



Soldiers help with testing

(5 April) Pilot testing for COVID-19 has been underway across selected 33 Roma communities in an effort to minimise the spread of coronavirus. There have been 244 tests carried out on recent arrivals from abroad across Roma settlements over the past two days. On Friday, samples were taken in Jarovnice. On Saturday, 196 samples were collected in Trebišov, Smižany, Kecerovce, Zborov, Dolany, Hrabušice and Markušovce. On Sunday, further sampling took place in Krížova Ves, Batizovce, Vechec, Ondavské Matiašovce, Bôrka, Dobšiná and Žehra.

Relying on the expertise of epidemiologists, the virus can multiply 13 times faster within Roma settlements, which is why they have been added onto the priority testing list. The results for the first day show that none of the residents of Jarovnice, a village which has one of the highest concentrations of Roma in Slovakia, have tested positive for COVID-19. The other results will follow soon.

Member of the Permanent Crisis Staff and Member of the European Parliament Peter Polák said: "Testing people in Roma settlements is an absolute priority for us. It is important to protect the health of people in settlements and villages and I have no doubt this is also true of the whole society. We had information on recent arrivals from abroad, some of them were reportedly not in good health and were afraid to visit their GP. On return to their settlements, up to ten people share a single room, and some have no access to drinking water, nor to a sewer system. One can say there this poor adherence to hygienic measures, not to mention home quarantine. After exploring all options for available personnel and technical resources, we decided that the testing would be carried out by doctors in uniform or armed forces, because there was no other institution that would have the equipment and personnel required to swab test about 1,500 people in the Roma communities in just a few days." Sampling for COVID-19 testing has been taking place in cooperation with the Office of the SVK Government's Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities.

According to Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, testing for COVID-19 in the communities is going off without a hitch and he has come across positive feedback from local residents. "They can see that this activity of the SVK Armed Forces is here for their health and safety," he said. He further noted that up to 200 SVK Armed Forces personnel, drawn from CIMIC experts of the Special Operations Forces, medical professionals from the Office of the SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General, and members of the SVK Air Force and the SVK Army, have been out to take samples.

Praising the activity of the MOD, Prime Minister Igor Matovič said: "That the Armed Forces are going to help test residents of settlements is not a demonstration of force. It is a demonstration that we do not want to put extra pressure on medical staff in hospitals and that the Armed Forces were willing to provide medical professionals to deal with this situation."

"Along with the Health Minister, we are finalising the discussion to transform the SNP Central Military Hospital into a red hospital, which, in practice, this would mean setting it aside as a hospital to treat COVID-19 patients only," explained Minister Naď.

Remarks by Defence Minister on 75th anniversary of Bratislava's liberation

Dear friends,

Today we commemorate the liberation of Bratislava, the capital city of the Slovak Republic, for the 75th time already. And we do so at a time when each of us and, at the same time, we all together face a global threat – that of coronavirus causing the COVID-19 disease.

It was 75 years ago that the merciless enemy was defeated in the Bratislava-Brno Offensive, and daily life in peace could begin in Bratislava once again. To the sound of the last shots being fired, residents of Bratislava put all their efforts together to deal with the aftermath of the senseless acts of war. Similarly, let's find inspiration in our predecessors and rally our efforts towards fighting the current threat – one endangering the very functioning of our society.

Esteemed friends,

Let us dedicate a moment of silence in memory of all those who deserve most of the credit for liberating our capital city, namely members of the Soviet 7th Guards Army led by Lt Gen M. S. Shumilov, under which the Romanian Army's 2nd Tank Regiment was deployed operationally, members of the Soviet 46th Army led by Lt Gen A. V. Petrushevsky, and members of the Danube Flotilla led by Rear Admiral G. N. Cholostakov. We should not forget those who laid down their lives for our freedom and rest in peace at war cemeteries, dreaming their dream of eternity.

Jaroslav Naď, SVK Defence Minister



■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď met with Mayor of Bratislava Matúš Vallo on 30 Mar 2020. They agreed on how to find solutions and coordinate efforts in support of Bratislava and its residents over and above the assistance provided thus far.

■ Working from 07.00 to 17.00 as part of the military's response to COVID-19, military psychologists provide **psychological support and counselling** to service personnel, civilian employees in Defence, their family members, and people in self-isolation at the quarantine centres on the following helplines: 0904 739 312 / 0914 370 276 / 0903 824 433 / 0904 786 080 / 0903 824 490. You can also email your questions to psycholog.ossr@gmail.com.

■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď received representatives of the **SVK Soldiers Union** at the Ministry of Defence on 2 Apr 2020. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď warmly welcomed the discussion, because working for the cause of soldiers is one of his main goals.

■ In an effort to stem the spread of COVID-19 by a series of preventive measures for the protection of SVK Armed Forces members, the Clothing Centre for Generals and Ceremonial Units of the MOD and SVK Armed Forces, joined by Supply Base I Nemšová, Supply Base II Martin, Supply Base III Zemianske Kostolany have turned to **sewing their own face masks** from 16 Mar 2020.

■ Having received her assignment orders, 1Lt Kristína Baďová took up the appointment of **Chief of Personnel Management**, Supply Base II Staff Martin, with effect from 1 Apr 2020.

■ The **Institute of Military History (VHÚ)** announces it has begun to publish papers by VHÚ researchers under "Information Updates", portraying historic events and personalities in the history of Slovakia and Slovaks. Also published will be recipes for soldiers' meals of different historic periods and from different locations across Slovakia. For more information, go to www.vhu.sk/vojensky-historicky-ustav-k-vam-domov/.

■ For all soldiers and civilians, live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, Regina Radio's **Full Field Kit** will bring information on how soldiers spend their Easter on international crisis management missions and operations. We appreciate your comments, suggestions and opinions. Please, write to us at plnapolna@mod.gov.sk.

■ The SVK MOD announces that the SVK Armed Forces will transport equipment from Kuchyňa to Zemianske Kostolany by rail. The **rail movement** is scheduled for 6 Apr 2020.

Tnava Faculty Hospital has new dental surgery from SVK Armed Forces

(4 April) The SVK Armed Forces lent the Tnava Faculty Hospital a shipping container turned dental surgery, which forms a containerised element of the military field hospital, operated by the SNP Central Military Hospital in Ružomberok. This is a new, fully equipped dental surgery office to serve the public, starting from Monday 6 April. The site was visited by Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "This element of the field hospital has been set aside for citizens of the Tnava region who may have dental complications, however, it is not advisable for them to see their dentist due to the current



measures in place." He added that civilian dentists will provide dental care there. In this connection, he offered his recognition and thanks to all healthcare professionals, not only those in the Tnava hospital, who are putting in a lot of outstanding and invaluable work at times like these. Head of the MOD emphasised: "In this situation, we are trying to help and provide as many Armed Forces personnel and assets as possible in

Minister meets U.S. Ambassador Brink



(2 April) Since assuming his appointment, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď for the first time met the U.S. Ambassador to Slovakia, Her Excellency Mrs Bridget A. Brink, for talks at MOD Main Building. At the meeting, they devoted their attention to combating COVID-19 and addressed the MOD's priorities for the coming period. Ambassador Brink appreciated Slovakia's commitment to delivering on its pledges in the NATO Alliance and highlighted the irreplaceable role of SVK service members on international crisis management operations.

SVK nationals brought home from UK

(2 April) SVK nationals were brought home from the United Kingdom by members of the Transport Wing Kuchyňa. Among them were SVK students who had formally requested repatriation and SVK soldiers who had become stranded in the UK while on holiday. They were repatriated on a flight from Aberdeen Airport to Sliač Airport. On arrival in Slovakia, they were transported to the Training Centre Lešť by personnel of the Tactical Wing Sliač, where they were placed in quarantine.

Army trains sanitary personnel



(30 March) 150 personnel are undergoing training for sanitary personnel over the next 3 weeks. The first intake of 47 soldiers have already begun intense medical training at the Training and Mobilisation Manning Base in Martin. On completion of the training, they will be posted to hospitals, retirement homes, and the quarantine centre at Lešť, based on the needs of the SVK Central Crisis Staff. They are expected to provide medical care for over 3,500 patients.

SVK soldiers serving abroad

(1 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď and Armed Forces leaders announced that a proposal to change the arrangements for sending SVK soldiers abroad would be submitted to the SVK Cabinet. The intent is to ensure that armed forces are ready to take on a growing number of tasks at home. In this situation, the training of new contingents to be deployed abroad is proving risky and the measures in place abroad do not allow the transport of personnel and equipment.

As no artillery contingent is ready to deploy to Latvia, the mandate for the serving contingent must be extended. On the recommendation of HQ RS Kabul, the SVK military is to withdraw 29 soldiers from Afghanistan and 20 soldiers will remain in the country to carry out essential tasks. For the time being, the measures will not affect the personnel serving in Cyprus and BiH. A change to the conditions of the mission in Iraq is still being discussed.

support of the fight against the spread of coronavirus and ensure the safety of our citizens." The field hospital container was transported to Tnava by soldiers from the Logistics Battalion Hlohovec, he added.