



Minister introduces amendment

(22 March) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš introduced, at first reading, the Voluntary Military Training Amendment Act in the plenary of the Slovak Parliament. Under the new arrangements, the financial incentive for voluntary soldiers should increase by 200 euros, the length of the training will be shortened from 12 to 11 weeks, and successful graduates will have easier access to enter the Armed Forces, Police Corps and Fire and Rescue Services. These changes follow from an analysis of the VMT pilot project, which also incorporates assessment feedback from the first batch of successful VMT graduates.

The MOD seeks to increase the quality of the project as much as possible and to train the next batch of voluntary soldiers under better conditions. The MOD plans to go ahead with the training of additional voluntary soldiers immediately once the Amendment Act comes into force, with the estimated effective date of 1 July 2017. Annually, the MOD wants to train up to 150 voluntary soldiers.

The Voluntary Military Training project is aimed at people who want to undertake military training and gain basic expertise and skills that are essential to the performance of tasks across the SVK Armed Forces and crisis management operations. As part of the training scheme, the graduates will have acquired basic soldiering expertise and skills such as military tactics, personal weapon handling and firing, orienteering in the field, medical and topographical training. Additionally, they will have achieved greater physical and psychological resilience, self-discipline and the ability to better deal with stressful and challenging situations. During the specialist training phase, they will have developed knowledge of their chosen trades as a marksman, engineer, decontaminator and signaller.

MOD to construct a memorial

(26 March) Working in conjunction with the Liptovský Mikuláš city authorities, the MOD wants to build a memorial dedicated to the memory of the soldiers who have died on missions and operations abroad in the contemporary history of the SVK Armed Forces. The involved parties have confirmed this intent by signing a Memorandum of Cooperation.

The memorial, to be built on Hill Háj-Nicovô at Liptovský Mikuláš, will bear the names of the 57 soldiers who served tours of duty in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Eritrea and Cyprus, but never returned home. For this purpose, a formal place of commemoration is missing in Slovakia and the MOD sees its construction as a way of paying its respects to those Servicemen and women who have helped people in need even beyond Slovakia's borders and contributed to the sustenance of peace.

In the joint Memorandum, the city authorities have committed themselves to settling the legal land ownership issues, hiring or purchasing the piece of land for a symbolic price, designing the project documentation, and obtaining the building permit. The MOD will provide funding for the construction and operation of the memorial and it is planning to allot €30,000 for this purpose.

These days a commission involving representatives of the MOD's organisational elements, the Military Institute of History and the Liptovský Mikuláš city authorities is now being formed. Its task will be to come up with a central theme for the memorial and to delve into its particular location, design proposal and historic background. The memorial will be unveiled during a ceremony next year.

Change of Commander SVK Land Forces

(24 March) The parade ground of SNP Barracks in Trenčín saw the Commander SVK Land Forces change of command ceremony with the participation of CHOD Gen Milan Maxim, DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko, Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Corps Mons František Rábek, representatives of the Military Diplomatic Corps accredited to Slovakia, Mayor of Trenčín Richard Rybníček, and other guests. The outgoing Commander SVK Land Forces, Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad, will assume the appointment of Military Representative to the NATO Military Committee with effect from 1 April. Gen Maxim expressed his appreciation for the work done by Maj Gen Novosad in his appointment as COM SVK LF since September 2012 and wished him much success in his new posting. Maj Gen Novosad has extensive international experience as DCOM SVK Engineer Battalion in UN-led UNTAES in East Slavonia, COM SLOVCON in KFOR in Kosovo, and COM SLOVCON in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, who has until recently served as DCHOD, will succeed Maj Gen Novosad as COM SVK LF. Also in attendance at the COM SVK LF change of command ceremony were representatives of all SVK LF units and facilities, former COMs SVK LF, members of the SVK Generals' Club, and other guests.



- State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Róbert Ondrejcsák welcomed the soldiers returning from their tour of duty in **UNFICYP, Cyprus** during a homecoming ceremony held on 23 Mar at the Maj Gen Otto Smik Tactical Wing. A total of 80 SVK Armed Forces servicemen and women received the Medals for Service in Peace and Observer Missions.

- To culminate Phase 3 of the **preparations for a live fire exercise Missile II**, to be held in the Republic of Poland, selected combat crews of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra underwent a training for the 2K12 KUB command and guidance radar (CGR) operators using real military targets. The CGR commanders and operators honed and solidified their skills in detecting and tracking air targets and in an activity in response to the flying platform's manoeuvre of releasing a target as part of a combat mission that imitated the realistic conditions of launching an air target during a live fire exercise. The training accomplished the objective of Stage III training and confirmed the readiness of the operators and combat crews. The realistic air targets were provided by L-39 aircraft from the 2nd Flight of the Tactical Wing Sliač.

- The SVK Air Force's HQ Air Command held the **Main Planning Conference on Exercise Air Shield 2017**. The Deputy Commander SVK Air Force, Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, welcomed the participants from the exercising SVK Air Force and Land Forces units and members of the 5th Special Forces Regiment and the Topographical Institute. The Chief of the SVK Air Force Planning, Use and Development Branch, Col Peter Baliak, briefed the conference participants on the programme, objectives and intent of the main planning conference. The aim of the conference was to finish work on the exercise plan and initial setup as well as to survey the grounds and premises to be used during the exercise. Exercise Air Shield 2017, which is to be held in May, is aimed at practising and consolidating the professional abilities and specialised skills of commanders and staffs at the SVK Air Force's tactical level of command during the conduct of a military operation, hence stepping up the SVK Air Force's complex readiness to secure the defence the SVK REP as well as its readiness to effectively contribute to operations under NATO's collective defence.

- On 21 Mar, the 1st Mechanised Brigade Topoľčany Club hosted a **Logistics Battalion Commander's meeting of commanders** with the participation of Col Miroslav Ollé, Deputy Commander of the Combat Support Brigade Trenčín. Lt Col Stanislav Krížan, Commander of the Logistics Battalion, gave an assessment of the Training Year (TY) 2016 results. He hailed the work of the Battalion members and thanked them for performing their tasks well. He also expressed dissatisfaction with the work of some functionaries. At the conclusion, the Battalion Commander issued instructions for the tasks to be carried out in the upcoming period and wished everyone much success in performing them.

Preparations for the first SVK Armed Forces Active Reserves exercise continue

(21 March) The Ministry of Defence is gearing up for the first exercise of the Active Reserves to be held in May of this year. The employers of the soldiers assigned to the Active Reserves have received a letter from the SVK Armed Forces, informing them of their respective rights and obligations above and beyond the legal provisions of applicable legislation. In view of the fact that this is a pilot project the MOD underscores the importance of providing the public with as much information as possible. According to law, the concerned employers are obliged to grant eligible employees an authorised leave from work for a specified period as well as an additional day of leave from work, provided that the journey from the place of the employee's residence or workplace to the place of destination takes more than 6 hours by public transport. This rule also applies to the return journey, so there is also an entitlement for employees to an additional day of leave for transport. For the duration of the

Injured in Afghanistan

(24 March) While on a tour of duty in Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, a Slovak soldier was injured during a live fire exercise incident involving personal weapons on 24 March. The member of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina sustained abdominal injuries after being struck most probably by fragments of shrapnel. He was transported by helicopter to a Role 2 Hospital, where he has been hospitalised. He is not reported to be in a life-threatening condition. The soldier's family has been informed of the incident, however, given the fact that he is a member of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, his identity cannot be released to the public.

Zuzulová becomes SVK Champ

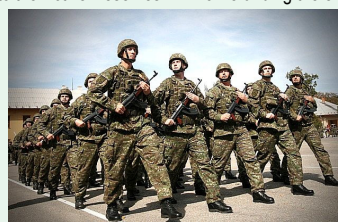
(25 March) Veronika Velez-Zuzulová became the Alpine Skiing Champion of Slovakia on Saturday. The member of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica clearly won over all of her competitors at Štrbské Pleso. This victory marks the 8th time she has won the title "Champion of the Slovak Republic in Alpine Skiing". "Veronika is in excellent condition, that's why I will repeat once again that she has made all of us very happy with her decision to stay and continue in her professional career even next season," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

Exercise Toxic Lance 2017



(24 March) On 12-24 March, Slovakia hosted the international exercise Toxic Lance 2017 with the participation of Slovak, US and Czech CBRN specialists. Part I of the exercise, aimed at training units in incident

response, took place at the CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostoľany. Part II of the exercise, focused on the incident response itself as part of a stabilisation operation, took place on Lešt Training Area. The aim of the exercise was to test the activities of commanders and those of Multifunctional National CBRN Platoons under field conditions. The exercise enabled the Slovak, US and Czech CBRN specialists to practise tackling the operation's planned and unplanned tasks. They were tasked to respond, properly and timely, to a variety of simulated incidents, including to an explosion in a chemical laboratory, a blast in a chemical substances warehouse, a crashed helicopter transporting toxic chemical substances, a collapsed chemical substances warehouse following an earthquake, a crashed train transporting toxic chemical substances, as well as to a chemical contamination of a mechanised platoon. All tasks were performed successfully. After the end of the exercise they decontaminated the area and roads used during the exercise.



authorised leave, the employees are entitled to a refund of their average salary, whereas the military unit assumes responsibility for refunding the employers' costs. The documents for refunding the costs related to the authorised leave from work will be delivered to the employers after the end of the regular training activity. The training for the Active Reserves will be conducted from 15 to 26 May 2017. The first 40 members of the Active Reserves will receive training as part of the pilot project. For each calendar year of service in the Active Reserves, the soldiers will be entitled to a motivational incentive of 600 euros, which will be payable retrospectively, on the condition that they complete at least 75 per cent of the training programme. The use of the Active Reserves in peacetime has been made possible since January of this year thanks to the Conscription Amendment Act. The training of the Active Reserves will be conducted in compliance with the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments and the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic.