



Transparency and growth

(20 April) Prime Minister Igor Matovič has submitted the SVK Government Manifesto, which was approved by the Cabinet the day earlier, to Members of Parliament (MPs). It is now being debated by the parliamentary plenum as part of its 6th plenary session before a confidence vote in the new government is called. "I am immensely proud of the Chapter on Defence and Security where we clearly join up with our partners in the West and commit to supporting soldiers, armed forces, SVK defence industry and increasing transparency," said Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď. "This week I've introduced it to MPs on the Parliamentary Committee on Defence and Security and it is now being debated in Parliament. Acting responsibly, I can say it is the best government manifesto the Slovak Republic has ever had. It is written in the spirit of promoting transparency, fighting corruption, assisting ordinary people. And it also contains 11 points on which we committed to take action before the general election," he added.

On 20 April, the Minister attended two briefings on the ongoing defence modernisation programmes. "I am sorry that my concerns are gradually being confirmed and most of the programmes must be either reviewed or completely cancelled. We are holding intense discussions within the MOD leadership team, we are consulting with subject matter experts and armed forces about the way ahead and the decision will be made in the coming days," he said. He called on his colleagues to be fully cooperative with control authorities. "It is absurd and unthinkable to keep contracts secret where we do not have to, say, for example, before the Supreme Audit Office or the Office for Public Procurement, and pay a fine every month," he added.

On 21 April, cooperation and maximum openness were among the topics of discussion between J. Naď and representatives of the National Union of Employers, which brings together 1,300 companies with 250,000 employees. "It is especially at times of crisis that we need to support employment and restart economic growth," he said.

Stop disinformation

(24 April) State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence Marian Majer today met State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Martin Klus for a bilateral meeting to discuss how both ministries can coordinate the fight against hybrid threats and to lead together a large informal meeting of GOs and NGOs that are specialised in and have a lot to say about this subject. "The security environment, in which Slovakia too finds itself, is changing with technological advances. Whether we speak about cyber threats and attacks or the influence of disinformation being spread in the online space, it is imperative that we react to them promptly and effectively," said State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marian Majer. The bilateral meeting took place in the margins of the informal meeting on hybrid threats, where representatives of both ministries and the NGO sector addressed the issue.



The security environment, in which Slovakia too finds itself, is changing with technological advances. Whether we speak about cyber threats and attacks or the influence of disinformation being spread in the online space, it is imperative that we react to them promptly and effectively," said State Secretary of the SVK MOD Marian Majer. The bilateral meeting took place in the margins of the informal meeting on hybrid threats, where representatives of both ministries and the NGO sector addressed the issue.

Standup of Joint Operations Centre to run Operation Corona

(21 April) The Armed Forces will make best use of their unique capability to plan and control complex and long-lasting operations in Slovakia. By activating the Joint Operations Centre, the deployments of SVK personnel and assets promise to be more efficient and so will the military's ability to rapidly respond to requests for assistance by the Government, the Central Crisis Staff, and the Permanent Crisis Staff.

CHOD General Zmeko said: "My intent is to exercise united and coordinated command over deployed forces on operations which we have been carrying out since the beginning of the emergency. Planning and controlling operations of large units is one of the areas which we normally test while using different types of staff rehearsals and exercises. Our expertise from training is reflected in our rapid and effective execution of tasks to slow down the spread of COVID-19, which is rightly required of us by the public."

All partial operations and individual tasks, including collecting swab tests for COVID-19 under Op Carousal, supporting and guarding the quarantined settlements under Op Umbrella, transporting people and material under Op Courier, are all being integrated into a single one – Operation Corona, led by the Armed Forces.



■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď spoke by phone with **Czech Defence Minister** Lubomir Metnar on 21 Apr 2020. They discussed ways to foster the Defence engagement between the States and paid close attention to joint solutions on defence and security issues within the V4, EU and NATO. A dominant theme of the phone conversation was the developing COVID-19 situation.

■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď received the **Ambassador of the French Republic to Slovakia**, HE Mr Christophe Léonzi, at the MOD on 21 Apr 2020. In their first official meeting, they spoke about areas of further cooperation on security and defence at the bilateral level, as well as part of the EU and NATO. He updated the Ambassador on the SVK military's COVID-19 operations in reaction to the spread of the virus and deployments on international crisis management operations.

■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď along with State Secretary Marian Majer and MP Karol Kučera visited the **DUKLA Banská Bystrica Military Sports Centre** on 25 Apr 2020. They were updated on the current situation and ongoing activities at the Centre and the refurbishment and modernisation of the Athletics Stadium in Štiavnický.

■ The **M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy** in Liptovský Mikuláš has received €2.9 million in non-repayable funding from the European Structural and Investment Funds. The financial resources will go towards refurbishing and modernising residential buildings in order to save energy during the buildings operation. The aim is to improve the comfort of residents at the Armed Forces Academy.

■ Live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, Regina Radio's **Full Field Kit** will provide you with information on the SVK Engineer Battalion's deployment with UNPROFOR. We appreciate your comments, suggestions and opinions. Please, write to us at plnapolna@mod.gov.sk.

■ Up-to-date information on the role of the SVK Armed Forces in the fight against COVID-19 is available on **social media networks**:

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/ozbrojenesily>

Instagram: http://www.instagram.com/ossr_sr/

Twitter: <http://www.twitter/ArmadaSR>.

■ Drivers are advised by the SVK MOD to drive carefully as the SVK Armed Forces will conduct **road movements** between 27 Apr and 3 May 2020. The round trip convoys will transport oversized cargo on the following routes: Levice – Sereď – Martin and Martin – TC Lešť. Over the period, there will also be a SVK military rail movement from Prešov to Zemianske Kostolány.

Sanitary personnel undertake duties at Central Military Hospital

(20 April) The first 40 sanitary personnel who completed their training over the recent weeks at the Training and Mobilisation Manning Base Martin have begun to carry out their duties at the SNP Central Military Hospital (CMH) in Ružomberok. "At the beginning of April, we trained 147 soldiers of non-medical specialties in three groups under the supervision of specialists from the Office of SVK Armed Forces Surgeon General. The training and preparation in accordance with the Health Ministry-approved training programmes prepared



different hospital wards. "After a theory phase, our soldiers are now moving on to application and practice," added Sgt Maj Viliam Machara.

On modernisation at Sliac



(24 April) With each modernisation project, senior Ministry of Defence leaders are committed to acting with responsibility and maximum transparency to provide service personnel with the best

Service condition they can, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď announced after his visit to Sliac Air Base. "The former government set aside €55 million in funding for the modernisation of Sliac Air Base, and all this with no implementation project whatsoever," adding that "I saw with my own eyes in what stage of 'implementation' this project was. Therefore, I see this as a case of failed communication by the former MOD leadership and I will do everything to make sure the acting MOD leadership finds the best solution to the project, including to its financial aspects." In this regard, he pointed out that different lies have been created in the past. "That is why I would like to stress that no way will this lead to establishing U.S. bases in our country. I will be very pleased if we succeed, as has been the case in the past, in getting funds from other sources than our taxpayers' money. This is especially true in this crisis situation."

Quarantine measures pay off



(25 April) SVK service personnel's continued efforts for the benefit of domestic crisis management in the fight to contain the spread of COVID-19 are an exemplary example of the SVK

Armed Forces' capabilities and professionalism, Defence Minister Jaroslav Naď confirmed following his visit to the village of Bystrany, where the first of the sealed-off Roma settlements was re-opened 16 days on since its closure. Prime Minister Igor Matovič, State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence Marian Majer, and Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, too, came to inspect the success of the measures in place. "Just as an ordinary Roma settlement in Bystrany is becoming a model for the whole of Slovakia today, it is also recognition of some very exemplary work the SVK Armed Forces have put in here," said Prime Minister Igor Matovič in Bystrany, extending his thanks to soldiers for their professionalism and human approach. "We have been continually performing tasks for the benefit of the quarantined settlements, the town of Krompachy and its urban areas. There, our soldiers have been fully engaged not only with local government officials, but also with the Police Corps and other authorities and NGOs," said Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko.

the participants for executing duties at state-run medical facilities, retirement homes, and the quarantined centres run by the SVK military during this emergency," said CSEL of the Defence Medical Service Sgt Maj Viliam Machara. Based on a request from CMH Ružomberok, the staffing levels there were increased to include soldiers ready to undertake tasks at