



In support of recruitment

(18 March) The SVK MOD launched a marketing and communication campaign in support of Armed Forces recruitment. The motto of the campaign is: 'Deeds, not words, make heroes – join us!', subtitled 'Do you like Slovakia? Prove it!' Over the past days, the MOD conducted a tender for renting billboards and citylights via the electronic contracting system. A number of promotion materials, such as videos, posters, handouts, and texts for social networks, web portals, and printed media, are ready for distribution. Soldiers and children, to whom soldiers are heroes and a source of great inspiration, will be the faces of the campaign. In a press conference held at the MOD today (18 March 2019), Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš set out concrete steps the MOD will take as part of the recruitment campaign.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "I believe no one in the Slovak Republic will cast any doubt on the fact that our service personnel are heroes, because they are the guarantors of our security. As I am convinced that every young person wants to be a hero, I believe the motto will motivate young people to enlist in the SVK Armed Forces."

The campaign highlights the Service benefits of which not many people may be aware and could provide additional motivation for them to join the Armed Forces. The MOD wants to emphasise that it is drafting changes in order to improve the Service conditions. As already announced, among them is a Service pay rise of up to 30%.

Concurrently, the SVK Armed Forces Personnel Office launched an admission process for candidates for Voluntary Military Training (VMT). Applicants are invited to submit their application forms to the Army Recruitment Teams, based in Slovakia's regional capital cities. The application deadline is on 10 June 2019. Just as in previous years, once again they will undertake an 11-week training course, with a focus on marching drills, marksmanship, engineering, signal, medical and tactical training, live fire exercises, and familiarisation with soldiers' basic duties and responsibilities. On completion of the VMT course, successful graduates will receive a financial reward of over €1,100.

Minister tours military units

(19 March) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš toured military units of the SVK Armed Forces located at Prešov Garrison. While at HQ 2nd Mech Bde, he was briefed by Commander 2nd Mechanised Brigade Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň on the Brigade's Training Year (TY) 2019 tasks and equipment and personnel issues regarding the modified table of organization and equipment (MTOE). The Minister went on to visit the ISTAR Battalion at Sokolov Barracks, where Lt Col Dušan Cisár presented the Battalion's main types of armament and equipment. For the last leg of his tour of Prešov Garrison, Peter Gajdoš went to see the Helicopter Wing Prešov. On the same day, he also visited the Munitions Depot Poprad where he familiarised himself with the tasks being performed, the procedures for munitions storage, maintenance, treatment, receipt, stocktaking and issuance, and the security measures against the loss and theft of munitions, before meeting local personnel.

Brig Gen (Rtd) Milan Píka passes away

(21 March) Brig Gen (Rtd) Milan Píka (born on 28 July 1922), participant of the Western Resistance in WW2, who had lived in Slovakia since 1949, passed away on Wednesday 20 March 2019. At the meeting with Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš who received him on the occasion of his 95th birthday at the MOD on 27 July 2017, Brig Gen Milan Píka said: "Slovakia saved my life and I am grateful to it that I can be here with you. Looking back at the time after my father's execution, I could not bear to stay in my country of origin, Czechia. Slovaks have, besides common sense, a heart they speak and act with." Facing the Nazi threat at the outbreak of WW2, Milan Píka fled Prague via Romania to France and then on to England. He was successively posted to the air staffs of the Czechoslovak Air Force units RAF, where he held junior administrative appointments until the end of WW2. While in the UK, he rose to the British rank of Flight/Officer (F/O) and the Czechoslovak rank of 2Lt of Aviation in Reserve. With the end of WW2 he returned to Czechoslovakia. No sooner had his father Div Gen Heliodor Píka had been arrested than the persecution of then Capt Milan Píka began. His father Heliodor Píka was executed on 21 June 1949 in Bory Prison, Pilsen. Milan Píka was stripped of his military rank and dismissed from the Czechoslovak Army. Forced to leave the Faculty of Law, Charles University, and banned from staying in Prague, he found refuge in Bratislava. In Slovakia, he worked in coal mines before being employed as a boiler operator, a driver and an economist. In November 1972, the rank of Captain was returned to him after a partial rehabilitation. He was fully rehabilitated after November 1989 and promoted to Colonel (Rtd) on 30 May 1990. He lived to experience the greatest recognition of his operational service in WW2 and of his personal life and opinions after 1948 by being promoted to the most junior general officer rank, Brigadier General (Rtd), both in Slovakia and Czechia in May 2014.



■ Commander of the **NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK)** Col Štefan Acsai has been succeeded by Col Peter Brauner. The official Change of Command (COC) ceremony took place on 20 Mar 2019, with the participation of State Secretary of the SVK MOD Róbert Ondrejcsák, DCHOD Josef Pokorný, and Deputy Commander of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Szczecin Maj Gen Ulrich Helleberg (DNK A). The previous posting of Col Peter Brauner was with the Strategic Staff for Defence Planning, SVK GS. The outgoing Commander of the NFIU SVK has assumed the appointment of Chief of the Combat Training Branch in the SVK Army HQ Trenčín.

■ A **remembrance ceremony for Gen Maurice Pellé** was held at the Batignolles Cemetery in Paris on 15 Mar 2019. Gen Pellé participated in the formation of the Czechoslovak Army and served as 1st Chief of the Czechoslovak Army Main Staff. In attendance at the ceremony were representatives of the SVK and CZE Embassies. The SVK Armed Forces were represented by SVK Defence Attaché Col Peter Knánik.

■ The Trenčín Garrison Club and the General Golian Military History Club Trenčín hosted an exhibition entitled **Break-up of Czechoslovakia by Hitler and Formation of Anti-Nazi Resistance in Slovakia and in France (1939 – 1940)**. The exhibition will be open on working days at the Trenčín Garrison Club from 14 Mar to 5 Apr 2019.

■ Traditionally, members of the **SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM**, led by Chief of Staff (COS) Col Pavol Tőkőly, visited the Children's Medical Faculty Hospital in Banská Bystrica on 15 Mar 2019. They handed over a TV set and a notebook to hospital personnel and child patients, gifted from members of the SVK Air Force and fans of Slovak aviation. In return, child patients gave soldiers presents they themselves had made.

■ Deployed to Lešť, members of the Engineer Battalion Sered, 12th Mechanised Battalion Nitra, 13th Mechanised Battalion Levice and cadets of the SVK Armed Forces Academy (AOS) underwent **training on blasting and mining operations** using live army engineer munitions, focused on explosives, demolition and engineering obstacles from 11 to 15 Mar 2019. According to the Officer commanding the training, Capt Jozef Šinál, the tasks and goals were accomplished at a highly professional level.

■ Working closely with the SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the Head Office of Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces, and the SVK Ministry of Interior, members of the **Slovak Contingent (SLOVCON) EUFOR ALTHEA** handed over humanitarian aid worth €18,108 to the Red Cross Branch in Foča, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH).

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be **32 Allied road movements**, scheduled for 25-31 Mar 2019. They will mostly involve CZE and POL troops. This week, SVK Army convoys will ferry oversized cargo on the routes: Martin – Levice – Lešť, Hlohovec – Levice – Lešť, Martin – Michalovce, Kuchyňa – Martin, Michalovce – Dubnica nad Váhom, Michalovce – Prešov – Martin, Martin – Nemecká. There will also be SVK Army movements on the routes: Prešov – Kamenica nad Cirochou, Hlohovec – PC Koliňanský Vrch, Rožňava – Zemianske Kostolany.

With British Ambassador



(21 March) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš held talks with the British Ambassador to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Andrew J. Garth, at MOD Main Building. He expressed his appreciation for the SVK-UK Defence engagement thus far and highlighted the joint activities of both countries in the field of education and training. Minister Gajdoš informed Ambassador Garth about Slovakia following through on its commitments to NATO and the EU and the planned defence budget increases.

On cooperation with Egypt

(21 March) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš received the Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Slovakia, His Excellency Mr Bassem Mohamed Abdel-Azim Khalil. They focused on security policy issues and took stock of the bilateral Defence cooperation between the countries, including on supporting the defence industry. On his first visit to the MOD, the Egyptian Ambassador was accompanied by the Defence Attaché of the Arab Republic of Egypt to Slovakia, Col Ahmed Khalil Abdelkader.

Maj Gen Ulrich Helleberg in SVK



(20 March) CHOD Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko met with Deputy Commander of the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) Szczecin Maj Gen Ulrich Helleberg (DNK A). Maj Gen Helleberg participated in the Change of Command (COC) ceremony for Commander NFIU SVK. The generals discussed strengthening the cooperation between the SVK GS and the NFIU SVK and involving NFIU personnel in the defence planning processes of the SVK military. Lt Gen Zmeko reassured Maj Gen Helleberg that Col Peter Brauner, who until recently served with the Strategic Staff for Defence Planning, SVK GS, is a guarantor of closer cooperation between the entities, especially when it comes to the anticipated review of strategic plans.

Liberation of Zlaté Moravce marked

(24 March) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš took part in a commemoration ceremony to mark the 74th anniversary of the liberation of Zlaté Moravce from Nazi occupation forces. In his speech, he underlined the threat of growing extremism, both in the world and in Slovakia. On the occasion, he called on local residents to join him in paying tribute to a recently deceased hero of WW2, Brig Gen Milan Píka. Zlaté Moravce was occupied by Nazi troops during WW2 and bombed on several occasions. It was liberated by Red Army units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front as part of Operation Bratislava-Brno on 28 March 1945.

Martin-based snipers undergo training at Lešť

(22 March) The Training Centre Lešť hosted Phase II of sniper training for the Mechanised Battalion Martin. The practical training was preceded by a theory phase at Martin Garrison. "It contained a series of lectures aimed at tactical sniper training, tactical movements by day and at night, selecting and taking up observer positions, and sniper activity from them. This week snipers have performed different practical tasks. Their training has culminated in a more complex assignment," said the Officer commanding the training, Lt Miroslav Knizner. After receiving an operation order, snipers planned and prepared their mission. What followed was a tactical movement to the target area, where they set up an observer



position and carried out an extended observation of the target all night and morning before engaging in live firing.

"As a rule, sniper training takes places four times a year. We do our best to deliver such training in all seasons of the year, so that snipers can be ready to perform their mission in changing conditions all year long. A top quality sniper must have an excellent knowledge of tactics, the ability to translate theory into practice, move unnoticed by day and at night, set up observer positions, and have a good grasp of topography, analytical skills and psychological resilience. 'To see and not to be seen' is a rule of thumb for every sniper," added the Officer commanding the training, expressing his satisfaction with the course and results of the training.