



ŠTEFÁNIK heading to Latvia

(31 March) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces General Milan Maxim bid their farewell to the soldiers leaving for the training mission to the Baltics during a pre-deployment ceremony at the 13th Mechanised Battalion in Levice. A total of 149 SVK Armed Forces service personnel will be performing tasks in Latvia as part of the Task Force codenamed "Štefánik 2017". Also on stand-by are two additional military policemen.

"Our soldiers are leaving to the Baltics as part of the V4 countries' joint initiative, which was endorsed by the North Atlantic Alliance. For the first time in history, in this way we are becoming directly involved in the reassurance measures for the Allies on the eastern flank. In view of training, for us this too is a new experience because never ever before have the SVK Armed Forces members been deployed on a training mission abroad in such strength and for such a long time," said Minister Gajdoš. He further added that the V4 countries had reached consensus on the initiative within a short span of time and declared their intent to do so at the NATO Summit in Warsaw last year. "This is an expression of solidarity and clear evidence of the V4 being a strong brand," said the Minister.

Each V4 country is making its own contribution to the training mission. The Czech Republic deployed the first rotation to Lithuania at the beginning of 2017. Building on the deployment is our Task Force Štefánik 2017 in Latvia, which is due from the beginning of April to the end of June 2017. This will be followed by the deployment of Hungarian troops to Estonia, and, finally, the deployment of Polish soldiers to Latvia.



Slovakia marks 13 years in NATO

(29 March) The Slovak Republic marked the 13th anniversary of its entry into the North Atlantic Alliance. On 29 March 2004 our country became, alongside Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia, a member of the elite community that provides the highest security guarantees.

With Slovakia's entry into NATO, the security of the Slovak Republic was clearly strengthened under the collective defence guarantees according to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty. At the same time, it applies that Article 3 binds the Member States to develop individual and collective defence capabilities. Therefore, our country, too, is obliged to keep its Armed Forces capable of delivering the defence of our territory. Also for this reason, the current MOD leadership is drafting a Long-Term SVK Armed Forces Building and Development Plan, which has been missing for years.

For the past 13 years, thousands of Slovak soldiers have rotated in and out of the international crisis management operations conducted under the umbrella of NATO. Thanks to this, their operational deployments have brought a wealth of experience to SVK Armed Forces members in resolving military and non-military crisis incidents in the international environment.

Defence Ministers confirm their interest in developing NATO CI CoE

(30 March) The establishment of the NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence (NATO CI CoE) is seen by Slovak and Polish Ministers of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Antoni Macierewicz as a contribution to strengthening the security of the North Atlantic Alliance countries. In their bilateral meeting, together with the Director of Military Intelligence, Maj Gen Ján Balciar, and the Chief of the Polish Military Counterintelligence Service (SKW), Piotr Bączek, on Wednesday in Warsaw, they welcomed the accreditation of the NATO CI CoE granted by the NATO Alliance. This marks the end of Phase 1 – Formation of the Centre and now it's time for real work to be done on developing doctrines as a tool for strengthening NATO interoperability, especially in the field of training and exchange of lessons learned among partners. Both sides dismissed as false the claims about Slovakia's alleged intention to withdraw from the project, which appeared in some Polish blogs and posts at social networking sites. Even the information contained in some Slovak media articles can, according to the Chiefs of Military Intelligence and Counterintelligence, be treated as misinformation. The NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence began to operate in September 2016 in Krakow, Poland. This common Polish-Slovak initiative has since then been joined by another eight NATO countries. In addition to sending experienced officers to the NATO CI CoE, Slovakia also contributes by making the Training Centre Lešť available for training. The NATO Counter Intelligence Centre of Excellence was granted accreditation following its approval by the North Atlantic Council in February 2017.



- On 29 Mar 2017, Mgr. Andrea Urmaničová assumed the appointment of **Director of the Office of the Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic**.

- On 1 Apr 2017, Roman Benčík, the longtime sportsman and former race walker representing the SVK REP in 50 km race walk, the coach of athletic walking at the MSC DBB, and the coach who trained the Slovak Race Walking Team in the years 2001-2016, took up the appointment of **Director of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica** (MSC DBB). Richard Galovič, who until recently acted as the MSC DBB Director, was dismissed from the post on 31 Mar.

- Some material which was being issued to troops at the **Armed Forces Ammunition Depot Trenčín – Kúbrej** was reported to be missing. It was ordered that an inventory check be conducted and an investigation commission be set up in order to look into the circumstances of the incident.

- Representatives of the SVK MOD and Horezza j.s.c. have signed an Agreement on the Provision of Discounts to War Veterans. The veterans of WWII and of contemporary international missions and operations are now entitled to a **discount of 25 %** on accommodation across the accommodation facilities in Piešťany, Tatranské Zrubky, Zemplínska Širava and Smrekovica. Also eligible for the discount are the veterans' spouses or co-habiting partners who have been sharing a common household with them, as well as the veterans' children and grandchildren.

- During a ceremony on 30 Mar, the Scientific Council of the M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy awarded, in the presence of State Secretary R. Ondrejcsák, academic functionaries from across the Slovak colleges and universities, members of the academic community, Armed Forces Academy teachers, students and employees, an **Honorary Doctorate** to prof. Ing. Tobiáš Lazar, DrSc. (*1935), professor emeritus of the Aviation Faculty at the Technical College Košice.

- At the Ministry of Defence on 30 Mar, Chief of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff Gen Milan Maxim received the outgoing **Defence Attaché of the Czech Republic**, Brig Gen Zdeněk Jakubek, as well as the incoming Defence Attaché of the Czech Republic, Maj Gen Ján Gurník, who until recently served as Commander Czech Land Forces.

- During a civilian L-29 Delfin training flight on 27 Mar, the aircraft was forced to carry out an **emergency landing** at Sliac. The rescue components of Sliac Air Base and Sliac Airport were immediately activated, and so was the crisis management staff at the military and civilian airport. While practising the touch and go manoeuvre, as the civilian L-29 Delfin aircraft touched the runway, its landing gear retracted, which caused the aircraft to slide along the runway on its belly to a halt. There were no injuries reported in the incident.

- SVK Armed Forces soldiers assisted in putting out a **landfill fire** in Trnava from Sun 26 Mar. In response to a request from the Interior Ministry's Crisis Control Department, the Engineer Battalion Sered deployed two Tatras trucks to move soil to the landfill site.

- In Liptovský Mikuláš on 23-24 Mar, the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) hosted a specialised conference, entitled **MILMEDKON 2017**, held under the auspices of the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General. It was attended by nearly 300 service and ex-service members of the SVK Armed Forces Military Medical Service, the Interior Ministry's Medical Service, the Rescue Services and a delegation from the Czech Armed Forces.

- On 20-24 Mar, the AOS Simulation Centre, based in Liptovský Mikuláš, hosted 41 Fire Support Battalion members as part of NC 2013 Mech Bde for Ex **HELL STORM 2017**. The exercising Fire Support Battalion was made up of members drawn from the Rocket Launcher Detachment Rožňava and the Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment Michalovce. The theme of the exercise was providing fire support to Mech Bde in the individual phases of a defensive operation, with the aim of practising firing and executing fire control, whilst using the CAX simulation package.

- On 20-22 Mar, the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General Ružomberok – Workstation Liptovský Mikuláš and the Central Military Hospital SNP Ružomberok – Faculty Hospital hosted a **training aimed at restoring Combat Lifesaver (CLS) skills sets and capabilities**. The training was led by WO Milan Štípala, an instructor from the Training HQ, of the Czech Armed Forces Academy in Vyškov, in an effort to step up the cooperation between the Medical Services of the SVK and CZE Armed Forces as part of the V4 cooperation in the field of pre-hospital care training for health care professionals and non-professionals, which will go on in the second half of 2017 with the CLS 2 course as well as with the testing of the CLS instructors' skills in the CZE REP. Members of the Czech Armed Forces will participate in finalising and activating a new course for the SVK Armed Forces medical support staff, aimed at providing urgent medical care in field conditions according to applicable standardisation documents and the TCCC protocol.

Change of positions

(28 March) To mark the end of his mandate in Brussels, Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian, Chief of the Office of Military Representative, bid his farewell to the Chairmen of the NATO and EU Military Committees, the NATO and EU Military Representatives and the international community. General Petr Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, and General Mikhail Kostarakov, Chairman of the EU Military Committee, underscored the contribution of the Military Delegation of the Slovak Republic to Brussels who successfully handled the tasks of the historically first Slovak Presidency of the Council of the European Union. On behalf of the Chief of the Czech Armed Forces General Staff and the Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Poland, Miroslav Kocian was awarded the Czech Armed Forces Honorary Badge for Merits (Grade III) and the Polish Armed Forces Gold Medal for his personal contribution to promoting the V4 military cooperation. The mandate of Maj Gen Kocian ended on 31 March and he is succeeded in his appointment as Chief of the Office of Military Representative by Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad with effect from 1 April.

Artillerymen on interoperability

(30 March) The NATO Artillery Working Group (ARTYWG) held its 12th meeting on 20-24 March in Brussels. Apart from NATO Member States, the ARTYWG also consists of non-permanent members (Sweden, Austria and Switzerland). During the conference, it addressed a variety of issues, including the interoperability among NATO countries, the standardisation and implementation of STANAG agreements, the ASCA project implementation, the Combat Ammunition System (CAS), the ongoing artillery projects, the cooperation on procurement of new artillery assets, the application and testing of the Precision-Guided Munition (PGM Excalibur) with the M109, PzH 2000, PzH KRAB artillery systems, as well as the future capabilities of fire support elements. For the first time, the meeting was also attended by the SVK Armed Forces, represented by Lt Col Pavol Barančík (SVK General Staff) and Maj Marek Uchaf (SVK Land Forces).

Farewell to a rotation

(31 March) State Secretary of the Ministry of Defence Marián Saloň bid his farewell to the soldiers departing on a tour of duty with EUFOR ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina during a pre-deployment ceremony at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base in Martin. In his statement, he emphasised the importance of the operation in which our country has been involved since its inception in 2004. Slovak soldiers have been contributing to the stability of the security environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as assisting their Bosnian colleagues in building their capacities and capabilities and in the conduct of training.

State Secretaries meet for talks

(29 March) State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence R. Ondrejcsák and Deputy Minister of Defence of the Czech Republic/Head of the Defence Policy and Strategy Division J. Landovský met in Prague to discuss the security situation in the European neighbourhood and the activities arising out of it for the SVK and CZE REPs in the field of defence and security. In the context of strengthening NATO's eastern borders, they both reviewed the contributions planned for joint NATO activities. Then they discussed the status of delivering on the NATO guideline of spending 2 per cent of GDP on defence after the coming into office of the new US administration and also in light of the upcoming North Atlantic Council meeting at the level of Heads of State and/or Government in May 2017. The topic of defence expenditures was also supplemented by information on the ongoing modernisation projects of both countries.

Gen Maxim in Bosnia



(29 March) Chief of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff Gen Maxim visited the SVK Contingent soldiers deployed on Operation EUFOR ALTHEA, Bosnia and Herzegovina on 27-29 March. He paid a visit to all Slovak Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTS) in Foča, Novo Sarajevo and Višegrad. The Slovak delegation participated in the Commander EUFOR change of command ceremony at Camp Butmir. Maj Gen Friedrich Schrötter handed over the appointment of COM EUFOR to Maj Gen Anton Waldner on 28 March. Gen Maxim presented the outgoing commander with a memorial plaque. The Slovak CHOD also participated in the EUFOR ALTHEA Operation Commander change of command ceremony, with General Sir Adrian Bradshaw handing over to General Sir James Everard.