



Defence in a better light

(7 June) The North Atlantic Alliance has reviewed Slovakia's defence planning in a more positive light than in the past. This follows from the NATO Defence Planning Capability Review 2017-2018 that NATO Defence Ministers dealt with at the NAC meeting in Brussels.

On Slovakia's defence planning, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Compared to last year's Defence Planning Capability Review – Slovak Republic, what NATO really appreciates above all is our gradual increase in defence spending, which is set to reach 1.6% and 2% of GDP on defence in 2020 and 2024, respectively. The Alliance also gives a positive review of Slovakia's contributions to NATO's missions and operations, especially of our participation in NATO's enhanced Forward Presence." He continued: "However, we are falling behind with the stand-up of a heavy mechanised brigade. And that is why Slovakia has set out to expedite the stand-up of a tank battalion and is proceeding with the procurement of 8x8 armoured IFVs." He went on to underscore that it is always necessary to balance what NATO requires and what a country can afford realistically, whilst still respecting Article 3 of the Washington Treaty insofar that Slovakia is obliged to shore up existing defence capabilities at the national level.

In further reflecting on Slovakia's defence capabilities building, Minister Gajdoš noted that NATO does not see the modernization of SVK tactical aviation as a priority. According to the Alliance, we can deliver on our commitments to NATINAMDS with our current fleet of MiG-29 jets or in another way. Nevertheless, the MOD's current leaders deem the replacement of the MiG-29 fleet a core issue in securing the sovereignty of our country.

When it comes to increasing personnel levels, the MOD is now drafting the Personnel Manning Concept and the 2018 Active Duty Soldiers' State Service Amendment Act, to motivate SVK Armed Forces personnel towards career progression.

Head of the SVK MOD then participated in the Military Mobility Symposium. Military mobility, a Dutch-led PESCO project, aims to facilitate rapid and effective movement of troops and materiel in favour of Allied responsiveness to crisis situations. During the session, Ministers talked about the readiness, augmentation and support to armed forces. On this, Minister Gajdoš stressed that "if we have one set of forces, we need one set of roads".

Slovakia is considering increasing its troop levels in the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan as initially mandated, and is preparing a decision on extending funding for the Afghan National Army. It will make a binding statement on these commitments at the July NATO Summit of Heads of State. This announcement was made by Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš after today's meeting of NATO Defence Ministers in Brussels. On funding Afghanistan's Security Forces, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Slovakia has contributed to the Alliance's efforts to stabilise Afghanistan in the long run, and we perceive the need to fill our existing vacancies in the Resolute Support Mission. He continued: "We also understand the need to continue funding the Afghan National Army even beyond 2020. The decision to extend funding for Afghanistan will be taken at the NATO July Summit in Brussels."

In the margins of the NATO Defence Ministerial, V4 Defence Ministers signed the Memorandum of Understanding on the Stand-up of the V4 Joint Logistics Support Group Headquarters. "The Joint Logistics Support Group Headquarters along with its embedded units will be the V4's first permanent structure to be performing tasks for NATO needs," said Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš, adding that a total of 28 SVK personnel will be posted to the HQ.

SVK Armed Forces to be strengthened by new military pilots and aviation specialists

(8 June) The first 8 students of the Aviation Faculty of the Technical University in Košice, who had concurrently pursued studies as cadets of General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš, finished their studies by attending a graduation ceremony and a passing-out parade. The Master of Science (MSc) programme in aviation and the military education programme were completed by 3 pilots, 1 air traffic controller, and 4 aircraft technicians. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "This is the first real outcome of the collaboration between the Aviation Faculty of the Technical University in Košice and our General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš. The new lieutenants will be posted to air units, and I hope that the new air assets they will operate, too, will motivate them to serve in the SVK Air Force." He reminded that 2 UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters entered service with the SVK Air Force last year and 2 Spartan transport aircraft are new additions as well.

Head of the MOD further noted that the collaboration with the Technical University in Košice is seen as a good example of military and civil cooperation in the field of education. "This form of education is a good source for gaining graduates for niche trades. Apart from pilots, in this way we also gain new doctors by collaborating with the Medical Faculty in Hradec Králové."



- Col Edmund Freely (GBR A), new UNFICYP Chief of Staff, visited members of Sector 4 in Cyprus on 6 June. The visit commenced at Camp General M. R. Štefánik, Famagusta. In the afternoon, Col Freely received a situational update briefing, to familiarise himself with Sector 4's Area of Responsibility (AOR), operational tasks, and the progress achieved in current tasks. He then visited SVK personnel in the area of Varosha. His visit was wrapped up with a tour of the crossing point at Dherinia, which is being reconstructed and extended.

- After transporting their SBAD assets to Hungary's Várpalota Training Area, members of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra joined **Ex Tobruq Legacy 2018**. During Day 4 of the exercise the deployed units of AAM Bde Nitra were inspected by the Officer in Command of TOLY18, Col Pál Szucs (HUN F).

- The SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen hosted the annual meeting of the **SVK Generals Club** on 8 June. The meeting was also attended by CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko. Still before attending the meeting, SVK generals had visited Sliac Air Base.

- On 4 June, the University of Defence in Brno hosted a VIP Day for **SHARP LYNX 2018**, a NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (NATO MNMPBAT) exercise. It was attended by the most senior representatives of the SVK and CZE Military Police, Col Michal Migát and Brig Pavel Kříž. A total of 70 exercising troops, of whom 14 were from Slovakia, took part in the command staff exercise with computer-assisted simulation (CAX).

- Bratislava Garrison Commander Col Slavomír Milde took part in the international **Garrison Commanders Conference**, bringing together commanders of capital city garrisons in Central Europe on 28 May – 1 June at the invitation of Lubľana Garrison Commander Col Robert Glavaš. The conference was conducted in the spirit of the 100th anniversary celebrations of the end of WWI. The key theme was the Soča Front and its impact on the developments in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The venue of the next Garrison Commanders Conference is Prague.

- The Command Senior Enlisted Leader (CSEL) of the SVK Armed Forces Sgt Maj Vladimír Beluš and the CSEL of the Land Forces HQ (HQ Land) Sgt Maj Rastislav Bodnár took part in the **V4 CSEL Conference** at the Training HQ, of Military Academy Vyškov (CZE), on 29-31 May.

- The SVK MOD wants to alert the drivers in Slovakia to take caution as there will be 53 road and 2 rail **Allied military movements** across Slovakia over the period between 11-17 June 2018. The road moves will mostly involve CZE and POL troops, and the SVK military transporting oversized cargo of equipment along the routes: Zvolen – Training Centre Lešť; Prešov – Valaškovce; Kamenica nad Cirochou – Velké Ožorovce; Trebišov – Velké Ožorovce; Sered – Michalovce and back; Martin – Training Centre Lešť; Michalovce – Velké Ožorovce; Nitra – Alekšince. There will also be 2 military rail movements along the routes: Sása Pliešovce – Nitra and Sása Pliešovce – Levice.

Meetings with diplomats

(7 June) Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko received Defence Attachés (DA) accredited to Slovakia – namely the HUN DA, POL DA, CHN DA and RUS DA. With DA Lt Col Csaba Vido (HUN), CHOD Zmeko discussed the upcoming meeting of V4 CHODs, where Lt Gen Zmeko will take over the V4 Presidency from the HUN CHOD. He thanked DA Col Andrzej Kapica (POL) for his cooperation and assistance in deploying the SVK contribution to the NTCB-I. They also talked about the role of the SVK Armed Forces in the EU V4 BG, where POL is the Framework Nation. In his meeting with DA Col Hui Jai (CHN), he touched on the potential cooperation on UN missions and operations and the possible continuity of education activities.

EX RESCUE 2018



(6 June) **EX RESCUE 2018**, a Search and Rescue (SAR) coordination exercise unique in its extent and character, took place across the Čergov Mountains on 6 June. It saw participation of Police,

Firefighting & Rescue Corps, and SVK Armed Forces units. The theme of the exercise was a SAR incident involving a Cessna 172 Skyhawk aircraft that had gone missing with three people on board. The exercise was launched by the Operations Control Centre (OCC), of C2S Wing Zvolen, which is tasked with coordinating SAR operations. The OCC alerted HW Prešov's Land and Air SAR Services of the incident. A total of 54 members of HW Prešov and 11 members of C2S Wing Zvolen responded to the emergency. The exercise was aimed at training SAR Force Commanders and Officers in Command of the participating SAR units in organising and controlling an incident response to a missing aircraft, including searching for a crashed aircraft and rescuing survivors in a hardly accessible terrain, as well as maintaining communications among individual SAR teams.

Through children's eyes

(7 June) This year's 17th MOD Fine Art Contest – Soldiers through the Eyes of Children – for pupils and students has recorded a total of 1662 entries. This is the highest number of drawings and paintings over the past years. 183 schools and 6 individuals submitted their entries, from among which judges have chosen the best ones in the pupils and students categories, as well as giving one Honorary Recognition Award. The more numerous pupils category saw a total of 1,221 works assessed. Dominika Ondrušová, of a primary school in Gelnica, placed 1st, followed by Olivér Szabó, of a primary school in Kráľová nad Váhom, and Marek Gašpar, of a primary school in Prešov. With a total of 441 entries, the students category was won by Klára Billíková, of a primary school in Nitra, followed by Ivana Servická, of St Kalazanský Piarist Grammar School in Nitra, and Richard Pribeke, of a primary school in Kráľovský Chlmec. Winners of the pupils category were congratulated on by and received prizes from Minister Gajdoš and CHOD Lt Gen Zmeko at the Children's Day with SVK Armed Forces event in Svidník on 2 June 2018.

12th Mech Bn Grp successfully passes CREVAL certification

(7 June) The Training Centre Lešť hosted a Combat Readiness Evaluation (CREVAL) exercise, dubbed Exercise Live Shield 2018, for 12th Mech Bn Grp on 5-7 June. Made up predominantly of Nitra-based Mech Bn, the core of the Group also included soldiers from Levice-based Bn, Rožňava-based CBRN Bn, Michalovce-based SIF Arty Unit, ISTAR Bn, Sered-based Engr Bn, Nitra-based AAM Bde, Log Bn Hlohovec, CIMIC & PSYOPS Centre, Office of the Surgeon General, and other SVK Armed Forces components. Ex LISD18 incorporated testing and evaluating 12th Mech Bn Grp's readiness and capabilities as part of tactical-level high intensity operations; the ability to plan

operations and exercise command over units; the synergy in training the conduct of operations; the planning and execution of fire support; the capabilities to monitor the radiological and chemical situation; and partial and full decontamination of the Group. A team of French monitors from NATO HQ LANDCOM Izmir closely monitored the exercise. At the conclusion of the exercise, the CREVAL Team Chief, Col Ferdinand Muriň, confirmed that the 12th Mech Bn Grp CREVAL to establish the Group's readiness to deploy and fight in a high intensity conflict beyond Slovakia was over and declared the Group COMBAT READY.

