



Brussels NATO Summit

(11 July) At the July 2018 NATO Summit in Brussels, the Slovak delegation, led by President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces Andrej Kiska, reaffirmed Slovakia's commitments to increased defence spending and participation in operations and missions abroad. The delegation expressed its support for NATO's open door policy and closer cooperation between the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš stated: "After joining NATO's enhanced Forward Presence in Latvia, we are ready to get involved in a new NATO training – non-combat – mission in Iraq. At the same time, we are ready to increase our troop levels in Afghanistan, as mandated by our Cabinet." He further noted that Slovakia had reiterated its commitment to increasing its defence expenditure up to 1.6% and 2% of GDP on defence by 2020 and 2024, respectively.

NATO Member States agreed on the need to deepen NATO-EU cooperation, designating Military Mobility as one of the key and exemplary areas of their cooperation. On the start of NATO accession talks with the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Slovakia expressed its support for the decision.

Slovakia to join LBDM

(12 July) At the NATO Summit in Brussels on 12 July 2018, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš along with Defence Ministers of 15 NATO Allies and Partners (Austria, Finland and Republic of Northern Macedonia) signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Multinational Cooperation for the Provision of Land Battle Decisive Munitions (LBDM). The aim of this project is to support multinational cooperation on the procurement and storage of LBDM. Allied leaders expressed their support for the integration efforts of Georgia and Ukraine. In line with NATO's open door policy, Slovakia supports the countries' accession to NATO. "Of course, we declare our readiness to assist the countries in their accession process to NATO. On Ukraine, we will continue our mission as the Lead Nation in the EOD/C-IED Trust Fund for Ukraine. On Georgia, our expert on defence education will continue to support Georgia's defence capacity building efforts," said SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš.

V4 Declaration

(12 July) V4 Ministers of Defence adopted the Joint Statement of the Visegrad Group Ministers of Defence on the Brussels NATO Summit, in which they recognize that close regional cooperation in the field of defence has important added value in defining and implementing effective collective solutions. They emphasize that fair transatlantic burden-sharing is a key pillar of NATO unity and solidarity. Honouring the Wales and Warsaw Defence Investment Pledge is therefore of primary importance. They reaffirm that they are on a publicly declared track to meet the commitment to expend 2% of the GDP annually on defence by 2024. The V4, along with other NATO Defence Ministers, support the implementation of the NATO Readiness Initiative (NRI) and remain committed to the success of NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan. They endorse the transformation and expansion of NATO's training activity in Iraq into a regular mission and support joint Polish and Slovak efforts in the framework of NTCB-I to train Iraqi personnel in the maintenance of Soviet-era military equipment.

US F-16 fighter jets will protect Slovak skies

(11 July) Protection and sovereignty of Slovak airspace and close air support to land forces will be delivered by US F-16 Block 70/72 fighter jets. This follows from the decision of the Slovak Security Council and the Cabinet. From a modernization perspective, this is the most extensive modernization programme in the history of the SVK Armed Forces. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš stated: "Based on detailed analyses we have chosen the best solution, because these jets are modern and state of the art. From the perspective of price, quality and capabilities and what we can afford as a country, they have no rival." The Minister thanked the US and Swedish Governments for their fair and solid bids and negotiations. General Secretary of the SVK MOD Service Office Ján Hofko added: "I am proud that the MOD team of subject matter specialists along with Slovak Armed Forces experts exerted maximum efforts to evaluate the bids expertly and professionally, and with all due diligence expected of them. In cooperating with the Value for Money Unit, they worked out a specialist document that has obtained the approval of the Cabinet." From the perspective of all parameters of the bids, the US bid was more advantageous for Slovakia. "While the Contract with the US Government is ready to be signed, the Swedish Government insisted on negotiating details only once the SVK Government has made the decision, whereas in both cases the date of delivery depends on the date of Contract signature," explained Head of the Defence Department. In considering all parameters of the bids, the US bid was evaluated more advantageous in terms of money. The MOD compared the package of 14 F-16 Block 70/72 fighter jets, ammunition, training for pilots and ground personnel, logistics, airfield infrastructure development, dates of deliveries, and other operational costs beyond 2040 with the Gripen package.

- SVK Air Force personnel along with airmen and air defenders of 19 NATO and Partner countries are taking part in **Exercise Mace XIX**. This year marks the 19th iteration of this largest air exercise in Slovakia. The exercise tests the capabilities of 300 Slovak personnel and approx. 300 Allied troops.

- Soldiers, policemen, firefighters, rescuers and representatives of Slovakia's self-governing bodies participated in **Exercise New Horizon 2018** in the village of Trnava pri Laborci and on Michalovec Garrison's Biela Hora Training Ground, to practise responsiveness and joint procedures for handling crisis situations in the event of war and the state of war. The exercising audience included 227 SVK soldiers, including military policemen, and 33 members of the Interior Ministry, and self-governing and state administration bodies.

- On 10 July 2018, CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko received **U.S. Defense Attaché LTC Jonathan S. Dunn**, whose diplomatic appointment in Slovakia is coming to an end. CHOD Lt Gen Zmeko thanked the outgoing DA for making a significant contribution to SVK-U.S. cooperation, awarded him the SVK CHOD Commemorative Cross (1st Grade), and wished him the best for continued success in his Army career. At the same time, he welcomed the new **U.S. Defense Attaché LTC Jakub Andrews** to Slovakia.

- On 10 July 2018, Trenčín SNP Barracks hosted a **Commander Land Command Support Battalion change of command ceremony**, with Lt Col Michal Rázga, former Chief of the Secretariat of Commander SVK Land Forces, taking up the appointment of Commander Land Command Support Battalion. The ceremony was attended by Maj Gen Jindřich Joch.

- Members of the Repairs Battalion formed up for a **change of command ceremony**, with Deputy Commander Repairs Battalion Maj Róbert Kerekeš (temporary Commander Repairs Battalion since 1 May 2018) handing over command to Lt Col Rastislav Bodík.

- Chief of Defence Lt Gen Zmeko received Defence Attaché of Ukraine to Slovakia Col **Serhiy Yatsulchak** on 9 July 2018. During their first official meeting they discussed bilateral defence cooperation issues.

- On 4 July 2018, Members of the Slovak Contingent UNFICYP received the UN Medal in the Service of Peace during a medal award ceremony attended by Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Cyprus and **UNFICYP Head of Mission Elizabeth Spehar**, Force Commander Maj Gen Mohammad Humayun Kabir, Slovak Ambassador Ján Škoda, UNFICYP HQ staff, and other guests.

- The Transport Wing Kuchyňa hosted drills on **aircraft emergency exit procedures** on 9 July 2018. The training is mandatory for all flying personnel. Chief of the Parachute, Airborne and Rescue Service Sgt 1st Class Marián Pifko concluded that the tasks of the practical training were successfully accomplished.

- On 12 July 2018, the **SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM Zvolen** was visited by LTC Jonathan S. Dunn, the outgoing U.S. Defense Attaché to the Slovak Republic, LTC Jakub Andrews, the incoming U.S. Defense Attaché to the Slovak Republic, and U.S. Air Attaché Maj Adrian C. Patrascu. They were received by Commander SVK Air Force Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda.

- The SVK MOD wants to alert the drivers in Slovakia to take caution as there will be 16 **Allied military movements** across Slovakia over the period from 16-22 July 2018. They will mainly involve CZE, FRA, DEU troops deploying on Exercise Mace XIX in Slovakia. There will also be SVK Army convoys transporting oversized cargo of equipment along the routes Zemianske Kostolany – Michalovec and Nitra – Training Centre Lešť.

Another 2 UH-60M come into service with the SVK Air Force

(12 July) Another two UH-60M Black Hawk military utility helicopters have touched down at the Helicopter Wing Prešov.

This brings to the total number of the helicopters in service with the Slovak Air Force to 4. The additional 5 UH-60M Black Hawks will be delivered in line with the terms and conditions of the contract next year. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said:

"These two helicopters are already equipped with a fast rope insertion extraction system, an internal auxiliary fuel tank, and a rescue hoist system." He further added that the first two helicopters will be additionally fitted with the same equipment. As a result, the helicopter fleet will be capable of performing domestic crisis management tasks, in other words,



SAR and disaster response operations. "Modernization of equipment must always go hand in hand with training of

personnel. That is why I am pleased to say that our trained pilots flew the new helicopters from a German port to their home base," added Minister Gajdoš. A total of 6 aircrews have already been trained for operating the new air assets, and another three aircrews are undergoing training. The SVK Air Force intends to deploy new Slovak UH-60M Black Hawks on Exercise Atlas Common Challenger 2.0, which is due in October 2018.

The SVK MOD has procured a total of 9 UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters worth US\$261 million via the US Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme.

Minister meets US Ambassador



(13 July) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the US Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Adam H. Sterling. The Minister thanked the US Congress for approving the Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA)

regarding the purchase of the new F-16 Block 70/72 fighter jets in response to the SVK Air Force's modernization efforts. Apart from modernization programmes, topics of interest included bilateral defence cooperation, security challenges, and the NATO Summit in Brussels which took place earlier this week. SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I hope that we will sign the contract as soon as possible and that the SVK Air Force will have the state-of-the-art fighter jets as soon as possible." He added that the contract to be signed will contain a clause on payment schedule for the fighter jets. Minister Gajdoš informed Ambassador Sterling about another two UH-60M Black Hawk military utility helicopters landing at the Helicopter Wing Prešov.

MOD to procure 3D radars

(11 July) The new 3D medium-, short- and very short-range radars will be procured by the SVK MOD through Government-to-Government (G2G) sales. This proposed solution has been approved by the Slovak Security Council and the Cabinet. G2G sales is the most transparent procurement method which rules out any corruption. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "We will purchase a total of 17 pieces of 3D radars just as requested and defined by the Slovak Armed Forces. In this regard, we will invite all governments to enter into negotiations with us so that we can find the most advantageous solution and submit it to the Cabinet for approval no later than the end of June 2019." He stressed that the protection of Slovak airspace is delivered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In the years 2018 – 2025, the MOD plans to procure a total of 17 pieces of 3D radars: 3D medium-range radars (6 pcs), 3D short-range radars (5 pcs), and 3D very short-range radars (6 pcs) for an estimated price of 155,090,000 euros, VAT included.

Cpl Ondrej Kováč (36), of HQ Bratislava Garrison, suffered a cerebral infarction earlier this April. After clinical treatment he was released from hospital on 18 June to continue his recovery at home.

The bedridden patient needs 24-hour care, which is being delivered by his wife, with whom he has a 6-year-old son and a 10-year-old daughter. All costs of the treatment are not covered by insurance companies. Initial rehabilitation costs are estimated at 6,200 euros. Early physiotherapy and logopedic exercises are increasing the chances of Cpl Ondrej Kováč regaining his capacity to be self-sufficient. If you can help, please, make a donation to this fundraising effort:

SK91 7500 0000 0040 2351 3691, variable symbol 9999.