



Skýcov tragedy anniversary

(18 March) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš commemorated the 73rd anniversary of the Skýcov tragedy, which befell the village when it was burned down by German soldiers at the end of WWII. He stressed it is inevitable to remember events like this one, because only in this way can they serve as a reminder to all those who have a tendency to take the visions of the people spreading extremist views for their own. "For the brave partisans, life in freedom and peace was worth taking a risk and making the ultimate sacrifice. May their bravery be an inspiration for today's youth." German occupation forces burned the village down on 16 March 1945 and deported 13 of its residents to Nazi concentration camps. Skýcov was liberated on 30 March 1945 by the Red Army's 2nd Ukrainian Front. A memorial to the victims of WWII was unveiled in the village in 1949.

Veterans Amendment Act

(13 March) The 2018 War Veterans Amendment Act had its first reading in the SVK Parliament's plenary. It will enable the MOD to refurbish a building as a residential home for elderly veterans. The SVK Cabinet gave its consent to the Amendment Act in January 2018. It determines the extent of the services and the costs of accommodation and catering to be covered by the residential facility. This is about providing the war veterans who have run into difficulty with accommodation with a long-term affordable place to stay. Moreover, it counts with the possibility that the MOD will pay a share of their cost of accommodation, provided that they are unable to do so out of their own pension. In case of vacancies, the residential home will also be open to ex-service personnel. The MOD is planning to refurbish a building in an already existing facility that falls under the remit of the department. As of today, Slovakia registers 173 WWII veterans and over 7,500 contemporary veterans.

Active Reserves to be more attractive

(13 March) Active reservists will exercise under more attractive conditions. This follows from the Conscription Amendment Act, which the SVK GOV passed into law. It will now be possible to reimburse salaries and travel costs incurred to and from regular exercises not only to employees but also to the self-employed. Furthermore, it enables the soldiers in the reserves – holding the rank one below or two higher than their own rank required for the specific positions to be assigned to – to join the Active Reserves. This allows more candidates to meet the set requirements and thus qualify for transfer to the Active Reserves.

Amongst other new elements introduced are the provisions on non-attendance of active reservists at regular training and the obligation of active reservists to report changes in the conditions of their assignment to commanders. Another change is that an active reservist is entitled to a commensurate part of rank-based pay only for the period of time spent on regular training or when performing tasks in favour of the SVK Armed Forces.

The SVK Parliamentary Plenary also passed an amendment to the Professional Soldiers' State Service Act. Under the new legislation, the soldiers deploying on an exercise abroad to perform their tasks for a period longer than 1 month will be entitled to a foreign [exercise deployment] allowance up to 8 times the rank-based pay of 2nd Degree Private in Pay Grade 1. The allowance will already apply to the soldiers deploying to the Baltics as part of NATO's enhanced Forward Presence (eFP) and they will be entitled to free phone time.

The Battles of Sokolovo and Bakhmach remembered in Ukraine

(15 March) A Slovak delegation, led by DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko, commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Czech and Slovak soldiers of the 1st Czechoslovak Independent Field Battalion engaging in their initial combat operation on the Eastern Front – the Battle of Sokolovo near Kharkiv on 9 March 1943. The joint commemorative event was organised by the SVK and CZE MODs, embassies, associations and clubs, with the participation of CZE Defence Minister in resignation Karla Šlechťová. Representing Slovakia at the event was DCHOD Lt Gen Pavel Macko, Ambassador Juraj Síváček, Head of the War Veterans and Pensioners Section at the MOD Richard Zimányi, and the SVK Defence Attaché to Ukraine.

Elsewhere, during the acts of remembrance at Velikaya Doch and at Bakhmach-Kievskiy Railway Station on 10 March, the delegations unveiled a new monument and two commemorative plaques in tribute to the memory of the Czechoslovak legionaries to mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Bakhmach.



On 15 Mar, NFIU SVK personnel took part in **Exercise Toxic Lance 2018** at the Training and Testing Centre (TTC) Zemianske Kostolany, where CBRN Battalion Rožňava members along with CZE and U.S. troops had been training with toxic chemicals.

- The crew of Maj Stanislav Štovka, Commander 1st Transport Flight, of Transport Wing Kuchyňa, took to the skies in its SVK Air Force **C-27J Spartan** on 14 Mar, to conduct its initial transport mission from Šliach Air Base to Larnaca (Cyprus), carrying materiel for the SLOVCON rotating troops in UNFICYP.

- SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office Liptovský Mikuláš organised a **specialist meeting of librarians from across Defence** on 14 Mar. The librarians familiarised themselves with relevant legal documents, the state of Defence libraries, methodology for reporting annual statistics, and records management. The issues of funding library collections and purchasing new books were addressed as well.

- Commander SVK Land Forces Maj Gen Jindřich Joch welcomed **UK Defence Attaché to Slovakia Colonel Michael Longstaff** to SVK LF HQ on 14 Mar. Maj Gen Joch introduced the key LF HQ staff to Colonel Longstaff and briefed him on the SVK LF's history, organisational structure and doctrinal environment.

- **Ružomberok Central Military Hospital (ÚVN)** welcomed its new military chaplain, Capt Stanislav Kanik, who was ushered in by Military Ordinary Mons František Rábek during a Holy Mass at the ÚVN Chapel on 15 Mar. Capt Stanislav Kanik assumed the appointment of Military Chaplain of the Office of the Surgeon General, where he will support the work of military doctors and nursing staff and provide pastoral service to all hospital patients and employees.

- Selected personnel from **Transport Wing (TW) Kuchyňa** underwent marksmanship training at the "A" infantry firing range on Kuchyňa Training Area on 13-14 Mar. The live firing was conducted by the TW members assigned to the Duty Officer Service. In addition to live firing, they also practised self-defence techniques.

- Between 19 Feb and 9 Mar, Peace Support Operations (PSO) Training Unit, of Training and Mobilisation Replenishment Base Martin, organised a **pre-deployment training for military observers** before deploying to UNTSO in the Middle East and to EUMM in Georgia. During the final week of the training, they attended a three-day exercise to test their practical skills necessary in the performance of their duties in the areas of deployment.

- A pre-deployment ceremony for the 64 SVK personnel deploying on a tour of duty to **UNFICYP**, Cyprus took place at Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra on 9 Mar. In attendance at the ceremony was SVK Air Force Commander Maj Gen Lubomír Svoboda.

- The SVK MOD wishes to alert the drivers in Slovakia to take caution, as there will be **25 Allied military movements** across Slovakia over the period from 12-18 Mar 2018. They will mainly involve HUN and SRB troops rotating in support of UNFICYP, and POL troops transporting equipment. This week will also see SVK military convoys along the routes: Ozorovce – Nový Ruskov – Trebišov; Prešov – Vranov nad Topľou – Sečovce – Veľké Ozorovce; Prešov – Sečovce – Veľké Ozorovce and back; as well as a SVK military round trip convoy with oversize cargo of equipment along the route: Hlohovec – Zvolen – Krupina – Lešť.

WW1 centenary events



(13 March) The Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and the Institute of Adam Mickiewicz organised a working session for coordinators of the commemorative events marking the 100th anniversary of the end of WWI and the establishment of independent states in 1918. Bringing together delegations from HRV, SVK, CZE, EST, FIN, LVA, LTU, ROU, HUN, SVN, AUT, ARM and SRB, the meeting saw delegates introducing their national centenary commemorations. To highlight this historic milestone, they discussed filming a joint promotional video. Representing Slovakia at the meeting were Col Miloslav Čaplovič, Director of the Institute of Military History (VHU), and Matej Medvecký, military history scientist of the Military History Research Branch (VHU). They briefed the delegates on the upcoming commemorations at historic sites at home and abroad, the past and future international conferences for historians, archivists and museologists, the restoration of war cemeteries in Slovakia, as well as presenting publications and exhibitions on the anniversary.

Nitra-based sappers on training



(18 March) The Sereď-based Engineer Battalion's Váh training ground hosted a skills improvement training for instructors in counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) operations. The focus was on training the newly formed Engineer Platoon (Mech Bn Nitra). The sappers were provided with a theory package on IED-related analysis and threat assessment before being exercised in reconnaissance, area search procedures, team-level communications, information sharing, and IED incident response. The Nitra-based Engineer Platoon members honed their skills under the specialist supervision of experienced instructors from Sereď at five of the Váh training ground's facilities.

Officer saves a child's life



(13 March) Capt Miloš Karel, Chief of the Financial Services at the Combat Service Support (CSS) Brigade Trenčín, saved a human life. As he was driving home along the River Váh from Trenčín to Nová Dubnica on 7 March, he caught sight of an 11-year-old boy falling through the ice into the river at the place called the Bay of Calm. He crawled up to him, pulled him out of the water, and hauled him onto the river bank, whereupon policemen, firefighters and other rescue services arrived.

Civilian and military medics and rescuers compete at Lešť



(15 March) The Lešť Training Centre hosted the 8th International Rescue Services Competition on 14-15 March. The event, organised by the Salus Vitalis Civic Association in collaboration with the MOD, was geared towards managing a mass casualty incident (MCI) response. The focus of the competition, preceded by a specialist conference, was on handling an MCI incident response at the scene of an exceptional emergency, including setting up command posts (CPs) and securing coordination, cooperation and communications among the integrated rescue system elements. A total of 40 teams from Slovakia and Czechia, including professional rescuers, Slovak Red Cross staff, SVK Armed Forces personnel, and students of the urgent medical care specialisation took part in the competition, with scenarios replicating real-world incidents. The competitors covered a total of 20km and were tested on their physical fitness over the CIZMA obstacle course and on marksmanship skills by firing small-calibre firearms. The SVK Armed Forces were represented by 7 teams. Gabriela Patakyová and Dana Bocková, of CBRN Bn Rožňava, were first-place finishers, followed by a two-member team of Žilina, and yet another military team of Rožňava, Sgt Michal Kurek and Pte Vladimíra Čipková.