



Bratislava's liberation anniversary

(4 April) To mark the 72nd anniversary of Bratislava's liberation, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, Prime Minister Robert Fico and other members of the SVK Government paid their tribute during a commemoration ceremony held at the Slávin Memorial.

According to the Minister, it is of exceptional significance to cherish the memory of the events thanks to which peace and freedom returned to our country. "It is our duty to do our utmost to keep the horrors of history from repeating themselves again. That is why we cannot allow extremism to flourish and cannot once again give a space to the people who suppress human rights and disregard the principles of democracy."

Another commemorative ceremony marking Bratislava's liberation also took place at the Victory Memorial in Eugen Suchoň Square, where State Secretary Róbert Ondrejcsák and Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim paid their tribute to the liberation on behalf of the Slovak Ministry of Defence. Also in attendance was the Chairman of the Committee on Defence and Security of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, Anton Hrnko.



New Deputy Chief of Defence

(3 April) Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian assumed the appointment of Deputy Chief of Defence – Chief of Staff (DCHOD/COS) with effect from 1 April. He has succeeded Maj Gen Jindřich Joch, who has taken over command of the SVK Land Forces as Commander SVK Land Forces (COM SVK LF). Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received both DCHOD/COS and COM SVK LF during a meeting held in the presence of CHOD Gen Milan Maxim.

"I wish for you to have the best of luck in your new appointments and good teams around you, who you can trust and rely on," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš during the meeting. CHOD Gen Maxim added that "new old blood" is coming back to the MOD, as Maj Gen Kocian acted in the capacity of 1st DCHOD in the past.

"I approach this job with respect, just as any other previous job I have held so far. And I wish to contribute to the success of it with my expertise," said the newly appointed DCHOD/COS.

Maj Gen Kocian has had a distinguished military career. Having been educated at the Military Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš and at the military educational institutions in Brno, Hamburg and Rome, he served with the SVK Air Force as well as with the SVK Training and Support Forces HQ. He also gained other experience of cooperating with the Bundeswehr while serving directly in Germany and with KFOR in Kosovo. At the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces he held the appointment of Chief of Staff for Operations and became 1st DCHOD in 2011. He led the Office of the Military Representative of the Slovak Republic to NATO in Brussels until the end of March of this year.

Slovak soldiers to deploy on operation in the Mediterranean Sea

(5 April) The Security Council and Government of the Slovak Republic approved the deployment of Military Police personnel on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. The Slovak service personnel will serve as a boarding team of a ship sailing under the flag of the Federal Republic of Germany. The length of their deployment is scheduled for two rotational periods, each lasting 6 months, whereas the deployment is expected to take place in August 2017. For EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, Slovakia has assigned 10 military policemen who will be serving on a boarding team of a German Navy ship. The number of the MP team members is firmly set at 10. The team consists of two identical 5-member groups and each member has a clearly defined role.



- Mgr. Peter Kardoš was appointed, for a temporary period, as **Director General of the Legislation and Law Department** in the Slovak Ministry of Defence with effect from 4 Apr.

- Options for deepening the defence engagement between Slovakia and Ukraine topped the agenda of the meeting between State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Defence **Róbert Ondrejcsák** and State Secretary of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence Oleksandr Dublyan, which took place on 6 Apr in Kiev. State Secretary Dublyan showed his interest in exchanging experience with the civil and military structures reforms the implementation phase of which has been underway in Ukraine since 2016. Róbert Ondrejcsák also participated in the 10th Kiev Security Forum Conference and appeared in a panel focused on hybrid warfare.

- Richard Zimányi, Chief of the War Veterans' and Military Pensioners' Care Section, of the Human Resources Department in the SVK Ministry of Defence, handed over the **War Veteran's Badge** to Col (Rtd) Vladimír Repčík, a participant of the Slovak National Uprising, and Maj (Rtd) Ján Petluš, an ex-member of the UNPROFOR peacekeeping mission in the former Yugoslavia, during a ceremony marking the liberation of Nové Mesto nad Váhom on 7 Apr.

- Approx. 50 members of the SVK Armed Forces and MOD employees participated in the 70th anniversary of the **Devin – Bratislava National Run** on 9 Apr. "I am happy that I could run at least the 2,600-meter-long 'Little Devin' event together with pupils as part of their training," said with a smile 1st Lt Matej Tóth, the Olympic winner in the 50km race walk and a member of the Dukla Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre.

- Coming under the command of COM 1st Mech Coy, a **concentrated specialised training** involving the most junior officer commanders – lieutenants of the G-10 (mechanised) MOS – from across the SVK Land Forces, who had entered the Temporary State Service as of 1 Jan 2015, was held from 27 Mar to 5 Apr at 22nd Mech Bn Michalovce. The intent of the exercise was to increase specialised readiness levels, to improve the commanders' leadership skills, and to prepare the most junior commanders to run the training of units correctly in terms of methodology.

- A **survival skills exercise for pilots** from the 1st and 2nd Flight, of the Tactical Wing Sliac, took place in the area of Kráľová Lehota on 27–31 Mar. The pilots, based at Sliac Air Base, practised starting a fire in different ways, moving across high mountains, coping with stark temperature differences and prevailing ice conditions and fields. They tried out overcoming rock cliffs while using a rope pulley system, abseiling, and crossing a water obstacle.

- On 28 Mar, the Tactical Wing Sliac and the Training Centre Lešť hosted a working meeting between the **UK Defence Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS)** with the participation of a representative of the UK Embassy and the Tactical Wing Sliac, Helicopter Wing Prešov and Transport Wing Kuchyňa Fire Units on exploring the options for cooperation and exchange of lessons learned in the field of specialised rescue works undertaken by the Defence Fire teams in response to air disasters. Members of the Military Fire Units from the Tactical Wing Sliac, Helicopter Wing Prešov and Transport Wing Kuchyňa partook in a firefighting exercise on 9–14 Apr on a reciprocal basis at the Manstone Centre in Kent, UK.

Government endorses a plan

(5 April) The Security Council and Government of the Slovak Republic passed the Plan for the Use of the SVK Armed Forces in a Time of War on 5 April. This is the first document of its kind in the history of the SVK Armed Forces to have been submitted to the Government, who had decided on its drafting in a Government resolution adopted in September of last year, citing the need to create the basic conditions for delivering the defence of the Slovak Republic and to fulfil the tasks which arise for Slovakia out of the NATO Readiness Action Plan (RAP) measures as the reasons for the plan to be processed. The RAP was adopted by the NATO Alliance Member States at the Wales Summit in 2014.

Kids and MP personnel

(6 April) In 2011, informal cooperation got underway between the Children's Home in Kráľová Lehota and the Training and Cynology Department of Military Police Vlkánová – Hronsek. Since then, Military Police personnel have annually visited the Children's Home to make its children acquainted with their scope of work. Additionally, the children can enjoy an attractive and entertaining military training programme in Vlkánová – Hronsek. This was the case also on 5–6 April, when a two-day motivational training awaited the children. As well as familiarising themselves with a range of firearms and firing the vz. 58 submachine gun, they cleared different obstacles, learned the basics of rope climbing techniques, and became acquainted with CBRND tools and the work of Military Police (MP) Military Working Dog (MWD) handlers, self-defence and close combat tactics, aerobic and power building exercises. Martina Halinárová, a sportswoman representing the SVK REP in biathlon and a physical training coach at the Military Training Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica, briefed the kids on her sports discipline and led them through a specialised physical warm-up activity. Matej Tóth, the Olympic Champion and World Champion in Race Walking, prepared an entertaining training session for them as well.

Planning Conference

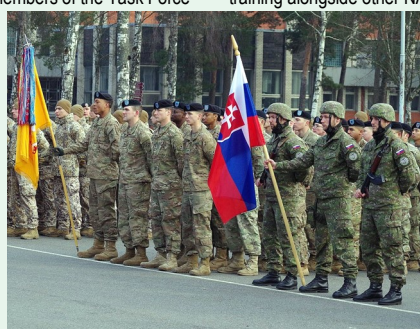
(4 April) The main planning conference on Exercise STRONG CHAIN 2017 / LOGEX 2017 took place on 4 April at the Combat Support Brigade HQ Trenčín. The exercise, due on 12–18 May, will test the second and third levels of logistic support to the SVK Land Forces, the coordination among the four levels of logistic support, Host Nation Support, and the coordination of activities with NATO forces via the NATO Force Integration Unit (NFIU SVK). As part of the exercise, improvement training will be undertaken by the companies of the CSS Bn Prešov and the units of the second level logistics, while simultaneously conducting sustainment training for the units declared for participation in the Logistics Battalion Hlohovec, improvement training for the units declared for participation in the 1st and 2nd Movement Control (MOVCON) Teams, and sustainment training for equipment repairers from the Repair Battalion Martin.

Ādaži Training Area in Latvia welcomes Slovak servicemen and women

(7 April) Latvia's Ādaži Training Centre hosted a welcoming ceremony for Slovak soldiers. The members of the Task Force

Group (TFG) Štefánik will be engaged in the country until the end of June. Latvian Minister of Defence Raimonds Bergmanis and Chief of Defence of the Latvian National Armed Forces Maj Gen Leonīds Kalniņš appreciated the presence of the Slovak troops in their country, based on the joint initiative of the V4 countries and the performance of the NATO Warsaw Summit outcomes. The ceremony to welcome the Slovak soldiers was also attended by Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň, Commander Mechanised Brigade Topolčany. In his speech, he reminded that the engagement of the Slovak soldiers in Latvia must have two objectives: "To show that even a small country such as Slovakia

is ready to support other NATO Member States and to conduct training alongside other NATO militaries so as to enhance



interoperability among our troops." As part of his visit to Latvia, Brig Gen Kubáň received a tour of the Slovak soldiers' accommodation facilities, military hardware and the training area itself where the TFG Štefánik members will be operating in the next three months. Maj Vladimír Moško, Commander TFG Štefánik, explained that, following the successful movement of material and assets to Latvia, the Slovak troops will undertake a live fire exercise using personal weapons and an integration training exercise to align individual platoons. On 7 April, the Slovak flag thus joined the Latvian, Lithuanian, US and Canadian flags flying over the main parade grounds of Ādaži Training Area.