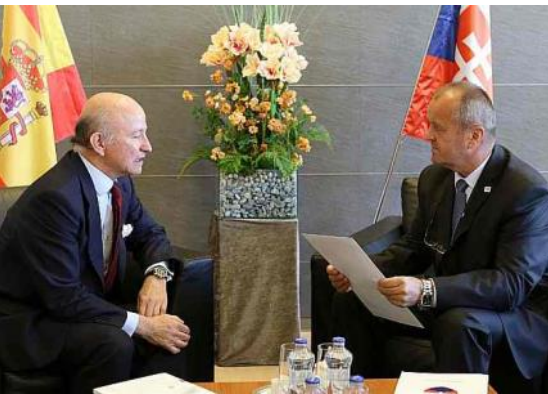




On co-operation with Spain

(3 August) Spain congratulated Slovakia on its decision to become the Lead Nation for the NATO EOD/C-IED Trust Fund for Ukraine. It is considering the option to participate in the programme through its training activities at the International Demining Centre (IDC) at the national level and at the Counter-Improvised Explosive Devices Centre of Excellence (C-IED COE) in Hoyo de Manzanares, both run by Spain. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš was informed of the initiative by the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the Slovak Republic, His Excellency Mr Félix Valdés, who conveyed this message from the Spanish Minister of Defence.

The aim of the Trust Fund is to provide advisory assistance to Ukraine in ramping up its explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and counter-improvised explosive devices (C-IED) capabilities. "We welcome each contribution to the NATO Trust Fund of which we are the guarantor. It is our common effort to help Ukraine reform its security and defence sector," said Minister Gajdoš.

He also informed the ambassador of the SVK MOD's activities and priorities in connection with the Presidency of the Slovak Republic of the Council of the European Union. The Spanish ambassador showed interest in furthering the defence industry co-operation between the countries.



First great success

(6 August) The first great success of the Slovak Republic at the 31st Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, was pulled off by air pistol shooter Juraj Tužinský, of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica.

After his excellent performance in the qualifying round where he took 3rd place, Tužinský ended up fourth in the finals. He thus achieved the success of his lifetime.

"Juraj's performance even in the qualifying round was excellent, raising great hopes for a medal. Unfortunately, it turned out differently in the finals. Yet still his fourth place is excellent. I am convinced that Juraj must have felt our very strong support in spite of the distance," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, who also expressed his appreciation for the work of his coach, Tibor Kiss.

In the past, Juraj Tužinský grabbed 7th place at the European Shooting Championships and clinched the bronze medal at the European Games. And he finished 15th at the Summer Olympic Games in London in air pistol shooting.

Sliach Airport gears up for the airshow of the year

(7 August) For the 6th time so far, Sliach Airport will be the venue of the largest airshow in Slovakia, the Slovak International Air Fest (SIAF) 2016. Traditionally, the SVK Armed Forces and the Military Police will get involved in the programme by staging flying and static displays. The SVK Ministry of Defence is the main SIAF 2016 programme partner again. "The Slovak International Air Fest, SIAF 2016, is a festival for each aviation and aircraft fan. I trust that this year, too, the flying displays of our Air Force pilots will captivate audiences. However, this time they will not feature the Antonov AN-26 military aircraft that has since March enjoyed its well-deserved military retirement at the Military History Museum in Piešťany," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš. As part of the flying displays to be held on 27-28 August, visitors to the airshow at Sliach will be able to see the flypasts of MiG-29 fighters, and Aero L-39 Albatros and L-410 Turbolet aircraft. An Mi-17 helicopter will perform a flying demonstration of a rescue mission and of firefighting with the so-called Bambi Bucket. As part of the static displays and follow-on programme, the visitors will also view the hardware of the SVK Land Forces and the Military Police, close combat demonstrations, a guard of honour show programme, and a paratroopers' parachute drop.



- On Thursday, 28 July, UNFICYP HQ hosted the Force Commander of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) change of command ceremony. After two years of intense work, **Maj Gen Kristin Lund**, of Norway, will be succeeded at the helm of the Blue Berets by the newly appointed UNFICYP Force Commander, Maj Gen Mohammad Humayun Kabir, of Bangladesh. Between 2002 and 2003, he served as a Military Observer with the UN-led MONUC mission in Congo and with UN-PROFOR from 1995 to 1996. He is scheduled to arrive in August. Meanwhile, Col Tim Wildish, Chief of Staff, was appointed to deputise for the Force Commander. Elizabeth Spehar, UN Special Representative and Head of UNFICYP, extended her thanks to Maj Gen Lund for her contribution and, as a mark of gratitude, presented her with a commemorative medal and plaque.

- On 29 July, the NCO Club, of the Training Battalion Martin, hosted a **passing-out parade for the graduates of the OR-7 (Sergeant 1st Class) Non-commissioned Officers' Course**. A total of 35 professional soldiers (of whom 6 were women), from across SVK Armed Forces units, had joined the course. The core subjects on the course included military leadership, effective communications, military psychology, and conduct of training methodology. SSgt Pavol Korček, of the 11th Mechanised Battalion Martin, became the best OR-7 NCO course graduate.

- For the 10th time to date, members of the Slovak, Hungarian and Serbian Armed Forces underwent joint team building training at the Military PSO Training Unit, of the Training Battalion Martin. It culminated with the **computer-supported exercise BLUE LAND 2016** at the Training Centre Lešť. It allowed specific standard operational procedures (SOPs), aimed at monitoring the activities of adversary forces and radio communications in the English language and at aligning reporting and responsibilities of respective components at different levels of command, to be practised in near-real conditions. The participants tested their basic skills needed for service in UN-led missions on Sučany Garrison Training Area.

- Under the initiative to deepen bilateral cooperation between the SVK Armed Forces and the Bundeswehr, the Defence Attaché of the Federal Republic of Germany, **General Staff (GS) Lt Col Rüdiger Heinrich** paid a visit to the Air Defence Brigade (AD BDE) Nitra on 2 August. Col Ladislav Dovhun familiarised him with the AD BDE's structure and mission, main armaments and equipment. They discussed training activities and international cooperation in the field of land-based air defence.

- On 31 July, the memory of **Brig Gen Josef Slunský** was remembered at Ondrejský Cemetery in Bratislava by representatives of the SVK MOD and SVK Armed Forces, the SVK Generals' Club, the Czechoslovak Unity of Legionnaires, as well as by other guests. Brig Gen Slunský (1877-1934) participated in building the Czechoslovak Defence Force in Spišská Nová Ves and in forming mountain units in Poprad. He finished his career as Commander of the 18th Foot Brigade in Lučenec. The mayor of his birthplace village of Hlohovec also came to commemorate the anniversary of his death.

First Prešov-based technicians return from Afghanistan

(5 August) The first Helicopter Wing technicians who had served on the Afghan Air Advisory Team (AAT), alongside their Czech

colleagues, with the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) for nearly five months were officially welcomed during a homecoming ceremony at the Col Gen Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing Prešov. The importance of their work was emphasised by the Chief of Staff for Strategic Planning at the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces, Brig Gen Ivan Pach, and the Chief of Staff at the SVK Air Force Headquarters, Col Stanislav Hurčík. During the ceremony, they appreciated the work of the Chief of the Air Armaments Maintenance Group, of the Helicopter Squadron, 1st Lieutenant Martin Kocúr, and that of the Chief of the Radio and Radio-Technical Equipment Squadron, of the Air Search and Rescue Service (ASAR) and Training, 1st Lieutenant



Michal Mašlar. Brig Gen Pach presented them with the War Veteran Badge and the Commemorative Cross for Participation in

Military Operation. The Deputy Commander of the Helicopter Wing, Lt Col Peter Fabišik underscored that, for the technicians as well as for the entire Wing, the engagement of the Helicopter Wing technicians in the training mission in Afghanistan is a great experience in terms of operating in the international environment. In Kabul, they took part in the training of Afghan Air Force (AAF) flying personnel and technicians on Mi-171 and Mi-24/35 helicopters. The AAT unit has been operationally embedded with the 311th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron, made up of members of the Armed Forces of the Czech Republic, the USA, Hungary, Croatia and now, from the 18th rotation of the AAT on, also those of the Slovak Republic.

Basic training underway



(3 August) It has become a tradition at the beginning of August to open the gates of Martin-based Training Battalion to the successful recruits who had passed the selection process for basic military training. A total of 58 preparatory state service candidates, 40 university graduates, and 98 cadets from the General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Armed Forces Academy reported to 4th Czechoslovak Brigade Bar-

racks in Martin on 3 August. Among them were also 40 women. Having successfully completed all the standard in-processing procedures and having been issued with the required materiel at the Regional Clothing Centre, of the Multifunctional Supply Base West in Nemšová, the newcomers were assigned to training platoon. They will go through training focused on mastering basic military skills which they will put to the test on Sučany Garrison Training Area. The passing out parade is slated for September. Subsequently, they will be assigned to undertake specialised training in Military Occupational Specialities (MOSs) within the SVK Armed Forces.

Also ISTAR gets involved

(2 August) Members of the ISTAR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance) Battalion Prešov, too, participated in the joint international training, dubbed Exercise SLOVAK WART-HOG 2016, involving members of the SVK Armed Forces and the Indiana National Guard (ING) at the Training Centre Lešť. Under the specialist supervision of the experienced Tactical Air Control Parties (TACPs), of the 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina, and the Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTACs), of the Indiana Air National Guard (IN ANG), they practised detecting and identifying targets, guiding close air support, and supporting air resupply.

Pilgrims to Częstochowa



(4 August) SVK soldiers joined international army groups of pilgrims in Warsaw to set out on a 350-km-long military pilgrimage to the town of Częstochowa. Members of the SVK Armed Forces under the leadership of 1st Lt Ján Ostapčuk, Staff Chaplain of Martin-based 11th Mechanised Battalion, will move along the route alongside Polish, German, American, Croatian and

Austrian soldiers. They will walk between 25 and 40 kilometres daily and sleep at provisional camps. Their destination is the pilgrimage site of Jasná Góra, where they are expected to arrive in ten days. This year's international military foot pilgrimage is being held between 4-14 August. To keep up the tradition, Mons František Rábek, Ordinary of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps, will join our soldiers for the final kilometres.