



Minister of Defence in eastern Slovakia

(30-31 August) Besides attending the government's away-day meeting in Vranov nad Topľou, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš also visited Col Gen Ján Ambruš Helicopter Wing in Prešov. There, he was interested in the status of the unit's preparedness to operate a new fleet of Black Hawk helicopters, performance of tasks, and incident response missions that aircrews had carried out as part of domestic crisis management events. "The Helicopter Wing performs vital tasks which are not only military in nature, but it is as well involved in domestic crisis management. Our helicopters regularly assist in extinguishing forest fires in hardly accessible terrains, in flood emergencies, or, for example, in conducting search and rescue for missing people," emphasised the head of the MOD. Aside the aforementioned missions, the unit also uses its fleet of Mil Mi-17 helicopters to execute transport and helicopter insertion tasks.

While in Vranov nad Topľou, Minister Gajdoš also visited the grave of a soldier who died as the Antonov An-24 military aircraft crashed on its way home from KFOR in Kosovo near the Hungarian village of Hejce in January 2006. "We have promised never to forget our soldiers who died while discharging their duties and we will live up to that promise," accentuated Minister Gajdoš, while noting that the SVK military forms an important part of international crisis management, whether be it under the umbrella of NATO, the UN or the European Union.

Still before the government's away-day meeting in Svidník, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, accompanied by Col Miroslav Čaplovič, Director of Military History Institute, visited a lookout tower at Dukla, which forms part of the Military History Museum and offers excellent views of an area that was a battlefield of the Carpatho-Dukla Offensive in the autumn of 1944. He paid tribute to the memory of its victims at the Czechoslovak Army Corps Memorial and at the War Cemetery at Dukla. "Right here in this area intense battles were being waged in the cause of our liberty during the Second World War. It is a beautiful region, one which is inseparably related to our history that needs to be respected by us as a nation," said the Minister. Just before the government's away-day session in Svidník, he appreciated the warm and sincere welcome given by local residents: "There were children and young people who were dressed in costumes, which pleased me immensely, because this, too, is part of our history. And there are places in this region linked to it inseparably. My sincere thanks go to them."

We hold the uprising in esteem

At the end of August SVK servicemen and women commemorated the 72nd anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising across dozens of garrisons. For example, Lt Col Oliver Toderiška, Commander of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Defence Battalion Rožňava, together with Lt Col Ľubomír Bodnár, Commander of Rocket Launcher Detachment, paid their respects to all those who participated in the operations against Nazis, both in Rožňava and Rimavská Sobota. Members of the SVK Air Force Headquarters paid homage to the uprising in Zvolen, Krupina and Dudince. The Military Band of the SVK Armed Forces Bratislava co-created the ceremonial atmosphere at the memorials at Jankov Vŕšok, Roh Hill in Lubina, Zlatno, Skýcov, Partizánske, Pezinok, Nitra, Bratislava and Topoľčany, while the Military Band Banská Bystrica provided music for the commemorations in Banská Bystrica, and in other cities and villages.

Building the Active Reserves

(2-30 September) The candidates for inclusion into the Active Reserves who meet the applicable legal conditions are invited to submit, over the course of September, their applications to the Personnel Office of the SVK Armed Forces via the recruitment teams based in each regional administrative capital, depending on their place of permanent residence. Throughout the year 2017, the SVK Ministry of Defence is planning to train 50 members of the Active Reserves in the engineer military occupational specialty. The training is scheduled to be conducted between 15 and 26 May 2017.

For each calendar year, the soldiers who are to remain in the Active Reserves shall be entitled to a motivational benefit in the amount of 600 euros, which shall be payable retrospectively to them provided that they have undertaken at least 75 per cent of the training scheme. Moreover, they shall be entitled to a commensurate proportion of rank-based pay, as well as to travel allowance to cover the cost of travel from the place of their permanent residence to a designated area and vice versa. They shall also be held materially accountable for the military equipment to be entrusted to them.

To qualify for inclusion into the Active Reserves, the candidates must meet several conditions. More information is available at <https://www.mosr.sk/oznamenie-ministerstva-obrany-sr-o-moznosti-zaradenia-vojakov-v-zalohe-do-aktivnych-zaloh/>. The amended Act on Liability to Conscription, which allows the use of the Active Reserves even in a time of security, has been valid since January 2016.



- A welcome-home ceremony was held on 2 September on the parade ground at Training Battalion Martin for the SVK Armed Forces personnel returning from EUFOR – ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "Security and stability in the world are no longer certain today, nor are they in the European countries where we have so far been accustomed to that. This is partly a reason why today the soldier's profession and people's jobs in other security components are far more difficult than they used to be," said the State Secretary at the Ministry of Defence, Ivan Mačovský, at the gathering. Along with Maj Gen Ondřej Novosad, Commander of SVK Land Forces, they awarded the soldiers with the Minister of Defence Medal for Participation in Military Operation and the best soldiers were also presented with material gifts from the Chief of the General Staff of the SVK Armed Forces.

- On 31 August, 31 participants of the Voluntary Military Training (VMT) concluded their basic military training by conducting the RG-Cv F1 live grenade throwing drills at Sučany Garrison's training grounds. They will now have undertaken specialist training in specific military occupational specialties by the end of September. Originally joined by 37 citizens on 6 June, the VMT will culminate with the VMT graduates taking an oath of allegiance and being promoted into the rank of 2nd Degree Soldier at the end of the month. The State Secretary at the SVK Ministry of Defence, Ivan Mačovský, arrived in Sučany to express his support for the participants on the training, as well as visiting Training Battalion Martin.

- A change of command ceremony for Commander Logistics Battalion Hlohovec, attended by the Battalion members, took place at Logistics Battalion Hlohovec on 30 August. Having been in command of the Battalion since 1 August 2013, Lt Col Maroš Murárik handed over to Lt Col Richard Beniák. The incoming commander officially assumed the responsibilities as Battalion Commander on 1 September. Also in attendance at the ceremony was Col Jozef Ševčík, Commander of Combat Support Brigade, with which Lt Col Murárik is to take up the appointment as Chief of Staff.

- Over the period of August 2016, 50 SVK Armed Forces soldiers were assigned to provide technical assistance to the Museum Sections of the Military History Museum in Piešťany and Svidník. Soldiers drawn from Garrisons Prešov, Kuchyňa, Sereď, Nitra and Trebišov assisted in moving oversized collection exhibits to the museum's depot, cleaning exterior exposition areas and the surroundings of exhibits, as well as taking part in the maintenance of collectibles.

- The 21st International Military Hike to Mount Kriváň (2,494m a.s.l.), held on 27 August, attracted a total of 1,654 hikers, including soldiers from Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Lithuania. "The event has recorded the highest attendance levels in its history," said Col (Rtd) Tomáš Švec, President of the SVK Soldiers' Union, who organises the hiking event. Its participants and organisers were greeted on behalf of SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš by General Staff (GS) Col Radoslav Ivančík, Director General of Human Resources Department at the MOD.

- Maj Gen Miroslav Korba, Commander of SVK Air Force, became the laureate of the 3rd Golden Wings National Aviation Award in the armed components aviation category during the awards ceremony held in Banská Bystrica on Friday, 26 August. The award committee had taken account, among other things, of his efforts in drafting the SVK Air Force Development Concept, adopted by the SVK government in May 2014. Commenting on the award, Maj Gen Miroslav Korba said: "These positive developments are an outcome of work by a large number of specialists from across the Ministry of Defence, with whom I am honoured to work and without whom this would have been impossible, I hold them in great esteem and share a common intent with them – to keep developing Slovak aviation."

Activation of SVK NFIU

(1 September) The Slovak NATO Force Integration Unit (SVK NFIU) was officially activated on 1 September 2016. In practice, this means that it is now under the command of the NATO Multinational Corps Northeast in Szczecin, rather than being subordinate to the SVK Armed Forces. The Slovak NATO Force Integration Unit is scheduled to reach Initial Operational Capability (IOC) on 1 January 2017 and Full Operational Capability (FOC) on 1 June 2017. The main mission of the SVK NFIU will be the delivery of support to NATO's collective defence in the planning process, assistance in training and joint exercises and, if needed, support to



and coordination of Allied forces' reception in a specific region. The unit's scope of responsibility will include identifying logistic capabilities and limitations, transportation means and routes, supporting infrastructure so as to ensure as rapid and smooth a deployment of the NATO Alliance's High Readiness Forces as possible. The Slovak NFIU will be headquartered at Vajnory Barracks. It will be manned by a total of 41 service personnel.

Represented in Austria

(2-3 September) After three years Austria's Zeltweg hosted the international Airpower airshow again. In a line-up of flying and static displays, a total of 246 aircraft and helicopters from 20 countries participated in the event. Of them, 53 aircraft came from the host country. Over 300,000 visitors appreciated, among others, the SVK Air Force, to be precise, the static displays of a Mil Mi-17 helicopter and an Aero L-39 Albatros jet trainer aircraft, as well as an L-39 flying demonstration by Maj Peter Gregor.



Thousands of visitors at Piešťany-based Military History Museum

(3 September) The 10th edition of Armed Components and Rescue Systems Day with Children was opened with a flypast of MiG-29 fighters and a gun salute from a vintage Sexton howitzer in the grounds of Piešťany-based Military History Museum. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Mayor of Piešťany Miloš Tamajka took on the patronage of the event, which attracted thousands of visitors.

"Those of us in Defence deeply treasure national and military traditions. Also for this reason, we try to use every opportunity to bring military history closer to the public. Apart from this, our effort is to show, especially to young people, the work and weapons of today's professional soldiers. They may become enthralled by this to that extent that they too decide to pursue a soldier's career," said the State Secretary at the SVK Ministry of Defence, Ivan Mačovský, who was present at the event in Piešťany. Besides the presence of military personnel, policemen, customs officers, members of the Prison and Justice Guards Corps, fire-fighters, rescuers, and military history clubs members presented themselves to the visitors as well.

"I am very pleased that at our museum we have, for the 10th year,

managed to present the military, past and present, as well as the co-operation of armed forces, armed components and rescue services. This is about being proud of our traditions as much as it is about the patriotism of today," said Col Miroslav Čaplovič, Director of Military History Institute, under whose authority the Military History Museum in Piešťany falls.



- Members of the Pontoon Company, of Engineer Battalion Sered, tested their expertise and skills in a platoon-sized specialist tactical exercise at Garrison Váh's training grounds. The theme of the exercise was to provide engineering support to force mobility through the assets employed by the Pontoon Company, which was the company's core mission, i.e. to secure the mobility of its own units. The exercising soldiers on the River Váh set up a pontoon bridge with a maximum load capacity of 60 tonnes and a floating pontoon crossing point with a maximum load capacity of 80 tonnes, as well as providing ship transport.