



Minister thanks soldiers

(1 January) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko participated in a video conference call with the service personnel who were on duty at the turn of the year, whilst deployed on operations and missions abroad. They wished them a prosperous 2018 and thanked them for their work in the previous year in favour of the SVK Armed Forces and the Slovak Republic as a whole.

"Thank you for your commitment and work over the festive season. I know you'd rather be with your close ones, but I want to reassure you that we do value your contribution to security. I wish you all the best for the New Year, may you accomplish all your professional tasks successfully and return home safely," said Head of the MOD.

General Secretary Ján Holko extended his warmest greetings to the soldiers on behalf of Parliamentary Chairman/Chairman of the Slovak National Party (SNS) Andrej Danko and on his own behalf. "I want to thank you for your service under the flag of the Slovak Republic over the past 25 years and for performing your tasks to the benefit of our country," he said. A total of 257 Slovak servicemen and women are currently deployed on operations and missions abroad. Overall, 18,000 soldiers from Slovakia have rotated in and out of the Slovak military deployments abroad.

Soldiers receive a present

(20 December) Slovak President and Commander-in-Chief of the Slovak Armed Forces Andrej Kiska along with Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and Chief of Defence Gen Milan Maxim spoke with Slovak soldiers deployed on missions in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Cyprus. In a video conference call, Slovak President A. Kiska wished all the servicemen and women a merry and peaceful Christmas. He was keen to learn about the security developments in the countries where they perform their duties and responsibilities and about how they will be spending their off duty time this Christmas. Head of the MOD gave the soldiers extra free phone minutes as a Christmas present. "I am convinced that the servicemen and women will use this present to stay in close touch with their beloved ones over the festive period," he said.

Christmas phone call

(19 December) The SVK Chief of Defence (CHOD) spoke by telephone with Slovak service personnel deployed on international crisis management operations. Following his trip to Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina where General Maxim had handed out Christmas presents from the MOD and SVK Armed Forces leadership, he wished the Slovak personnel serving abroad a peaceful and safe Christmas. "Your operational duties must come first. Still, I strongly believe you will also find some time to enjoy festive moments within the close circle of your Slovak fellow soldiers," he said in the phone conversation. The commanders of the Slovak Contingents briefed the CHOD on current developments in the area of operations and on the operational plan for the festive season. At the same time, they thanked for the Christmas presents in the form of Christmas trees, decorations, and traditional Christmas food ingredients. Some presents will also contribute to beefing up performance standards, especially when it comes to new Landrover Discovery patrol vehicles on Operation EUFOR Althea. At the conclusion of the phone call, General Maxim wished soldiers a speedy and safe return home on accomplishment of their tasks.

Soldiers welcome New Year 2018 by firing a gun salvo

(1 January) The New Year 2018, which coincides with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Slovak Republic and SVK Armed Forces, was greeted by artillerymen firing a traditional New Year's Gun Salute from Bratislava's Tyršovo Square. For the first time they were under the command of a servicewoman from Michalovce. "Traditionally, the New Year's Gun Salute comes part and parcel with the New Year. In a way it connects our history with the contemporary history of the SVK Armed Forces, insofar as this tradition goes back to the period before the breakup of Czechoslovakia," remarked SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, who was joined at the ceremonial act in Tyršovo Square by other MOD officials. In recognition of the jubilee, he wished the SVK Armed Forces all the best in performing their tasks this year and in the years to come. "I am convinced that, as has been the case thus far, the SVK Armed Forces will be viewed by the public as an institution they can trust, knowing that it is always here for them," emphasised Head of the MOD. Traditionally, the New Year's Gun Salute is fired on the orders of the President of the Slovak Republic, who concurrently acts as Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces. This year, active duty soldiers of the Self-Propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce fired the gun salute from the 122mm HD-30 Artillery Howitzers.



- SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš and the Chairwoman of the Slovak Trade Union of Employees in Defence, Mária Huszlicsková, signed the **2018 Collective Agreement** on 20 Dec. The Collective Agreement between the SVK MOD and the Slovak Trade Union of Employees in Defence regulates the mutual relations between the SVK MOD and MOD civilian employees.

- Artillerymen from Michalovce carried out a rehearsal on Nitra Garrison's Koliňanský Vrch training ground on 29 Dec, firing a 20-gun salvo ahead of the **traditional New Year's Gun Salute**. As part of their drill, members of Self-Propelled Artillery Unit Michalovce synchronised all their activities in preparation for the New Year's Gun Salute, using the 122mm HD-30 Artillery Howitzers. The rehearsal was inspected by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

- Members of the Slovak Contingent deployed on Operation ALTHEA in Bosnia and Herzegovina participated in a **blood donation event** at a medical facility in Kasinovo on 18 Dec.

- It has become a Christmas tradition for military policemen to prepare toys, parcels, mind-sharpening logic and parlour games as presents for kids from the **Children's Shelter in Kráľova Lehota**. The presents were handed out to kids by Col Michal Migát, Director of SVK Military Police, and Lt Col Marián Turanský, Director of Training and Military Working Dog (MWD) Department Vikanová Hronsek.

- Traditionally, members of the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen met with child patients at the **Children's Faculty Hospital with Outpatient Clinic** in Banská Bystrica and their teaching staff from the elementary school integrated into the hospital. They gave them Christmas presents and creative aids they had bought from the proceeds raised in a voluntary charity campaign.

- On 18 Dec, Col Róbert Tóth, Commander **Helicopter Wing Prešov**, welcomed representatives of District and Regional Police, Firefighting and Rescue Corps Directorates in Prešov, selected members of Civilian Protection and Crisis Planning Section, part of Integrated Rescue System Coordination Centre, and members of the SVK Air Force's Operations Control Centre. The aim of the meeting was to evaluate the cooperation in searching for missing aircraft and providing assistance to search and rescue (SAR) ops, including 2017 air incidents, as well as discussing the plans to deepen this cooperation.

- The SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to update the inhabitants of Slovakia on the upcoming **Allied military movements**, scheduled from 2-7 January 2018. A total of 4 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve U.S. troops transporting supplies in support of KFOR.

Minister Gajdoš hands over prizes to winners of literary competition

(20 December) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš handed over prizes to the winners of the 13th MOD Literary Competition with the theme **Our security cannot be taken for granted**. The prizes in the College/University category went to Peter Kromka (1st place), Dominik Gromoš (2nd place), and Ján Dvorščák (3rd place). In the Secondary Schools category, the prizes went to Klára Deketová (1st place) and Karolína Kollárová (2nd place). Just as the previous year, the winners of the College/University and Secondary Schools categories had been selected in an online public vote on the Facebook social network. Head of the MOD highly appreciated the effort of all the young writers participating in this competition. "I think the theme of this year's competition was

Visit to Operation SOPHIA



(19 December) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited the SVK Military Police members who have performed their duties in support of EUNAVFOR MED Op Sophia in the Mediterranean. He met with the team aboard a German ship, out of which they have

been operating for the past almost 5 months. He brought them a Christmas tree, traditional Slovakian Christmas meals and some presents from Slovakia. Minister Gajdoš appreciated the fact that the SVK Boarding Team has been called on to intervene 17 times and has participated in a variety of emergency drills, resupply procedures and training, as well as in a joint exercise with a Spanish warship. The Slovakian delegation was received by Frigate Captain Christian Schultze, of the German Navy, who fully acknowledged the contribution of the SVK military policemen to the common effort. The SVK Contingent Commander, MSgt Ladislav Kováč, confirmed the complexity of the operations. On the deployment of the SVK Military Police members, Military Police Director Col Michal Migát said: "It was so nice to listen to the words of the Captain of the Ship who was lavish with his praises of our team members. I consider it as appreciation of their preparation and training, which in this particular case took place both at home and aboard a ship in Germany."

Sportspeople of the Year



(22 December) Members of the Military Sports Centre Dukla Banská Bystrica (VŠC Dukla) placed well in Slovakia's most prestigious annual award of sports personality - 2017 Sportspeople of the Year, with skier Petra Vihová

taking 2nd place and skier Veronika Velez-Zuzulová finishing 3rd place. Two were ranked in Top 10, slalom canoeist Alexander Slafkovský (7th place) and sprint canoeist Peter Gelle (9th place). The Sport Legend Award went to Jozef Pribilinec, the former long-time representative of the VŠC Dukla and Olympic winner. Sportspeople of the VŠC Dukla also placed well in the category of teams. In downhill skiing, the combined team of Veronika Velez-Zuzulová, Petra Vihová, Matej Falát and Andreas Žampa clinched 1st place. The water slalom trio (Men's 3x1) of Michal Martikán, Alexander Slafkovský (both of the VŠC Dukla) and Matej Beňuš took 3rd place. "I want to offer my sincere congratulation to all the awarded sportsmen and sportswomen. I trust they will prove their qualities at the upcoming Winter Olympics and represent our Slovakia proudly. They can continue to rely on our support, that's for sure," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

highly topical, as we can never take security for granted. And although a lot of young people may not be aware of it, the



defence of their homeland depends on them too," he emphasised. For the MOD, the competition is a way to deliver one of the SVK Government Manifesto Commitments as well as those of the Slovak National Party (SNS) to raise public awareness of patriotism and homeland defence. Having met the entry criteria, a total of 210 competitive entries were evaluated in the first round by MOD judges. Of all entries, 5 were selected in each category for an online public vote on Facebook. A total of 4,568 people participated in the vote, which opened on 22 November and closed on the midnight of 30 November.