



15 years in NATO

(29 March) MOD employees and Service personnel, joined by members of the Military Diplomatic Corps, gathered in front of the Ministry of Defence Main Building for a ceremony to mark the 15th anniversary of the Slovak Republic's entry into the North Atlantic Alliance on 29 March 2004. In his speech, Minister Gajdoš underlined our country's active and respected membership in the Alliance and thanked Service personnel and civilian employees for working to high standards and representing the Slovak Republic abroad.

Speaking at the ceremony, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "Slovakia has been part of the North Atlantic Alliance for 15 years already. Over the period, we have demonstrated that we are not only a consumer of the benefits which derive from NATO membership but, on the contrary, that we are an active member." He went on to add that the Slovak Republic is also doing its utmost to undertake the commitments of NATO membership.

SVK Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko said: "From my point of view, the Armed Forces have been contributing to NATO's joint efforts towards collective security for the past 15 years already. Slovak service personnel have demonstrated their professionalism on all operations and joint exercises."

Head of the MOD along with other MOD and Armed Forces leaders then paid their respects to the Service members who died in the line of duty abroad during ceremonies at the MOD Hall of Fame and at the MOD Reconciliation Memorial.

The anniversary of the Slovak Republic's entry into NATO was also marked by members of the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM and the SVK Army HQ.

Petra Vihová recognised

(25 March) Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš awarded Petra Vihová, member of the DUKLA Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre (VŠC Dukla), the most successful SVK National Team sportswoman in downhill skiing and our only world champion in this sport during a ceremony at MOD Main Building. Head of the MOD congratulated her on her outstanding representation of Slovakia and presented her with a prize of €7,000 and the Minister of Defence Commemorative Medal, 1st Grade. He also awarded her team members: her father Igor Vihá (he was not present at the ceremony), her brother Boris, and her coach Matej Gemza, of VŠC Dukla.

Expressing her thanks to Minister Gajdoš for the medal and the support from the MOD, Petra Vihová said: "In essence, also thanks to you I was able to put in such performances, so thank you very much, and I will try to repeat it next year, let's see how it works out."

The greatest success of Petra Vihová in the 2018/2019 season and her career is the gold medal in the women's giant slalom at the FIS Alpine Ski World Championships in Åre, Sweden. During the ski season she stood on the winners' podium 17 times, as a first-place finisher 6 times and as a second-place finisher 7 times. Her overall second place in the women's downhill skiing at the FIS Alpine Ski World Cup is a huge success as well.

Students of secondary schools battle it out in defence duels

(31 March) This year, too, students of secondary schools will get an opportunity to participate in the Students' Defence Duels series, organised by the SVK MOD. The aim of the activity is to train young students for the defence of the State, promote patriotism and civil defence awareness, and increase students' interest in issues on the agenda of the SVK MOD. The winning team from each region will be invited to take part in a 48-hour Army camp at the Training Centre Lešť. As part of a range of the duel disciplines, students will test and compare their basic knowledge of topography, first aid, Slovak history and military history, as well as physical readiness and civil defence skills.

"Soldiers will visit schools and teach students something new and motivate them to be more interested in topics relevant to the defence of the State in a captivating manner," said Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš. "A 48-hour Military Training Camp as a winning prize is truly exclusive. Only a few are allowed to enter the Training Centre Lešť and to undertake training with elite military instructors in an unforgettable experience for many," he added, noting that this year students will learn more about Gen Milan Rastislav Štefánik in a quiz.

The Students' Defence Duels series will be held in Bernolákovo, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Kysucké Nové Mesto, Michalovce and Humenné.



■ Slovakia bade last farewell to the WW2 hero **Brig Gen (Rtd) Milan Pika** who was accorded a full military funeral with honours on 28 Mar 2019 in Bratislava. Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš attended the funeral service at the Bratislava Crematorium and said his last good-bye to the member of the WW2 Western Resistance and the Royal Air Force (RAF). Brig Gen (Rtd) Pika passed away at the age of 96 on 20 Mar 2019.

■ On 28 Mar 2019, NATO HQ Brussels organised an **exhibition marking the 20th anniversary of the entry into NATO** by Czechia, Hungary and Poland, and 15 years in NATO by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and 10 years in NATO by Albania and Croatia. In attendance at the exhibition were NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller, and Ambassadors and Military Representatives to NATO.

■ A ceremony to mark the **transfer to the reserve of Captain Peter Hudec**, Chief Senior Officer/Conductor of the SVK Armed Forces Band, with effect from 31 Mar 2019 was held on the SVK Armed Forces Band's premises. Commander HQ BA GAR Col Slavomir Milde presented Capt Hudec, who had completed over 28 years of service, with the SVK Chief of Defence Commemorative Cross, 3rd Grade.

■ The Galanta-based Sports Hall hosted the **Floorball SVK LIGUE 2019**, organised by the TV JOJ Foundation, for the Trnava and Bratislava regions on 27 Mar. The event was supported by subordinate units of 1st Mech Bde. The Mech Bn Levice team, led by Capt Ladislav Gurský, achieved an excellent 2nd place.

■ For the second time this year, the Training and Mobilization Manning Base Martin has hosted **Basic Military Training (BMT)** since 26 Mar 2019. Taking part in the BMT are 100 soldier trainees, of whom 19 are women. On successful completion of the training, they will attend a graduation ceremony and swear the SVK Armed Forces Oath of Allegiance on 17 May 2019.

■ Working in close cooperation with the non-profit Children with Cancer Foundation, members of the SVK Presidential Guard of Honour (GOH) participated in the **Week for Children with Cancer** event for child patients in the Children's Oncology Ward at Kramáre Hospital, Bratislava. The cooperation between the Children's Oncology Ward and the SVK Presidential GOH has existed for over 15 years.

■ Drivers are asked by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be 20 **Allied road movements**, scheduled for 1-7 Apr 2019. They will mostly involve CZE and POL troops. This week SVK Army convoys will ferry oversized cargo on the routes: Martin – Prešov – Lešť – Martin, Hlohovec – Sereď – Turecký Vrch, and Trebišov – Kamenica nad Cirochou.

Military policemen of 4 countries exercise at Liptov

(29 March) The final staff rehearsal for the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion (NATO MNMPBAT), ahead of Ex Sharp Lynx 2019 due in May 2019 in Croatia, took place on 25-29 March at the Simulation Centre, Gen Milan Rastislav Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš.

NATO MNMPBAT is a grouping involving Military Police units from 4 countries: Czechia, Croatia, Poland and Slovakia. It emerged after the 2002 NATO Prague Summit, with Poland as the lead nation of the project. This year the Battalion is commanded by Maj Jaroslav Slančík, Chief of the Crisis Management Section, Training and Cynology Branch, Military Police Dept Vlkánová – Hronek.

On the upcoming tasks of the NATO MNMPBAT, Battalion



Commander Maj Slančík said: "Roughly 50 members of the Battalion staff from 4 countries are preparing documentation for Ex Sharp Lynx 2019. After the exercise in

Croatia the NATO Multinational Military Police Battalion will undertake yet another test. This will happen in October as part of Ex Griffin Lightning II, organised by the Headquarters Multinational Corps Northeast (MNH NE) Szczecin, Poland." Maj Slančík does not rule out that the Battalion will be enlarged by another participating country, as accession talks with Georgia have been underway.

Taking part in the staff rehearsal in Liptovský Mikuláš was also Maj Jozef Šoltys, SVK representative at the NATO Military Police Centre of Excellence (NATO MP COE) in Bydgoszcz, Poland, and former Commander NATO MNMPBAT.

Fines for misuse of uniforms

(31 March) Illegal use of SVK Armed Forces uniforms and insignia will be punishable by fine of up to €500. This follows on from the 2019 Armed Forces and Military Police Amendment Act, which has been approved by MPs and will come into force on 1 May 2019.

According to existing legislation, military uniforms are exclusively provided for members of the Slovak Armed Forces, graduates of Voluntary Military Training and Active Reserves, and soldiers on exceptional duty service for the duration of such service. Exceptions have been granted to military pensioners, military disabled pensioners, WWII veterans, and soldiers whose reputation has been rehabilitated.

It also follows on from the Amendment Act that, besides uniforms, the ban will also apply to other items of clothing, featuring the emblem of the Slovak Republic, which may be mistaken for military uniform. Misuse of the official title 'Armed Forces of the Slovak Republic' will be illegal in writing, including in website domains or on vehicles. And misuse of the military ID by a non-military person will be treated as an offence as well.

Aircraft accident investigation



(25 March) The Tactical Wing Sliach hosted an Aircraft Accident Investigation Course at Sliach Air Base on 18-22 March 2019. The course was organised by the Military Aviation State Administration Branch, SVK MOD, led by its Chief Inspector of Flight Safety Col Ján Salaj and was attended by flight safety inspectors from the said Branch, HQ AIRCOM Zvolen, C2CS Wing Zvolen, other air wings, and the ISTAR Battalion. The course covered aircraft accident legislation, investigation methodology, and the aircraft accident report form (AARF).

Exceptional contribution to the course was made by CZE military investigators from the CZE MOD's Military Aviation Authority and the CZE Air Force's HQ AIRCOM. The course included a simulated MiG-29 aircraft incident response. The pros of the course were that the cooperation among rescue teams was deepened and that the new UH-60M helicopter capabilities were tested.

Ex Toxic Lance internationally

(27 March) Traditionally, Ex Toxic Lance for CBRN specialists takes place in March and April, and Ex Toxic Lance 2019 is no exception, running from 27 March to 12 April. Taking part in the exercise are 300 foreign and SVK CBRN specialists, including from the Indiana and Texas National Guards from the U.S., USAREUR, CZE Army, POL Army, as well as from the SVK Army's CBRN Battalion, 1st Mech Bde Topoľčany. During the exercise, multifunctional CBRN platoons are practising interoperability in a combat support role and in response to unexpected emergencies in an international environment at the TC Lešť and the CBRN TTC Zemianske Kostolany.