



SNU commemorations also with Romanian partner

(29 August) At the invitation of SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, Romanian Minister of National Defence Mihnea Ioan Motoc arrived in Slovakia for the 72nd anniversary commemorations of the Slovak National Uprising (SNU). Romania's officials regularly participate in the ceremonies in Banská Bystrica, as the country was a member of the anti-Nazi coalition and Romanian soldiers, too, made a considerable contribution to liberating Slovakia's territory. "We need to respect history, it is unchangeable. Even this way we wish to thank the Romanian nation, soldiers – warriors for their role, alongside the Red Army and other members of the anti-Nazi coalition, in fighting to bring liberty. Never ever should we forget the victims who died in the cause of liberty and democracy," emphasised the SVK Minister of Defence, noting that liberty came to us from the East.

Still before the SNU commemorations in Banská Bystrica, Minister Gajdoš and his Romanian counterpart visited the Romanian Army Cemetery in Zvolen. "I feel honoured to have visited the cemetery where over 10,000 Romanian soldiers rest in peace. This is the largest military cemetery outside Romania," said Minister of National Defence Mihnea Ioan Motoc.

In attendance at the SNU commemorations in Banská Bystrica were Slovakia's three top state representatives – SVK President Andrej Kiska, Chairman of the SVK National Council Andrej Danko, and Prime Minister Robert Fico. On the recommendation of the SVK Minister of Defence, the President appointed two direct participants in the insurgency movement – 1st Lieutenant Michal Peter, posthumously, and Colonel (Ret) Ľudvík Šesták – into the rank of brigadier general. Brig Gen Emil Boček and Col Václav Kuchyňka, Czech WWII veterans and Deputy Chairmen of the Czechoslovak Legionnaire Community, awarded three Slovak prominent figures, including Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, with the Czechoslovak Legionnaire Community Plaque for support of legionary and anti-Nazi traditions and veterans.

After attending the SNU commemorative event, the Ministers of Defence also met for a working lunch. They agreed that Slovakia and Romania share the same positions on key foreign policy issues. Both countries are NATO and EU members. A showcase example of the Slovak-Romanian military partnership is, first and foremost, the Multinational Engineer Battalion Tisa. Speaking at the occasion, the head of the SVK MOD thanked his counterpart for dispatching a Romanian soldier to the Slovak NATO Force Integration Unit (SVK NFUI).

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš also remembered the SNU on 25 August at the SNU Memorial in Bratislava's SNU Square by paying his tribute to the memory of the 60,000 Slovak soldiers and 12,000 partisans who had participated in the struggle for national liberation. He noted that as we commemorate the 72nd anniversary of the SNU, these days we also mark the 24th anniversary of adopting the Constitution of the Slovak Republic, which had laid the foundations for building our modern democratic state. During a ceremonial gathering at the SVK MOD Club, he called on professional soldiers and civilian employees to support commemorative events through their presence, even without receiving official orders to do so.

Training of Active Reserves

(26 August) The SVK Ministry of Defence is launching an Active Reserves pilot project. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš specified that potential candidates, i.e. the soldiers in Reserves who comply with all legal conditions, are invited to submit their applications for inclusion in the Active Reserves to the Personnel Office of the SVK Armed Forces between 2 and 30 September through recruitment groups, located in each regional administrative capital city, depending on the place of their permanent residence. In the upcoming year, the MOD is planning to train up to 50 members of the Active Reserves in the engineer military occupational specialty. "Training for the Active Reserves is fully in line with the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments as well as with the White Paper on Defence of the Slovak Republic. The latter was submitted for consideration to the SVK Government last month. The Active Reserves system has not been functional up until now. We need to change this," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, commenting on the need to launch the new project. "At present, there is a shortage of specialists in the SVK Armed Forces, in particular engineers, CBRN specialists, and artillerymen. We want to make up for the shortage also through the Active Reserves, under which a training unit is to be set up," said SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim. In 2017, the training is scheduled to take place on 15-26 May. For more information, go to <http://www.mosr.sk/oznamenie-ministerstva-obrany-sr-o-moznosti-zaradenia-vojakov-v-zalohe-do-aktivnych-zaloh/>.



On 15-25 August, Tactical Wing Sliach hosted a joint international training exercise entitled **Slovak Hawk 2016**. It was of great benefit to SAF pilots in terms of pre-flight preparation, conduct of air combat fighter manoeuvres, and post-flight review and methodology. Under the scheme, instructors will gain an instructor's qualification enabling them to train our pilots on air combat fighter manoeuvres involving a two-ship formation against one fighter. Maj Ján Kurtik, Chief of Flight Operational Section, is the first to be qualified as instructor. During his meeting with Wg Cdr Andy Wright, Officer Commanding of 100 Squadron at RAF Leeming, SVK Air Force Commander Maj Gen Miroslav Korba expressed his conviction that the co-operation between the Royal Air Force and the Slovak Air Force will go on. Wg Cdr Andy Wright updated Maj Gen Korba on the progress of training and expressed his satisfaction with co-operation.

At the invitation of Bishop Jerzy, Orthodox Ordinary of the Polish Armed Forces and Corps, members of the SVK Armed Forces, led by SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim, made a pilgrimage to Grabarka Hill in the Republic of Poland on 17-19 August. As part of their three-day visit, joined by members of the Polish, Czech and Lithuanian Armed Forces, they visited the monastery at Grabarka Hill and participated in a divine liturgy and in a 13-km foot pilgrimage.

A remembrance ceremony in memory of the victims of Czechoslovakia's invasion of 21 August 1968 and occupation by the Warsaw Pact Armies was held in Bratislava's Šafárikovo Square in front of the Comenius University building. Representing the SVK MOD at the remembrance ceremony was Ivan Mačovsky, State Secretary at the SVK Ministry of Defence, and Brig Gen Jindřich Joch, 2nd Vice Chief of Defence. Also in attendance were representatives of the diplomatic corps accredited in Slovakia and local government authorities. Accompanied by the SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour and to the accompaniment of music provided by the SVK Armed Forces Military Band Bratislava, they laid wreaths and paid their respects to the victims at the Victims Memorial.

A total of 31 **Voluntary Military Training (VMT) soldiers** underwent a final tactical training exercise at Sučany Garrison's training grounds on 18-19 August. The exercise comprehensively tested their physical, specialist and psychological resilience and readiness. Last week, the training continued with a marksmanship training exercise, using the vz. 82 pistol and the vz. 58 submachine gun at Sučany Garrison's barrier firing range. The participants undertook preparations for grenade throwing drills, which are slated for 31 August.

On 23 August, under the command of Lt Col Róbert Funtala, Commander of 21st Combined Mechanised Battalion Trebišov (21st Cmd Mech Bn Trebišov), a comprehensive command staff rehearsal commenced at Garrison Velké Ožorovce's training grounds, aimed at planning the battalion's deployment as part of a defensive operation within the territory of Slovakia; improving and synchronising the coordination between the 21st Cmd Mech Bn Trebišov commanders and staff members under a shortened planning process; and enhancing the quality of planning process end products. The outputs of the command staff rehearsal are to be used further on at Exercise Slovak Shield II, to be held this October.

On 22 August, CSS Battalion Prešov hosted an **instructional-methodological** exercise designed to train personnel for motor pools and motor pool systems under winter operating conditions. The officer in charge of the exercise was 1st Lt Gabriela Valčíková, Senior Officer of Specialist Technical Oversight, Repairs and Operations Group. The exercise was aimed at members of logistics units, leaders of teams, workshop specialists, and professional soldiers who will be responsible for maintaining motor pool systems.

On 23 August, Logistics Battalion Hlohovec hosted a **farewell ceremony** for Maj Alexej Kudrjavcev, the outgoing Battalion Deputy Commander on the occasion of his transfer to the Personnel Reserve (UK: Regular Reserve). He took up the post of Deputy Commander of Logistics Battalion Hlohovec on 1 December 2016. After 23 years of service with the SVK Armed Forces he concluded his military career. Lt Col Maroš Murárik, Commander of Logistics Battalion Hlohovec, and Maj Richard Beniak, the new incoming deputy commander, thanked him for his contribution.

Slovak International Air Fest SIAF 2016 at Sliach Airport

(27-28 August) During an opening ceremony at Sliach Airbase, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš opened the 6th Slovak International Air Fest SIAF 2016, with the Ministry of Defence as the main programme partner. Over the duration of two days, visitors had the opportunity to view, besides an international line-up of display participants, Slovak Air Force (SAF) pilots showing off the art of flying on MiG-29 fighters, Aero L-39s, Let L-410s, and Mi-17 helicopters. Visitors to the event could explore a wide array of the SVK Armed Forces' activities as part of equipment and training demonstrations by the SVK Land Forces, Air Force, Military Police and SVK Armed Forces Guard of Honour.

"This airport in the heart of our beautiful Slovakia most closely relates not only to our history. As a tradition now for the past 6 years it has also provided the venue for the Slovak International Air Fest SIAF," said the head of the MOD. He went on to remind that it was just the airfield at Sliach, bearing the historical name of Three Oaks Airfield, that played a significant role in the Slovak National Uprising, the 72nd anniversary of which Slovakia will be

Government in the east

(24 August) As part of the SVK government's away-days in the east of Slovakia, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš handed over new vehicles to soldiers during a vehicle handover ceremony on 22 August in the grounds of ISTAR Battalion in Prešov. A total of 30 Land Rovers have replaced the fleet of 50-year-old UAZ vehicles in support of training, domestic crisis management operations, tactical and transportation tasks. 16 vehicles have been assigned directly to ISTAR Battalion, another 10 to 23rd Motorised Battalion Trebišov, while 4 vehicles will replenish motor pools in military units across western Slovakia.

After a government meeting in Sabinov, the Minister visited Plant Branch Kamenica nad Cirochou operating under Military Forests and Estates of the Slovak Republic, a state-run plant. Foresters employ a total of 48 people from the districts of Humenné and Michalovce and another 500 externally hired people. The plant participated in erecting anti-flooding defences and supplied the commemorative columns that were installed on Borsó Hill.

After a government meeting in Sobrance on 23 August, Minister Gajdoš visited Michalovce-based 22nd Mechanised Battalion, Self-Propelled Artillery Detachment, and Engineer Company. He wanted to find out more about their scope of activities and problems he could help resolve. He also visited Hotel Granit, located at the Zemplínska Šírava Dam Reservoir, which operates under the MOD's Horezza joint stock company. Before the government mee-



ting in Trebišov on 24 August, the Minister of Defence visited local military units, to include 21st Combined Mechanised Battalion and 23rd Motorised Battalion.

"The government's three away-days in Sabinov, Sobrance and Trebišov are successfully behind us. I am pleased to conclude that people in eastern Slovakia are proud of their traditions. They welcomed us while dressed in national costumes and singing folk songs and it was sincere. I'd like to thank for the warm welcome and I am looking forward to our next government away-day meetings in eastern Slovakia. For sure, the people who pass on traditions to their children and grandchildren in this fantastic manner do deserve our support," concluded SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

commemorating on Monday, 29 August. SVK Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim emphasised that soldiers are here for visitors and they are ready to answer their questions and introduce the equipment they operate.

At SIAF 2016, over 100 aircraft from 13 countries presented themselves to the public with flying displays in the air as well as with static displays on the ground. The event attracted audiences of approx. 115,000 visitors to the SAF Sliach base.



