



Children's Day with soldiers

(2 June) Hundreds of children from Svidník and thereabouts celebrated their CHILDREN'S DAY untraditionally – along with soldiers. The Military History Museum Svidník hosted a 'Children's Day with SVK Armed Forces'. Among those who showed up to awaken the interest of children in Homeland Defence were Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš, CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko, State Secretary Marián Saloň, and Magdaléna Kuciaňová MP (SNS).

In his opening remarks, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The popularity of the military profession may often wane when the public lose their touch with the work of soldiers. That is why today I am very glad that we can demonstrate the everyday work of military professionals to both the young and the adults, and raise their awareness of the fact that our soldiers are people who are always ready to defend our homeland and its citizens."

CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko stressed he is happy with every opportunity for the armed forces to meet and speak with the public. "Today we have up to 200 professionals from different Army branches and trades on the ground here and 76 different types of equipment on display. For the public, we can demonstrate a wide range of missions the SVK Armed Forces are tasked to perform," he said.

In addition to today's celebrations, Director of the Institute of Military History Col Miroslav Čaplovič reminded that visitors to the Military History Museum Svidník are invited to attend an exhibition on Slovak military history, which runs the whole year round. Mayor of Svidník Ján Holodňák appreciated the MOD's efforts to organise the event.

The official programme opened with a flypast of an UH-60M Black Hawk rotorcraft. Visitors witnessed soldiers in action: parachute jumps, close combat, dog handling, the culprit's capture, and other dynamic demonstrations. The public could familiarise themselves with military equipment, clothing and weapons. Of all military assets, the biggest draw was a T-72 tank, followed by infantry fighting vehicles, rocket launchers, mortars and others.

On Children's Day, the Ministry of Defence also announced the results of the painting and drawing contest for pupils and students – 'Soldiers through the Eyes of Children'. This year 183 schools and 6 individuals from across Slovakia joined the contest.

Judges evaluated 1,662 works in two categories. Winners of the pupils and students categories are Dominika Ondrušová of Gelnica and Klára Billiková of Nitra, respectively.



International Day Of UN Peacekeepers remembered

(29 May) SVK soldiers have been involved in keeping peace and security on UN-led missions for the past 25 years. Over the period, they have rotated in and out of 19 UN Peace Support Operations (PSO) since the establishment of Slovakia, bringing the total number of SVK military deployed on UN missions to almost 7,500. During a ceremony at the Appeasement Memorial, MOD and Armed Forces leaders paid their respects to the memory of their colleagues who have died serving as UN Peacekeepers.

Speaking about UN peacekeepers, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Despite enduring separation from home and often serving under harsh and challenging conditions, our soldiers have, for the past 25 years, been passing on their expertise to those who need it most outside Slovakia. For this, they deserve our gratitude and support. And we will never forget those who have not made it back home to their loved ones." Shortly afterwards, Minister Gajdoš participated in a video conference call with SVK personnel performing tasks and duties with the UN.

A total of 141 SVK personnel, of whom 9 are servicewomen, are currently deployed with UNFICYP in Cyprus. Another 2 servicemen are deployed as military observers with UNTSO in the Golan Heights. Over 18,100 service personnel (over 500 servicewomen) have since 1993 served on international crisis management missions and operations under the umbrella of the United Nations, NATO and the European Union. A total of 244 SVK personnel (12 servicewomen) are currently deployed abroad.



- Members of the **Indiana National Guard (USA)** who are taking part in Ex LOGEX 2018 visited Repair Battalion Martin on 28 May. DCOM Maj Róbert Kerekeš and COS Maj Jozef Hojo briefed them on the Battalion's capabilities, equipment and facilities.

- On 14 May – 3 June, 12th Mechanised Battalion Group (12th Mech Bn Grp) Nitra underwent training in preparation for the upcoming **CREVAL-based certification exercise**. On successful completion of the exercise, 12th Mech Bn Grp will be put on standby with the NATO Response Force (NRF).

- On 30 May, air defenders of Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra attended a ceremony before deploying on **TOBRUQ LEGACY 2018** in Hungary. Commander AAM Bde Nitra Col Ladislav Dovhun presented the Battle Flag the Brigade air defenders had received on loan from the SVK President earlier this April.

- CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko** welcomed US Defence Attaché Lt Col Jonathan Dunn, DEU Defence Attaché Lt Col Joachim Schmidt and CZE Defence Attaché Maj Gen Ján Gurník for talks at the SVK GS on 25 May. During the meeting with the representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, he expressed his personal interest in strengthening international military collaboration, with focus on working together towards even stronger multilateral, regional and bilateral partnerships.

- After attending a **graduation ceremony** and taking the Oath of Allegiance to the SVK Armed Forces at TMRB Martin on 25 May, a total of 53 soldier trainees have graduated from their basic military training (BMT) and qualified for the service with the SVK Armed Forces. In attendance at the graduation ceremony were State Secretary of the SVK MOD Róbert Ondrejcsák, DCOM SVK Land Forces Brig Karol Navrátil, CSEL of SVK Armed Forces Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš, and other guests. Pte 1st Class Marek Beleščák was named Best BMT Graduate.

- On 25 May, CBRN Battalion (CBRN Bn) Rožňava, based in the Gemer-Malohont region, completed **drills for active reservists** as part of the Active Reserves training programme. The training package for 13 men and 1 woman was divided into all-arms and trade-specific training on Lešť Training Area before being assessed on their knowledge and skills. All active reservists got a 'pass'. At the conclusion of the training, COM CBRN Bn Lt Col Oliver Toderiška thanked all active reservists and instructors for the job well done.

- The SVK MOD wants to alert the drivers in Slovakia to take caution as there will be **34 Allied military movements** across Slovakia over the period between 4 and 10 June 2018. They will mainly involve CZE, POL and ITA troops. There will also be a SVK military convoy transporting oversized cargo of equipment along the route Prešov – Martin and a SVK military convoy along the route Lešť – Michalovce.

Minister and diplomats

(1 June) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš met with the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Slovakia, HE Mr Henk Cor van der Kwast, for talks to address current issues of interest, bilateral collaboration on defence, cooperation within NATO and the EU, especially the PESCO initiative. Also discussed were the commitments arising out of our membership in international organisations. Minister Gajdoš held bilateral talks with the Ambassador of Brazil to Slovakia, HE Mr Luis Antonio Balduino Carneiro. Bilateral cooperation, namely in the defence industry, was high on the agenda. Ambassador Carneiro passed on an invitation to the Defence Minister to pay an official visit to Brazil on the occasion of the Rio International Defence Exhibition (RIDEX) 2018, to be held later this month in Rio de Janeiro.

Malyutkas at Vihorlat



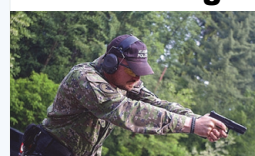
(1 June) Training of BVP-1 (IFV-1) platform gunners/operators culminated on Kamenica nad Cirochou Training Area on 28 May – 1 June. In addition to firing weapon stations and training on gunner simulators,

they practised firing live anti-armour grenades and Malyutka anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), with wrecks of military vehicles set up as their targets. Lt Col Vincent Csery, Officer in Command of the exercise, said: "Over 60 BVP-1 platform gunners/operators from across the SVK Armed Forces took part in the training activity."

Ex Strong Chain

(1 June) The aim of Ex Strong Chain 2018, running from 28 May until 1 June at Hlohovec and Trenčín Barracks and Lešť, was to test the combat readiness of CSS Bde Trenčín's contribution to V4 EU BG II/2019; to practise the capabilities of 12th Mech Bn Grp's NSE; to operate the repair capabilities of third- and fourth- level logistics; and to optimise the functionality of movement control operations. The exercise involved 262 SVK personnel and 125 platforms, plus 5 Indiana Guardsmen.

NP shooting course



(30 May) The Training and Cynology Branch, of the Military Police Department Vlkavová – Hronsek, hosted the first National Police Shooting Course (NPSC) – Level I for military policemen. The course, originally

designed for Police and Flying Squad units, integrates lessons learned from NATO and SVK law enforcement agencies. The Department is already preparing the NPSC – Level II, due to take place later this autumn, with more demanding tasks to negotiate. Successful graduates will then move onto the NPSC – Level III, which is the highest shooting skill level. Each level consists of several training stages.

Minister Gajdoš hands over upgraded tracked armoured IFVs to soldiers

(29 May) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš handed over 21 upgraded tracked armoured fighting vehicles to soldiers for operational use during a handover ceremony at the Specialist Testing Branch Lieskovec, a facility of Dubnica nad Váhom-based Konštruktúra Defence. The vehicles, configured in two variants, are destined for ISTAR and mechanised units. During the ceremony, Minister Gajdoš made a symbolic handover of the vehicles to Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko. On the vehicle uplift programme, Minister Gajdoš said: "Thanks to the life extension upgrade, we have extended the life cycle of the tracked armoured fighting vehicles by another 20 years." He went on to explain that the upgrades for an ISTAR variant and a mechanised unit variant are worth €1.1 million and €1.5 million, respectively. According to General Secretary of the SVK MOD Ján Holko, this modernization project shows how the Long-Term Defence Development Plan works in practice. "I am pleased to say that the project has been completed by our companies." CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko underlined that the military vehicles will shore up the existing capabilities of ISTAR Battalion Prešov, namely those of its Recce Coy. "The vehicles for mechanised units will be used to fulfil our commitments, be they towards NATO's eFP in the Baltics or the Stand-off of other Battlegroups," he explained. The contractor for the vehicle uplift project, delivered in two stages, was Konštruktúra Defence, the state-run joint stock company. Director General of Konštruktúra Defence Roman Ušiak noted that the requirements of the SVK Armed Forces served as a blueprint for integrating the upgrades onto the variants. A total of 35 tracked armoured IFVs will be modernized as part of this vehicle uplift project.

