



## Informal meeting in Prague

(12 March) The V4 ministers of defence attended an informal meeting in Prague, to discuss current issues and prospective cooperation on NATO and the EU. They also joined the V4 presidents for an official celebration marking the 20th anniversary of the Czech Republic's accession to the North Atlantic Alliance.

Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš said: "Slovakia has a stable place in Euro-Atlantic structures, however, of equal importance is regional cooperation, thanks to which our voice in NATO and the EU is stronger."

Also discussed at the meeting was the issue of V4 contributions to international crisis management. In this respect, Minister Gajdoš updated his counterparts on the current engagement of SVK personnel in missions and operations abroad and highlighted the Slovak participation in 8 Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) projects, including Slovakia's Indirect Fire Support project or EuroArtillery.

Heads of the V4 MODs also spoke about defence modernization and cooperation on EU projects. "We support strong and ambitious projects that have the potential of increasing the interoperability of the armed forces of participating countries," said the Minister. The discussion also covered third state participation in PESCO projects.

Currently, 193 members of the SVK Armed Forces are deployed abroad under NATO and so far more than 6,500 personnel have rotated in and out of Alliance missions and operations.



(11 March) The SVK Ministry of Defence has ended all talks with the SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs on the "Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) with the United States of America". The SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs did not accept the comments of the MOD on the DCA and the offer of the United States of America failed to reflect the operational requirements of the Slovak Armed Forces.

The MOD considers the creation of any legal conditions for stationing foreign armed forces in Slovakia for an indefinite period of time with an entitlement to terminate the DCA after the lapse of 10 years from its entry into force at the earliest with a 12-month notice period as a threat to or constraint on

## Defence Minister and Cypriot Ambassador hold talks

(15 March) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with the Ambassador of the Republic of Cyprus to the Slovak Republic, HE Mr Michalis Stavrinou, at MOD Main Building. They spoke about current issues and areas of cooperation on training and education and about the role of SVK personnel in UNFICYP, Cyprus. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "The Slovak Republic has supported the Cyprus peace process in the long run. Our service personnel have been contributing to stability and security in the country since 2001." He went on to add that 242 SVK personnel are currently serving in Cyprus, where Slovakia is a one troop-contributing country in Sector 4. Over 3,300 SVK personnel have rotated in support of UNFICYP to date. Head of the SVK MOD informed the Cypriot Ambassador about the prospective areas of bilateral cooperation in the field of education and training. In this connection, he underpinned the uniqueness of the Training Centre Lešť and explained what the International Staff Officers Course (ISOC), which is delivered by the General M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy in Liptovský Mikuláš, has to offer. At the meeting with Ambassador Stavrinou, Minister Gajdoš presented defence modernization programmes, which are consistent with the 2030 Defence Development Plan as part of a systemic and systematic modernization of armed forces, as well as the measures the MOD is taking to increase the attractiveness of the military profession. They also touched on ways to promote defence industry cooperation.



- A joint training for first CBRN responders took place on 11-15 Mar at the **CBRN Training and Testing Centre Zemianske Kostoľany**, involving instructors from the Mobile Identification Laboratory, CBRN Battalion Rožňava, and 31 members of the Fire and Rescue Corps drawn from across its units in Slovakia. The purpose of the training was to provide new EKOS vehicle crews with information on detection of hazardous chemical substances, collection of samples, and decontamination of personnel and materiel.

- A commanders' meeting took place on 12 Mar at the **Supply Base II Martin**, of the SVK Armed Forces Logistics Office, where Col Marián Filip evaluated the Training Year (TY) 2018 results. After the meeting, he welcomed Sgt Pavol Marcinko to the Base.

- Members of the **12th Mechanised Battalion Nitra** took part in a two-day railway movement training. On 12 Mar, they participated in a theory phase for leaders, staff members and unit commanders at barracks, followed the next day by practical training at the Nitra Railway Station.

- A meeting of commanders chaired by the **Helicopter Wing Commander Prešov** took place at the Prešov Wing Club on 14 Mar, in the presence of Deputy Commander of the SVK Air Force Col Róbert Kleštin. Helicopter Wing Commander Col Róbert Tóth evaluated the TY 2018 results and briefed on the training and exercise programme in 2019.

- Members of the 9th SLOVCON RS handed over Slovak humanitarian aid, including school uniforms for a primary school in Mazar-e-Sharif, during a ceremony at TAAC North Camp Marmal in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan. The Ecumenical Pastoral Service in the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps donated 540 uniforms, with the costs covered from its own funds and by the SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. The aid was delivered during the visit of the SVK Minister of Defence to Afghanistan on 18 Dec 2018 and was transported by NATO vehicles to Mazar-e-Sharif. The movement was coordinated by members of the SVK Armed Forces in cooperation with the Bundeswehr.

- A pre-deployment ceremony for members of the SVK Armed Forces leaving for **UNFICYP in Cyprus** took place in the grounds of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra. 70 soldiers, of whom 6 are women, are leaving as part of the March rotation. At the ceremony, protocols were signed and the deploying unit was transferred under the command of the Strategic Crisis Management Centre, GS, SVK Armed Forces.

- Drivers are asked by the MOD to drive carefully as there will be 31 **Allied road movements**, scheduled for 18-24 Mar 2019. During the week, SVK Army convoys will ferry oversized cargo on the following routes: Prešov – Trebišov, Sliach – Kuchyňa, Trebišov – MSM Trenčín, Trenčín – Nemecká, Kuchyňa – Moldava nad Bodvou, and a SVK Army convoy will move from Rožňava to Lešť.

## MOD ends talks on DCA with U.S.

the sovereignty of Slovakia. Moreover, such activity of foreign forces could come close to what in NATO terminology is understood as the establishment of a foreign military base in the territory of Slovakia, which is something the MOD fundamentally disagrees with.

If the Agreement were signed, it would set a precedent enabling the stationing of foreign military forces in Slovakia. Moreover, the number of American soldiers, military assets, materiel and their type and purpose were not specified. In this regard, the SVK MOD wishes to underline that in no way can it agree with the unjustified preferential treatment of members of the U.S. Armed forces and civilian components, their family members and American contractors over members of the armed forces of other NATO member states. No other NATO armed forces enjoy such advantages, nor would they even at a time of Slovakia's assistance response under NATO's collective defence, not to mention the above-average

## We support athletes



(16 March) Maximum efforts are made by the current MOD leadership to ensure that athletes of the DUKLA Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre have the best conditions for training. This is

evidenced by the biggest investments the department has made in the last decade in an effort to build new parts of the Centre and modernise equipment and sports facilities.

"Sportspeople of our Military Sports Centre are the pride of Slovakia's top class sports and great ambassadors of the military profession before the general public. However, we are fully aware that what they need in order to give excellent performances and represent Slovakia is, besides a stable background, modern equipment," said Defence Minister Peter Gajdoš in connection with the investments. For the last three years, the overhead costs for the Centre and its personnel, including salaries, insurance premium payments, travel expenses, construction works and purchases of land, equipment, tools, instruments, devices and other related expenses, have amounted to over €23 million.

As well as modernising sports equipment, the MOD wishes to improve the training conditions for sportsmen and women by reconstructing the DUKLA Athletics Stadium. It will comply with the current technical standards and meet the criteria of the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) for international and national competitions. The reconstruction project proposal has already been approved by the SVK Government.

## Skýcov tragedy remembered



(17 March) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš commemorated the 74th anniversary of the tragedy of Skýcov, the village burnt down by German troops during WW2. He emphasised the need to organise such commemorative events and pointed to growing intolerance and extremism in society.

"Devaluation of human life, spread of racial discrimination, and intolerance have not had their final word and, sadly, still find their place in today's society. Therefore, it is important for us not to forget the horrors the First and Second World Wars brought," he said. During World War II several partisan units were headquartered in Skýcov, situated in Zlaté Moravce County, and operated in its neighbourhood. Residents of the village formed their own partisan unit. That is why the village was burnt down by Nazis on 16 March 1945 before being liberated on 30 March 1945. Later, a memorial to the victims of the World Wars was unveiled there.

cooperation on airspace protection being advanced. Based on the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) programme, the U.S. offer was exclusively aimed at constructing facilities which would serve, as a priority, for the purposes of facilitating the deployment of U.S. troops, military equipment and materiel, or for any other purposes. In no way did the Agreement address the operational requirements of the Slovak Armed Forces, nor NATO requirements for Host Nation Support (HNS). Needless to say, we have declined this offer of bilateral cooperation on the grounds that the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic could be put under threat. Nevertheless, the SVK MOD continues and will continue to perform all of its commitments as a NATO member. In a letter addressed to the SVK Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, we presented factual information on our decision.