



A letter from Chief of Defence

Dear Men and Women in Uniform,

Let me thank you sincerely for your professional and responsible execution of all tasks, which the situation regarding the measures taken against the spread of coronavirus in our country is making significantly more complicated for us, redirecting our efforts from performing planned to operative tasks. Thank you for conducting yourselves rationally and considerately in public when on and off duty – I have no doubt whatsoever that we have maintained a high level of discipline and professionalism at this exposed time.

Servicemen and Servicewomen,

Please, take this letter as my personal appeal to each of you to act in a sensitive and professional manner. The extent of my letter mirrors the increasing seriousness of the situation in which we find ourselves and presents a summary of my personal requests to you – my servicemen and my servicewomen – regardless of your appointment or rank.

Today, we can almost certainly say that the demands on our service are only going to increase over the coming days and weeks as a result of justified and urgent requests from the SVK Central Crisis Staff. From the perspective of our service, the hardest days are yet to come, for sure. Although you can feel that the measures being drawn up are discomforting, painful and limiting your everyday civil and personal life, yet we must bear them. One of the possible scenarios ahead is your long-term isolation from the outside world at your barracks and working places. So, I encourage you to make sure you are available on short notice and have well-thought-out plans for keeping your families going.

The assertion that "My job is a mission" is not a phrase – and it is about time we lived up to it! That is why I ask you to keep your travels to a minimum, limit your free time activities so as to have no impact on your near-immediate deployability, prompt reaction to instructions, requirements and guidance from your commanders, and full compliance with the organisational measures. When it comes to hygiene, bear in mind you need to protect not only yourselves, but also your families and the rest of society. "Exceptional emergencies call for exceptional solutions!"

Commanders and Commandresses,

Your commitment is key to the success of our input into handling this exceptional situation in Slovakia. We are forced to think about how best to use our personnel in order to keep all the ecosystems in our area of responsibility functional and be part of the current response, while exposing ourselves and others to the risks of the infection and the spread of the virus as little as possible. In view of availability of personnel on short notice, I ask of you to consider whether the presence of your subordinates at their working places is now indispensable.

The SVK Armed Forces Command is issuing further guidance on our internal action plan that we must follow strictly, while maintaining our flexibility and adaptability. Based on these specifications, I call on you, commanders, to draw up plans to support the crisis infrastructure at your level in your area of responsibility and in the region, even over and above the scope of our regular plans.

I also ask of you, commanders, to show your human side when you approach and consider the needs of your subordinates, so that in performing at the highest standards, they can support their families adequately and sustain themselves permanently deployable.

Men and Women in Uniform,

Please, bear in mind that it is us, soldiers, who are rightly expected to serve in a time of emergency!

Yours proudly and sincerely,

General Daniel Zmeko

Jaroslav Nad' appointed as new Defence Minister

(21 March) Mr Jaroslav Nad' was appointed as the new Minister of Defence of the Slovak Republic on 21 March 2020. The Ministry of Defence was today officially handed over to him by the outgoing Defence Minister, Mr Peter Gajdoš. Jaroslav Nad' worked in the field of defence and security for nearly 20 years. In 2004-13, he held a number of positions in the SVK Ministry of Defence, where he worked as Deputy Director of the International Relations Department, Director of the Office of State Secretary, and Director General of the Defence Policy, International Relations and Legislation Department. He left the MOD after his posting to NATO's diplomatic structures as a diplomat, Chief of the Defence Section at the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO and the Permanent Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU. Jaroslav Nad' was also employed in the non-governmental sector. On leaving his position as Director of the Slovak Security Policy Institute, he entered politics.



■ To contain the spread of the highly infectious COVID-19 virus, the Armed Forces Academy (AOS) Liptovský Mikuláš have suspended all classes across the three university levels from 16 to 29 March 2020 until 13:00hrs local time. Classes will also be suspended by the University of the Third Age (U3A). This also applies to all educational, international, career development and short-term courses delivered by AOS.

■ Acting on the recommendations of the SVK Government to contain the spread of COVID-19, the study room of the Military History Archives in Bratislava and the exhibition premises of the Military History Museums Piešťany and Svidník will be closed to the public until further notice.

■ Starting from 19 Mar 2020, the SNP Central Military Hospital – Faculty Hospital Ružomberok will open a pre-triage area for all patients coming to the hospital. Filling out of containers from the military field hospital, the working place is located at the Surgical Pavilion. Every patient entering the hospital from General Miloš Vesel Street will proceed from the hospital gatehouse along a marked path to the pre-triage area, where they will be screened for temperature and fill out a medical questionnaire. Filling out the questionnaire and passing the control point is a precondition for any medical check at the hospital. This measure does not apply to ambulances and medical transport vehicles. The control point is also accessible to patients driving to hospital who can be screened without the need to get out.

■ Members of HQ Bratislava Garrison have begun performing tasks at border crossings and from 16 Mar 2020 they are protecting the forward control point in front of Bratislava's University Hospital in Kramáre. As part of joint patrols and two 24-hour shifts, they are performing tasks in support of SVK police forces, as well as assisting with the COVID-19 information campaign. Assistance tasks are being undertaken at the border crossings at Čunovo – Rajka, Rusovce – Rajka, Jarovce – Kittsee, Jarovce – Kittsee and Petržalka – Berg, as well as in front of Bratislava's University Hospital in Kramáre.

■ The SVK Armed Forces have set up hotlines to record enquiries and questions from military and civilian staff and members of the public. For this purpose, you can call 0960 311 798, 0960 311 571 or 0904 786 033 (mobile phone). We will get back to you and inform you how they have been resolved. This service should be used in a responsible manner!

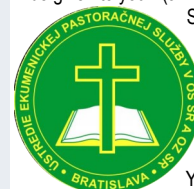
Joint speech by military chaplains

Dear Fellow Colleagues,



On behalf of the SVK Military Chaplaincy, we wish to extend our wholehearted greetings to you as we come to celebrate the greatest Christian feast of the year. Easter festivities mark a period of time when we are filled with great joy, because they speak of Christ's victory over death. They testify to the certainty of eternal life for each of us, though we may die physically.

This period as we take on unexpected tasks that the situation in the country has brought in connection with the measures to contain the spread of coronavirus is, however, a period of sacrifices and renunciation. Anchored in these very principles, the mission of service members is to think more about others than themselves. For us soldiers, too, the current situation, stirring up fears and concerns, is making our personal and professional lives a lot more complicated. While this is understandable and natural, this period offers an opportunity when we can reaffirm our commitment which had motivated us to dedicate our lives to this noble, albeit difficult profession. Aware of the difficulties of our challenging service, the support from the Armed Forces Supreme Command, and the trust given to us by SVK citizens, we wish to offer you our spiritual assistance and encouragement, so that we can fulfil the words of our Saviour: "Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." (Gal 6:2) Towards this end, you can reach us on +421 904 739 330, whenever you need. It will be an honour for us to help you carry your burden in the spirit of Whom we trust: "Ask and it will be given to you." (Jn 14, 14; Lk 11, 9)



Servicemen and Servicewomen,

May the power and joy of Christ's anticipated resurrection fill us and accompany us through life! May the God, the giver of victory over death and all fear, fill you and your families with his mercy and his peace.

Yours sincerely,

Col Stanislav Lipka, Bishop's Vicar
and
Maj Vladimír Varga, EPS Director

Speech by SVK Armed Forces Command Senior Enlisted Leader Sgt Maj Marcel Kaniak

Dear Fellow Colleagues,

The current situation in Slovakia is serious and new for SVK citizens. It is new in the sense that there is a direct threat and that most probably it won't be over in a few weeks. However, this is nothing new for many of us, I have in mind mainly the veterans of Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and African countries. There, apart from direct military threats, we also faced non-military threats such as malaria, tuberculosis, scabies, hepatitis or Ebola on a daily basis as part of our several-month-long deployments. Thanks to the high standards of discipline and professionalism, a vast majority of us fought them off. So, we must apply the same approach now. The demands on our service are being stepped up and the worst is yet to come. Today, many of us are already carrying out a variety of assistance tasks, such as assisting with border checks. Yet, the other tasks have not been suspended and we continue to perform our duties on missions and operations abroad. Similarly, none of the existing security threats to our motherland have disappeared and that is why there should be no let-up in our efforts to secure our fundamental task – to protect the territory of the Slovak Republic and its citizens. The world will never stop – not even once the coronavirus crisis is over. We, the Slovak armed forces, are the last line of defence in the Slovak Republic. SVK citizens will look up to us once our country's overstretched and overwhelmed capacities can't cope with the long-standing pressures on the services associated with the functioning of the State. That is why your ability to preserve your health in good condition and responsiveness during and after the crisis is key to our success. It is absolutely clear to me that in order to fully concentrate on your current tasks while being partially isolated

from your families, you need assurances that they are being looked after adequately in this situation. The SVK Armed Forces Command are undertaking steps to address this situation too, which is a priority issue for us all. Towards this end, we are going to set up a system of call centres which will provide updates on your condition or where you are deployed. We are also preparing an assistance system to support the families of soldiers. Based on our capacity, we going to help them manage their day-to-day needs.

I am addressing you because I have trust in our chain of command and because I believe in the rightness of what the SVK Armed Forces Command are doing. I expect you to do the same with no exception at all. There is neither time nor space to answer superfluous questions, why me and why not him, etc. The "I" mindset must be replaced by the "We" mindset. Our key to success is coordinated cooperation. Although the reach of some decisions and orders may not be visible immediately, each of them will be of great significance in the sequence of steps to sustain the responsiveness of the SVK Armed Forces for the moments when our society most needs it.

I wish to thank all responsible members of the SVK Armed Forces who perform their duties across and beyond Slovakia and thus greatly contribute to protecting and defending Slovakia and its citizens. I encourage you to perform your duties to the required standards, so that we have no regrets in the future. Take good care! See you soon!

Sergeant Major Marcel Kaniak
CSEL, SVK Armed Forces