



Ministers meet in Malta

(27 April) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš attended an informal meeting of Defence Ministers of the European Union Member States in Malta. At the core of the meeting's agenda were discussions on EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia in the Mediterranean Sea, the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and EU Battle Groups (EU BGs).

The migration from the African continent via the Mediterranean Sea towards the North remains one of the EU's current problems. Partly due to this, the Slovak Republic has decided to contribute 10 Military Police personnel to EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia. As part of the official programme, the Ministers visited the ITS San Giusto, the flagship of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia, which belongs to the Italian Navy. As part of the operation's support tasks, the training of the Libyan Coast Guard and Navy has been in progress.

Based on the lessons learned from the EU and NATO operations and missions, it is evident that Europe lacks capabilities for delivering its security and defence priorities. Towards this end, PESCO is expected to create a platform to enable EU Member States and their partners to remove the most severe deficiencies in this area. At the meeting, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, informed the Ministers of the progress achieved in shaping this initiative.

Stepping up the usability of EU Battle Groups remains one of the Union's goals and challenges in the field of building realistically employable capabilities. In the upcoming months, we can expect to see proposals to strengthen the significance, deployability and usability of the EU's Rapid Response tools.

Assessing the benefits of EUGS

(28 April) The contribution of the EU Global Strategy (EUGS) to and its impact on European defence and security were evaluated by high representatives of European institutions, Malta and EU Member States at a conference held during the Maltese Presidency of the Council of the European Union in Valletta. Representing Slovakia at the conference was the State Secretary of the Slovak Ministry of Defence, Róbert Ondrejcsák. Speaking after the conclusion of the conference, he summarised: "We needed a common strategic document, one that would reflect the current security environment and present threats, just as we implement it at a national level by drafting new Defence and Security Strategies." The conference built on the Valletta meeting of 26-27 April 2017 by EU Defence Ministers who addressed the current developments of the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy.



The nationwide commemoration of Gen Štefánik will return to Bradlo

(25 April) After a several-years break, Bradlo will see the comeback of the nationwide commemorative ceremony dedicated to the memory of General Milan Rastislav Štefánik. This year the commemorative ceremony will be held on 6 May to mark the 98th anniversary of his tragic death. The nationwide event is being organized by the town of Brezová pod Bradlom in cooperation with the SVK MOD, the Trenčín Self-Governing Regional Authority and the M. R. Štefánik Society. The May commemorative festivities at Bradlo will be staged in commemoration and celebration of Štefánik's entire life and works, not just as a reminder of his tragic death. "Štefánik is one of the most prominent figures of our history and he does deserve our attention. It is important to spread the message of his life to wide audiences. So that everyone knows who General Štefánik was and how much he did for our nation during his short life. For this reason, we have given our full support to the initiative of the Brezová Town Authorities to restore the nationwide commemoration," said Minister of Defence. To support the event, the MOD will assign the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour and the Band of the SVK Armed Forces. And in case of favourable weather conditions, it will also provide fly-pasts of fighter aircraft.



- The Slovak MOD issues this notice to warn the public against a **potential increase in noise levels** in the surroundings of Airport Sliač. From May through October (but not every day), SVK Air Force pilots will practise aerobatic movements on L-39 Albatros and MiG-29 aircraft over the airport and will engage in low level flying. As a result, the residents of Banská Bystrica, Zvolen, Sliač and those of the surrounding villages may be exposed to increased noise levels.

- Members of the SVK Armed Forces General Staff were given an opportunity to test their readiness to plan operational activities in the form of a **complex staff rehearsal**, led by Brig Gen Ivan Pach, on Kutuzovové Barracks' premises on 24-27 Apr. The aim of the drill was to prepare and test the operational planning methodology in the phase of concept and operational plan design, and to align the preparations for performance of a key task – the future certification of the NFIU Slovakia before it achieves its Full Operational Capability (FOC).

- On 21 Apr, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Deputy Chief of Defence Lt Gen Pavel Macko paid a visit to the **Supply Base (SB) II HQ** in Martin and the Munitions Depot (MD) in Sklené. Lt Col Július Bala, COM SB II, briefed them on the SB's mission, tasks, structure and status of military hardware and weaponry. For the guests, the Repairs Centre and the Supply Centre put on a demonstration of their capabilities. Then the guests moved to the Munitions Depot in Sklené, where Maj Rimóc, COM MD Sklené, filled them in on the MD's tasks and introduced the capabilities for munitions placement and storage.

- Throughout Apr, members of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion (CBRND Bn) and the Multiple Rocket Launcher Detachment (MRL Det), based in Rožňava, backed a **project in support of patriotism and home defence education at secondary schools**, which forms part of Camp 2017's final event. Aimed at the students of the Banská Bystrica region, the activity took place in Rimavská Sobota on 21 Apr. Secondary schools took a keen interest in it, which was confirmed by the students' high attendance levels. They received the information on how to enter the SVK Armed Forces as well as on the upcoming changes to the Voluntary Military Training (VMT) from members of the Recruitment Groups Banská Bystrica and Nitra. Members of the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour staged their show programme.

- The **Final Planning Conference** for EX STRONG CHAIN 2017 / LOGEX 2017 took place on the Combat Service Support (CSS) Brigade HQ Trenčín's premises on 24 Apr. During the conference, the exercising units representatives were briefed on the plan of the exercise, which will be, as a specialised training activity of the CSS Brigade, aimed at the CSS Bn Prešov achieving the set readiness levels; sustaining the set readiness levels of the Logistics Battalion Hlohovec's declared units; and practising selected capabilities of the Repairs Battalion Martin.

SVK Air Force units practise the readiness to defend Slovak airspace

(26 April) The SVK Air Force has concluded the most important phase of Ex Air Shield 2017 that unfolded at the Training Centre Lešť and on the training ground at Koliňanský Vrch, building on Ex Blue Wave 2016, Ex Air Shield 2015 and Ex Tobruq Legacy 2016. MiG-29, L-39, L-410 aircraft and Mil Mi-17 helicopters were used to exercise the SVK Air Force's capabilities. "The aim of the exercise was to practise the standard operating procedures for planning, controlling and executing individual tactical missions by the command staffs of the units subordinate to the SVK Air Force in protecting and defending Slovak airspace," emphasised Brig Gen Miroslav Lorinc, Deputy Commander SVK Air Force. The intent of the exercise also included increasing the SVK Air Force's overall readiness to defence the Slovak Republic and contributing to

operations under NATO's collective defence. The exercise assembled 280 personnel from across the SVK Air Force units, i.e. Tactical Wing Sliač, Helicopter Wing Prešov, Transport Wing Kuchyňa, SVK Air Force Command, Control and Surveillance Wing Zvolen, Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra, and 5th Special Forces Regiment Žilina. At Koliňanský Vrch, members of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra used the PLRK 2K12 KUB GBAD systems. Ex Air Shield 2017 tested the units' readiness to carry out operations to gain control of airspace; to coordinate AF units; to protect and defend airports; as well as conducting SAR missions. The exercise was directed remotely via advanced technologies, which allowed soldiers to evaluate their tasks in a detailed and thorough manner directly in the field.



On bio-protection of airports

(26 April) The Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General, working in cooperation with the SVK Air Force, organised an international workshop entitled Wildlife Hazard Management and Flight Safety in Bratislava on 25-26 April. At the workshop, representatives of 8 NATO countries presented their national procedures for securing biological protection of airports. The participating countries have agreed on standards and technical systems for monitoring migrations of birds in real time and on setting up an information network to connect individual countries.

Defence firefighters together

(28 April) On 24-28 April, the training facilities of the Training Centre Lešť hosted an international exercise dubbed Fire Rescue 2017, with the aim of practising and coordinating the fire crews' action in conducting specialist activities and rescue missions during a firefighting response. The exercise brought together representatives of the SVK Air Force Firefighting Service, medics from the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General, representatives of the SVK Interior Ministry's Integrated Rescue System, and members of the Czech Air Force Firefighting Service from Prague, Stará Boleslav, Vyškov, Čáslav, Sedlec, Vicenice, Pardubice and Libava.