



Operation Umbrella 1

(13 April) The SVK Armed Forces launched their historically first civil-military operation – Op UMBRELLA 1. It is aimed at ensuring civic life and security in the sealed-off Roma communities. Meanwhile, specialist Armed Forces teams have been continually gathering swab samples for testing COVID-19. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Juraj Krúpa, and Chief of Defence Daniel Zmeko set out to see for themselves and inform of the situation in the affected Roma communities.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "The situation is developing relatively positively at the moment. Since Thursday, when the previous meeting was held here, a number of positive steps have been made, even in terms of food supplies for example. Drinking water has also been provided continuously, and so have medical services." He went on to add that several dozen people from the communities will be moved to state-run quarantine centres at their own request today. "The SVK Armed Forces definitely do the job 100%. I am proud of how they act, mainly because in this way we can demonstrate their importance as part of domestic crisis management," he emphasised.

As Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko noted, the SVK Armed Forces were fully committed to steering local responses to the pandemic over the Easter holidays. As part of assistance services in support of the SVK Police Corps, several operations were underway concurrently, including swab sampling across Roma communities, maintaining public order, and supporting civic life under quarantine in Roma communities. "Over 1,500 service personnel are currently out in the field, with about 150 of them deployed directly in and around Krompachy. There, two operations have been underway. There is the testing team as part of Operation Carousel, plus there is the task force to maintain order and security and support the daily civic life in local communities. Disinfectants and medical resources are available on site, and so are a team of sappers to supply wood and, last but not least, logistical support elements," he said.

Appreciating the work of the SVK Armed Forces, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Juraj Krúpa said: "I can see that the activities being carried out here are at a very high level. Thanks to this field experience, I will be able to give a better assessment of things that will come up in Parliament." On different hoaxes and disinformation about the reported militarisation of the service personnel's deployment, he reminded that the SVK Armed Forces form a regular component of crisis management and have an irreplaceable role in this situation too.

A total of 1990 swab samples for testing COVID-19 were collected across 86 communities from Friday 3 April 2020 to Sunday 12 April 2020. Today further sampling was scheduled to take place across 12 villages. The sampling efforts in the field and at the operational centres were supported by 200 soldiers. The Operation Carousel Task Force is composed of Special Operations Forces (SOF) experts for civil-military cooperation (CIMIC). Military medical professionals from the Office of SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General are embedded with the task force, and so are elements of the SVK Air Force and the SVK Army.

EU Defence Ministers meet "online" to discuss COVID-19 situation

(6 April) In a video conference, EU Defence Ministers met to discuss the current security issues and measures to counter the spread of coronavirus, as well as the assistance response being provided by the armed forces of EU Member States in the battle against the pandemic at national levels. State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marian Majer took part in the video conference. During the video conference, heads of the MODs addressed the implications of the pandemic on the international crisis management missions and operations that have been taking place under the EU's umbrella. In this respect, State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marian Majer reassured that the Slovak Republic will continue to responsibly deliver its international commitments, as being consistent with the valid mandate. He also briefed on the actions of the SVK MOD and Armed Forces in the battle against coronavirus in terms of the measures in place at home and in the area of deployment in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where SVK personnel are serving. "At the end of last month we delivered 218 FFP3 respirators and medical material to service personnel deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina on Op EUFOR ALTHEA, where Slovak soldiers are serving too," he added. On the developing COVID-19 situation, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Josep Borrell called on EU Member States to share their initial views on the strategic impact of the spreading pandemic on the CSDP. These should serve the European External Action Service (EEAS) as input data for identifying and analysing the mid- and long-term implications for defence and security.



■ To mark the 75th anniversary of Bratislava's liberation on 6 Apr, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď, State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marian Majer and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko today attended an act of commemoration at the Victory Memorial in Bratislava's Eugen Suchoň Square, to pay their respects to the memory of the soldiers and civilians who lost their lives in **liberating our capital city**. Also in attendance at the commemoration were Deputy Parliamentary Chairman Gábor Grendel and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Juraj Krúpa.

■ As part of efforts to halt the spread of COVID-19, a SVK AF UH-60M Black Hawk, crewed by airmen of the Helicopter Wing Prešov, transported swab samples, collected from residents of Roma communities, to a **COVID-19 testing lab** in Trenčín on 6 Apr. As part of a second mission, they transported a total of 29 swab samples from Filakova and Jelšavy to Trenčín.

■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď visited **CBRN specialists in Rožňava and at the Training Centre Lešť** on 7 Apr. Along with Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, he was interested to find out about the current needs and how the MOD can make their everyday work easier and more efficient. He was thankful to the service personnel for their sense of responsibility with which they undertake tasks and their resolve to deal with the pandemic.

■ Every two weeks video podcasts will be made available on the **Azimuth 24/7 YouTube Channel** with coverage of SVK armed forces and events across Defence. Please, visit <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCLJp8YjvKwgjuUimQU9X3A>.

■ 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 update you on how soldiers are helping in the battle against the COVID-19 respiratory disease. We appreciate your comments, suggestions and opinions. Please, write to us at pinapolna@mod.gov.sk.

■ The Ministry of Defence has set up a **Twitter account** (@mosr_official), where you can find updates on what's going on in Defence. Please, don't forget to follow us at: https://twitter.com/mosr_official.

■ The SVK MOD announces that the SVK Armed Forces will conduct **road movements** between 13 and 19 Apr 2020. The round trip convoys will transport oversize cargo from Levice to Martin and from Hlohovec to Martin.

Medical supplies unloaded

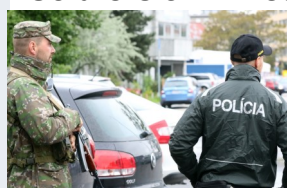


(13 April) Over 40 service members unloaded more than 20 tons of personal protective equipment (PPE) from a cargo aircraft from China at M. R. Štefánik Airport in Bratislava. As part of

Operation Courier, they transported the medical material to the central warehouses of the State Material Reserves.

Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "As part of Operation Courier, we have driven over 300,000km to date, whereas we have delivered over 1,500 tons of material, including 100 tons of medical supplies. The cooperation with the State Material Reserves and other organisations is very good, which once again testifies to how helpful for domestic crisis management the Armed Forces are, for which they deserve our thanks." Also today, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď along with Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security Juraj Krúpa and Chief of Defence General Daniel Zmeko inspected the soldiers serving at the Jarovce border crossings, where they are assisting the SVK Police Corps on mixed patrols.

Soldiers on mixed patrols



(13 April) Over Easter holidays, Armed Forces personnel were out in cities and villages across the whole of Slovakia, to assist members of the SVK Police Corps in enforcing the SVK

Government's latest measures on dealing with the COVID-19 outbreak. Based on a request from the Police Corps, 714 Armed Forces personnel were set aside to carry out assistance tasks and enforce the public order as part of mixed patrols from 8 to 13 April 2020. They worked two 12-hour shifts and carried out assistance tasks at border crossings, quarantine centres and hospitals, as well as assisting with the delivery of medical material. And members of the Office of SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General are continuing to take swab samples across marginalised Roma communities. Today further sampling will be done at 7 other locations. Minister Naď hailed the exemplary cooperation between the Armed Forces and the Police Corps. Based on the Government's decision, the Armed Forces can set aside additional 1,500 regular soldiers to undertake assistance tasks on mixed patrols with members of the Police Corps as part of the measures to control the spread of COVID-19, the head of the MOD reminded.

Central Military Hospital Ružomberok launches COVID-19 testing

(8 April) The Slovak National Uprising Central Military Hospital Ružomberok – Faculty Hospital (UVN SNP Ružomberok-FN) launched its own pilot testing for COVID-19 with the real time RT-PCR method on Monday 6 April 2020. The hospital's current capacity is 60 RT-PCR tests per day. The first 25 high precision tests were done as early as Tuesday. Two days after the launch, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko inspected the hospital's readiness to operate as a "red hospital" for patients with COVID-19. Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď said: "I am very pleased that our hospital has taken all the necessary measures to provide SVK citizens with the best healthcare it can." On this occasion, he thanked the hospital staff and those taking part in the fight against



coronavirus for their work and commitment. As he added, the Central Military Hospital can provide comprehensive healthcare services to 60 COVID-19 positive patients, including artificial lung ventilation, and can hospitalise up to 250 patients with COVID-19. As part of the measures in place, the Central Military Hospital converted 184 beds, which is over 1/3 of the hospital's total bed capacity, to care for COVID-19 patients. Additionally, a building of the former outpatient clinic in

Ružomberok's Považská Street was under reconstruction to serve as a pavilion for COVID-19 patients. The hospital also ordered 4 pieces of a bio-shuttle, a medical isolation and transport system, to move patients safely from the pavilion to other wards within the hospital, if required.