took place in Žilina on Monday, 13 March.

Col Miroslav Gardlo, Commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, briefed the regimental members on the key points of the Chief of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff's Convention of Commanders.

The assessment of TY16 was delivered by the former Commander of the 5th Special Forces Regiment, Col Lubomír Šebo, who currently acts as Chief of the Special Forces Branch at the SVK Armed Forces General Staff.

Speaking on this occasion, Chief of the General Staff Gen Milan Maxim said: "Never ever have I heard that a member of the 5th Special Forces Regiment has not accomplished a task. On the contrary, I can hear NATO partners and our Interior Ministry partners speak only in superlatives about you. And their words of thanks are not a matter of diplomatic courtesy, but one can feel recognition and respect for your work in them."

At the conclusion of the TY16 assessment, the best 5th Special Forces Regiment soldiers were awarded in the NCO and Other Ranks categories.

