



Štefánik's birthday

(21 July) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš visited the village of Košariská to commemorate the 138th anniversary of General M. R. Štefánik's birthday. During the commemoration ceremony, the Minister along with DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian paid homage to one of the most prominent figures of modern Slovak history.

"General Štefánik dedicated practically the whole of his life to the struggle for freedom of his nation. That is why it is important to keep his legacy alive especially at a time when it may falsely appear that freedom may be taken for granted," said Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, whilst emphasising that the defence of the State should be a matter of honour for every citizen. General Štefánik once remarked: "Those who believe other people will fight in order to bring freedom to them are not worthy of freedom." Accordingly, helping to stimulate the interest of young people in Homeland Defence is a priority of the SVK MOD.

Milan Rastislav Štefánik was born on 21 July 1880 in the village of Košariská. He died tragically in an aircraft accident on 4 May 1919 on returning to Czechoslovakia.

Minister hands over Black Hawks

(20 July) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš handed over two new UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters to Slovak airmen during a handover ceremony at the Helicopter Wing Prešov. This brings the total number of the helicopters in service with the SVK Air Force to 4. An additional 5 Black Hawks are scheduled to arrive next year.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I believe these two helicopters will perform their tasks reliably – both on training and on civil contingency operations in support of our citizens, that is to say, in response to various disaster relief incidents." He further elaborated on the extra and future equipment with which the two UH-60M Black Hawk utility helicopters are fitted: "These helicopters are equipped with a rescue hoist system, a fast rope insertion extraction system, and an internal auxiliary fuel tank. After equipping them with an aerial firefighting module and a Bambi bucket water drop system and once the crews have been trained for the firefighting role, they can fight fires as Mil Mi-17s do over hardly accessible mountain terrains."

Head of the Defence Department further noted that the SVK Air Force has 6 trained two-man UH-60M Black Hawk crews. "Another 3 crews are undergoing training in the United States right now," he added.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Anton Hrnko said: "New air combat assets in the SVK Air Force can markedly upgrade the defence capability of our homeland. I am convinced that once this contract has been fulfilled, the Helicopter Wing Prešov will be one of the best combat units in the Slovak Armed Forces."

Chief of Defence Lt Gen Daniel Zmeko thanked the MOD for its modernization efforts. "I want to reassure all of you that the new air assets will be used to support the defence of our State and will help our citizens in different civil contingencies," he said. He then wished Slovak airmen a lot of safe flying hours up in the air. SVK Air Force Commander Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda appreciated the fact that the SVK Air Force has now 4 new helicopters at its disposal. "The first two helicopters that were delivered last year have already logged 640 flying hours and I can state we are fully ready to perform operational tasks," he added.

The procurement of the UH-60M Black Hawk multirole helicopters is being implemented through the U.S. Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme. The contract is worth US\$261 million. In addition to the price of the helicopters, it also covers the initial two-year Contractor Logistic Support package, training of pilots, aircrews and ground personnel, and the costs associated with the delivery of the helicopters to Slovakia.

Distinguished Visitors Day at Exercise Mace XIX

(20 July) Exercise Mace XIX hosted a Distinguished Visitors Day (DVD), with the participation of DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian (GS), COS for Operations Support Brig Lubomír Gacko (GS), and a NATO delegation led by NATO Assistant Secretary General for Defence Investment Jamie Shea.

Nearly 50 foreign visitors from 15 countries were welcomed by Deputy Commander SVK Air Force and Officer Conducting Exercise (OCE) Brig Miroslav Lorinc and LTC Mark Threadgold, of SG2 NATO. Members of the delegation were briefed on the tasks of the exercise and the SVK SBAD structure and tasks.

Later on, they moved on to Sliač Air Base where they were welcomed by Commander Tactical Wing Sliač Col Vladimír Lisý. There, they observed aircraft returning from missions as part of the exercise. The main phase of Exercise Mace XIX will run until 27 July.



- DCHOD/COS Maj Gen Miroslav Kocian welcomed Lt Gen Manfred Hofmann, the outgoing Commander of the NATO Multinational Corps North-East (MNC NE) Szczecin, Poland to the General Staff in Bratislava on 18 July. Lt Gen Hofmann had an office call with the SVK Minister of Defence before paying a visit to the NFIU SVK, based in Vajnory Barracks.

- At the invitation of Father Juraj Macko, Col Marian Bodóľ, Chaplain General of the SVK Armed Forces and Armed Corps Ecumenical Pastoral Service, and Marko Trochan, Dean of the Ordinariate of the SVK Air Force's HQ AIRCOM, participated in a worship service in Dačov Lom on 15 July. They unveiled a commemorative plaque where Col (Rtd) Karol Jurga and Director of the Training Centre Lešť Anton Maštalský laid wreaths during a wreath-laying ceremony in the parish garden.

- On 13 July, SVK Air Force Commander Maj Gen Ľubomír Svoboda welcomed 19 lieutenants – graduates of the Slovak Armed Forces Academy before they reported to their AF units. "The Slovak Cabinet has approved the purchase of the F-16, we have new C-27J Spartan transport aircraft and new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. You will be operating all of them," said Maj Gen Svoboda. He further underscored the need for airmen to follow life-long education and to advance their qualifications.

- Exercise Mace XIX has been underway at the Training Centre Lešť since 9 July, with the participation of Slovak Surface-Based Air Defence (SBAD) units, of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade (AAM Bde) Nitra. 150 AAM Bde air defenders and over 50 SVK Air Force air assets have been involved in the exercise.

- In the spirit of the continuing tradition, SVK Armed Forces personnel assisted the Military History Museum (VHM) in the first half of 2018. Members of the Combat Support Service Brigade assisted the Museum in the preparations for the Slovakia-wide Museums and Galleries Night festival by repairing, cleaning, transporting, and setting up military vehicles and equipment. Members of the SVK Air Force gave a helping hand with repairing historical aircraft, restoring aircraft ensigns, transporting aircraft and helicopter exhibits as part of the planned redesign of the VHM. Finally, soldiers of the Engineer Battalion Sereď restored the paint of engineering vehicles and members of the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra restored the paint of an 1S91 SURN to its original glory. The VHM Museum Section in Svidník received highly appreciated assistance from SVK personnel as well.

- The SVK MOD releases this traffic alert to inform the drivers in Slovakia about the upcoming Allied military movements, scheduled from 23-29 July 2018. A total of 20 Allied road movements will take place across Slovakia over the period. They will mainly involve POL and US troops. There will also be SVK military convoys transporting oversized cargo along the route between Trebišov and Trenčín.

Farewell to Lt Gen Hofmann



(18 July) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received Lt Gen Manfred Hofmann, Commander of the NATO Multinational Corps North-East (MNC NE) Szczecin, as Lt Gen Hofmann's tenure is coming to an end. During their meeting, they underscored the importance of the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia having reached Full Capability (FC) and the role the NFIU SVK has been playing in strengthening the security and collective defence of NATO Member States. Also discussed was the new adapted NATO Command Structure, including Slovakia's role in it. The Minister further informed Lt Gen Hofmann about the SVK military's modernization programmes that the MOD has been delivering in furtherance of the Long-Term Defence Development Plan with an Outlook to 2030.

SWE Ambassador in visit to MOD

(16 July) Slovak Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Sweden to Slovakia, Her Excellency Ms Helen Eduards. He thanked the SWE Government for the fair and solid bid of the JAS Gripen fighter jets it made to the SVK Government. Topics of common interest were dominated by bilateral defence cooperation and security issues. Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "I trust the cooperation between our countries will go on at an excellent level just as has been the case thus far, even though our government has adopted a different solution to its future fleet of supersonic fighter jets." The Minister informed the Swedish Ambassador about the state of play of current and future modernization programmes in the SVK Armed Forces, and that staff-to-staff talks on the stand-up of EU Battle Groups and PESCO projects could be held between the Slovak General Staff and the Swedish Defence Staff.

Cooperative training for MWD handlers



(18 July) K9 Section, of the Training and Cynology Branch, Military Police Department Vlkavská – Hronsek, hosted the 4th International Cooperative Training for Military Working Dogs (MWDs) and MWD handlers from the armed forces of Czechia, Hungary and Slovakia.

The traditional training audience, including 70 MWD handlers and 80 MWDs, came from the CZE Military Police, HUN Prison Service, SVK Police Corps, SVK Prison and Justice Guard, SVK Financial Administration Authority, and SVK Armed Forces. This year for the first time the training was attended by representatives of the Czech Army and the HUN Military Police. The training programme was adapted to the variable levels of MWD handlers' experience and the specialization and trainability of MWDs. The tactical procedures for explosives and precursor chemical detection, introduced in cooperation with the SVK National Centre EOD and CBRN Nováky, were used in a new training scenario.

Students of Children's Comenius University spend a day with soldiers

(16 July) This year, too, service personnel prepared a rich programme for students of Children's Comenius University. This is the 8th time that soldiers have demonstrated their day-to-day work and equipment to the summer students and involved them in training activities. Today participants of the Army Workshop were visited by SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš at the SVK Army's 13th Mechanised Battalion base in Levice.

SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš said: "It is exceptionally important for us to stimulate the interest of young people in Homeland Defence. In addition to promoting patriotism, it is one of the most important tasks that the MOD is trying to deliver in order to enhance the defence capability of the Slovak Republic in line with the SVK Government Manifesto and the SNS Party Manifesto."



Commander of 13th Mechanised Battalion Lt Col Richard Király, who introduced the statistic and dynamic demonstrations his soldiers had prepared for children, added: "The kids tried out

firing air rifles and underwent tactical, topographical and CBRN skills training." One of the highlights of the military programme for participants of Children's Comenius University was a military lunch prepared by Army soldiers and served inside a field tent. At the conclusion of the day packed with training activities and contests, the final results of the teams were announced.

Now in its 16th year, the Children's Comenius University project has been supported by the SVK MOD and Armed Forces since 2011. A total of 160 elementary school pupils and students have participated in the Army Workshop this year.