



A commemoration in Nováky

(1 March) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today attended a ceremony to remember the victims of the tragic blast of 2 March 2007 at the Military Repair Plant (MRP) in Nováky, which claimed 8 lives and dozens were injured.

In his remarks, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Coming to terms with the loss of a close one and finding a new sense in life is the most difficult lot for the surviving next of kin to handle. In this case, your new beginning must have been all the more difficult, because no one has been punished for the death of your close ones to date. As a politician I am in a difficult situation, because it is not befitting for me to assess the work of law enforcement agencies. But as a husband and a father I humanly sympathise with you in this situation."

In 2007 the blast in the ammunition disassembly hall destroyed much of the plant. Consequently, the leadership of the MRP Nováky adopted a set of measures to minimise work-related hazards and prevent any malpractice. In 2012 the MOD leased the MRP facility to a strategic partner for 20 years.

A surprise gift for Anastasiya

(1 March) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš today fulfilled his promise and gave Anastasiya Kuzmina the promised surprise gift for the three Olympic medals she won at this year's Winter Olympics. She and her husband and children will spend a week at an MOD-run Horezza spa facility. As their personal gift, Minister Gajdoš and General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko presented Anastasiya Kuzmina with a work of art depicting the medal trio and epitomising the Olympic spirit. Head of the MOD also gave prizes to other successful biathletes – Paulína Fialková, Ivona Fialková, Terézia Poliaková – for their 5th place as well as to their support teams. Later on, he will also give a prize to skier Petra Vlhová, who is currently out of the country.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I am immensely proud that the performances of the Dukla sportspeople [within Team Slovakia] were the best at the Winter Olympics. They clearly demonstrated that they belong to the world's best athletes. But our thanks go out not only to them but also to all coaches, support teams, and the VŠC Dukla leaders."

As Anastasiya Kuzmina said, the symbolic coin for good luck that Minister Gajdoš presented to every Olympian before their departure to the Olympic Games met its purpose. "I felt the sincere support of the MOD and Minister Peter Gajdoš thanks to the talisman and the everyday encouraging messages and personal congratulations, which motivated me for my next performances."

Roman Benčík, Director of the VŠC DBB, praised the performances of his protégées and protégés at the Winter Olympic Games and he added that the money he has received as a reward from the MOD he will reinvest into a new roller skiing circuit for the Dukla biathletes. Head of the MOD has promised to give his maximum support to help build a better training infrastructure for our successful sportswomen and sportsmen.

For their performances, our successful sportswomen received financial rewards of €6,000 (gold), €4,500 (silver) and €2,500 (5th place) from the MOD. Financial rewards will also be given to their coaches.

Col Kraushuberová becomes new Commander CSS Brigade

(1 March) On 28 February, Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim attended the Combat Support Service Brigade (CSS Bde) Change of Command (COC) ceremony at the Headquarters Land Forces (HQLF) in Trenčín. Lt Col Zuzana Kraushuberová was promoted to the rank of Colonel and assumed command of the CSS Bde. During the ceremony, Gen Maxim symbolically handed over the colonel shoulder marks to Lt Col Zuzana Kraushuberová and promoted her to the rank of Colonel. The CHOD congratulated her on her appointment as Brigade Commander, praised her work to the benefit of the Armed Forces, and underscored her role as the first female commander of the Brigade. He also thanked for her sense of responsibility in performing her duties thus far, and wished her every success in her new appointment. Another ceremony was held at SNP Barracks in Trenčín on 1 March. The Personnel Orders of the Chief of Defence were read out. The outgoing Brigade Commander, Col Jozef Ševčík, took up the appointment of Commander Logistics Office Trenčín and Col Zuzana Kraushuberová took over from him as Commander Combat Support Service Brigade. Also in attendance at the ceremony were Brig Ľubomír Gacko, Chief of Staff for Operations Support (GS), Brig Karol Navrátil, Deputy Commander SVK LF, SVK LF HQ staff, and other guests. In his remarks, Brig Karol Navrátil thanked Col Ševčík for his role in developing the CSS Bde. He congratulated Col Kraushuberová on her promotion and wished her every success in her new appointment. The ceremony was concluded with a ceremonial march.



- A meeting of SVK Armed Forces CBRN specialists, led by Col Miroslav Ofčarovič, Chief of Operations Combat Support Branch at SVK GS, was held on 28 Feb – 1 Mar at Referential Chemical Laboratory Zemianske Kostolány, National EOD and CBRN Centre Nováky.

- A SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office Director's Meeting of Commanders was held on 27 Feb at the SVK Armed Forces Academy Liptovský Mikuláš. Col Ivan Šálaši evaluated the tasks being performed in specific areas, with a focus on work with military personnel and set out the tasks for Training Year (TY) 2018.

- Bratislava-based Kutuzov Barracks hosted an initial planning conference for Exercise Slovak Shield 2018 on 27-28 Feb. Taking part in the exercise will be Visegrad 4 (V4) Armed Forces units, U.S. Army Europe (USAREUR) troops, and Indiana National Guard (INNG) personnel. The exercise will test the coordination role of NFU SVK.

- During the Logistics Office Chief's Meeting of Commanders held on 28 Feb, CHOD Gen Milan Maxim presided over the Logistics Office Chief Change of Command ceremony, with the outgoing commander, General Staff (GS) Col Ján Zarnovický, handing over to the incoming commander, Col Jozef Ševčík, whose most recent appointment was as Commander Combat Support Service Brigade. Col Zarnovický will take up a new appointment at the SVK General Staff.

- On 26 Feb – 2 Mar, Members of the Defence Fire Service (DFS) from Tac Wng Sliach, Tpt Wng Kuchyňa, and Heli Wng Prešov underwent fire training at the Defence Fire Training & Development Centre (DFTDC) in Manston, England. They honed their skills whilst using different types of firefighting equipment.

- St Sebastian's Cathedral, of the Ordinariate of the Armed Forces and Armed Corps, located in Bratislava's Krasňany, hosted a Holy Mass to mark the 15th Anniversary of the Ordinariate on 1 Mar. In attendance were Apostolic Nuncio to Slovakia Archbishop Giacomo Guido Ottonello, SVK Parliament Deputy Chairman Martin Giváč, church dignitaries, representatives of the Defence Ministry, Interior Ministry, Justice Ministry, and Finance Ministry.

- The Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra hosted a Brigade Commander's Meeting of Commanders, chaired by Col Ladislav Dovhoun, on 26 Feb. In attendance were the AAM Bde HQ leaders, staff and units. DCOM SVK AF Brig Miroslav Lorinc presented selected soldiers with the Slovak Minister of Defence Commemorative Medal marking the 25th Anniversary of the Establishment of the SVK Armed Forces.

- In the presence of DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian at Vajnory Barracks on 27 Feb, Col Slavomír Milde, Commander Bratislava Garrison (COM BA GAR), took stock of the Training Year (TY) 2017 results and briefed the BA GAR staff on the goals set for 2018.

- On 23 Feb, a total of 137 soldier trainees finished their basic military training (BMT) for the service in the SVK Armed Forces by taking the SVK Armed Forces Oath of Allegiance and attending the graduation ceremony at the Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin. 1st Degree Private Veronika Hrochová was named Best Graduate of Basic Military Training (BMT).

- The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus and Head of UNFICYP, Ms Elizabeth Spehar, and the Force Commander, Maj Gen Humayun Kabir, presided over a UN medal presentation ceremony held at the UNFICYP HQ, located in Nicosia, Cyprus. Slovak Ambassador to Cyprus Ján Škoda and First Secretary/ Consul Daniel Belanský came to the ceremony to show their support to SLOVCON.

- The last surviving Czechoslovak airman and fighter pilot of the Royal Air Force (RAF), the elite pilot of No. 310 Czechoslovak Fighter Squadron RAF and Deputy Chairman of the Czechoslovak Legionary Community, Maj Gen (Rtd) Emil Boček celebrated his 95th birthday on 22 Feb. On behalf of the CHOD and the entire SVK Armed Forces DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko visited Maj Gen (Rtd) Emil Boček to congratulate him on his birthday.

- The SVK MOD wishes to inform the drivers in Slovakia about the upcoming Allied military movements, scheduled from 5-11 Mar 2018. A total of 14 Allied road moves will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve CZE troops en route to a military exercise, and HRV and POL troops transporting their equipment. This week will also see SVK military round trip convoys with oversize cargo of equipment along the routes: Rožňava – Zemianske Kostolány, Topoľčany – Koliňany, Michalovce – Poruba, Rožňava – TC Lešť.

Minister condemns a hoax



(26 February) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš is to initiate penal action against an unknown offender for spreading a hoax about the SVK AF Mi-17 helicopters, to be exact, for the claims that the defence capability of Slovakia has been threatened.

He denies the accusations reported in the media. "Once again the good reputation of the Armed Forces and the MOD has been seriously damaged. There should be limits to everything, including political wrangling," he said at a press conference.

He stressed that as Head of the MOD he is seriously concerned about the people who constantly mislead the public and damage the good reputation of the Armed Forces, the people who will not shrink from casting doubt on the defence capability of our country. He underlined the fact that SAR missions over the period the SAR helicopter could not be airborne were provided by other air assets. In the military there are procedures that must be followed, including information classification, and we cannot discuss details of the checks being carried out at this moment. Just as the MOD proceeded with the inquiry into the munitions depots, the public will also be updated on the results of this inquiry, whether or not the discrepancies in the provision of the engines in the years 2006 – 2015 are established.

General Secretary of the MOD Service Office Ján Holko explained that the Military Aviation State Authority is the only body to be entrusted with the task of assessing the airworthiness of military aircraft. "If there is any sign of breach in the preparation, maintenance and operation of aircraft, it is obliged to order a temporary halt of operations and to look into all the circumstances."

V4 Senior Body

(28 February) On 27-28 February, State Secretary of the SVK MOD Róbert Ondrejčák attended the second meeting of the V4 Senior Body during the HUN V4 Presidency. The State Secretaries of the V4 MODs discussed the agenda of the upcoming V4 Defence Ministerial in March and preparations for the upcoming NATO Summit. They also focused on the developments in the EU's CSDP, especially PESCO. Róbert Ondrejčák then presented Slovakia's PESCO EuroArtillery project to his partners and invited them to sign up for the initiative. He also invited them to the next V4 Senior Body to be held during the SVK V4 Presidency in the second half of 2018 in Slovakia.

New Commander NATO EOD COE



(28 February) Colonel Róbert Császár today took up the appointment of Commander NATO Explosive Ordnance Disposal Centre of Excellence (NATO EOD COE), taking over from Colonel Ľubomír Mrvňák. The Change of Command (COC) ceremony was held at the Trenčín Garrison Club and was attended by SVK Minister

of Defence Peter Gajdoš and other MOD and Armed Forces officials. In his speech, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Our Explosive Ordnance Disposal Centre of Excellence has an irreplaceable place on the international stage. For more than 7 years Slovak EOD specialists have demonstrated through their responsible and highly accurate work that they are among the world's best." He thanked the outgoing commander, Col Mrvňák, for his job well done and wished the incoming commander, Col Császár, a lot of strength and energy in performing his new duties. Chief of Defence General Milan Maxim said: "I believe Col Császár will continue to improve the EOD COE. And the members of the Centre will maintain their readiness to perform tasks, because the results of their work are highly valued not only in the Slovak Republic but also in the international environment." The NATO Explosive Ordnance Disposal Centre of Excellence (NATO EOD COE) Trenčín was accredited in 2011 and the EOD domain is among the key capabilities of the Slovak Armed Forces.