



Transparency comes first

(29 April) At a press conference, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' along with Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko officially outlined the way ahead for the MOD with the 8x8 Armoured Infantry Fighting Vehicle, 4x4 Multirole Tactical Vehicle, and 3D Radar Systems modernisation programmes. He made it clear that the emergency situation caused by COVID-19 will have a major impact on the defence budget. "Because of that, the Chief of Defence and I will do the absolute maximum to make sure that every euro invested into modernisation ends up with soldiers," he emphasised.

On the modernisation programmes, the Defence Minister pointed to the need for transparency. "Everything that does not need to be secret will be public. You have my public promise," he said, noting that he has already taken concrete steps to this end. Furthermore, he underlined that his next steps will also reflect the need for systemicity, on which he has already engaged with Armed Forces leaders, defence experts, and internal and external control bodies. "We will engage in intense talks on the future commitments of the Ministry of Defence towards our international partners as part of the NATO Capability Targets. Thus, the future of the 8x8 IFV programme will depend on the outcome of the talks," he said. But if during the talks it is decided that the 8x8 IFV programme should go ahead, the number of vehicles will be reviewed significantly and an orderly procurement process, involving subcontractors, will be conducted.

Furthermore, the Minister announced a definitive stop to the 4x4 Multirole Tactical Vehicle Programme. "The project was prepared in a non-transparent manner, which was, after all, confirmed by the Office for Public Procurement. For this reason, the Office put a stop to it and the MOD appealed against its decision. Still today, we are going to initiate interdepartmental consultation on the proposal to cancel the former Government's decision on this project." He noted that the MOD will withdraw its appeal against the Office for Public Procurement's decision.

From the standpoint of Armed Forces modernisation, the top priority is now assigned to the procurement of 3D radar systems. "Inevitably, we need new radar systems," said Minister Nad'. The Minister wants to manage this acquisition process through to completion in a transparent manner. Due to the technical conditions, he cannot afford any substantial time delay that a new competition may require. "We are going to allow the countries that participated in the radars selection process to submit one more final bid."

The Defence Minister's move on Armed Forces modernisation has the backing of Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko. "The Armed Forces have in the long run signalled the need for a review of the Long-Term Defence Development Plan, because it is not up-to-date, nor is it being delivered – whether that's in terms of timeline, resources or content. We are pragmatists and we understand that we have changed the conditions for funding the MOD. That is why we will have to reprioritise the Long-Term [Defence Development] Plan in its specific parts, and of course, so is true of the scale of individual acquisitions and specific needs of the Armed Forces," he said. At the same time, he announced that the Armed Forces are going to update their requirements on new assets and total numbers.

The decisions on the purchases of military assets were welcomed by President and C-in-C of the SVK Armed Forces Zuzana Čaputová. She appreciated the openness with which the Minister communicated and stressed that Slovakia must deliver its commitments towards Allies. The President expects the Defence Minister to come up with a solution to ensure that the Armed Forces "finally get" what they need to meet the commitments and boost their operational readiness.

J. Nad': Military ranks cannot be an expression of kingpinism

(29 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' today signed orders to cancel the exceptional promotion of reservists JUDr. Andrej Danko and JUDr. Tomáš Borec to the ranks of Captain and Colonel, respectively. In justifying his decision, he stated: "Military ranks have their meaning and purpose. They denote the level of responsibility and authority in the Armed Forces. Most importantly, they cannot be an expression of kingpinism, politicking or some political corruption or anything close to what we witnessed in the previous term." Head of the MOD has announced a legislative proposal to prevent such malpractice in the future. "We will amend the Conscription Act and abolish the institution of exceptional promotions for soldiers in reserve. And the option to promote reservists in the Active Reserve under clearly delineated conditions is being offered up for consideration." In this connection, the MOD's internal guidance on this matter will be updated as well. Exceptional promotions and appointments for retired soldiers will be possible where the conscription obligation has ceased. "For example, this pertains to the veterans who participated in the Slovak National Uprising, which, on moral grounds, is intended to be an act of recognition for their service," concluded Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad'.



■ Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' met with representatives of the **Union of Contemporary Veterans** on 29 Apr 2020. The Union members have been actively engaged with the crisis staffs combating the coronavirus pandemic, making the best of their experience from domestic and international operations. The Minister expressed his appreciation for their engagement and committed to doing everything to strengthen their social status.

■ Slovakia fully supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and considers any change to them by military force as unacceptable. State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence Marian Majer confirmed in a phone call with **Deputy Minister of Defence of Ukraine for European Integration** Lt Gen Anatoliy Petrenko on 28 Apr 2020. He reaffirmed Slovakia's steadfast support for Ukraine on its path of integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures.

■ The United States of America is a key partner of the Slovak Republic on defence, as referenced in the SVK Government Manifesto. This as well as other issues of bilateral cooperation on security and defence were discussed in a phone conversation between State Secretary of the SVK Ministry of Defence Marian Majer and **Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for European and NATO Policy** Michael C. Ryan on 28 Apr 2020.

■ On 29 Apr 2020, EU Defence Political Directors held talks on security and defence issues regarding the measures in place to combat COVID-19, the use of armed forces for this purpose, and the ongoing PESCO Strategic Review Process. The **EU Defence Political Directors video conference** saw the participation of Director of the SVK MOD's International Relations Department Július Demetrian.

■ On 30 Apr 2020, 55 male and 5 female young soldiers have made the **Oath of Allegiance** to the SVK Armed Forces. 2nd Degree Soldier Jakub Benček was named Best Soldier.

■ On 30 Apr 2020, as part of two transport flights, conducted by a SVK Air Force **C-27J Spartan** airlifter, medical supplies and spare parts were transported to our soldier serving in Latvia and mobile air-conditioning systems, protective masks, respirators and disinfectants were brought back to be distributed to other destinations where our soldiers are on operations.

■ As part of the call for voluntary financial contributions, 8,456 euros have been raised for the family of departed serviceman Cpl Ján Husenica by 3 May 2020. The fund-raising event was initiated by his colleagues from the Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade Nitra and the Military Support Foundation on 21 Apr 2020. Using the **Military Support Foundation** mechanism, 2,118 euros have also been raised for the family of departed serviceman Col Anton Tisoň.

■ Starting from 4 May, the **Ružomberok-based Central Military Hospital – Faculty Hospital** has restarted its specialist surgery services, operations and interventions. To undergo medical checks with their GPs, patients can make appointments by phone. The patients whose operations have been cancelled due to the state of emergency will receive new dates from specific hospital departments.

■ Live on Fri at 21.05 with a rebroadcast at 00.30 on Sat, Regina Radio's **Full Field Kit** will celebrate the 75 anniversary of the end of WWII through veterans' memories. We appreciate your comments, suggestions and opinions. Please, write to us at plnapolna@mod.gov.sk.

■ Drivers are advised by the SVK MOD to drive carefully as there will be 2 **Allied road movements** between 4-10 May 2020. In particular, NATO convoys, unescorted by MP, will move from Hungary to Poland and from Poland to Hungary on 8-9 May 2020. Additionally, SVK Army tanker trucks will conduct refuel operations from Prešov to Zemianske Kostolány. There will also be a SVK military rail movement carrying fuels from Zemianske Kostolány to Kuchyňa.

Minister sacks Horezza director

(30 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' has sacked Chair of the Board of Directors and Director General of MOD-run Horezza joint stock company Miloslava Slížová. The reason for her dismissal is mismanaging State estate by selling off Ministry of Defence land holdings in the High Tatras in a non-transparent manner.

Minister Nad' said: "By selling off plots of land in Tatranská Lomnica for a disadvantageous price and the way it was done by the previous Horezza leadership, it is estimated that the State has lost hundreds of thousands of euros on average – not to mention the non-transparency of this sell-off."

Head of the MOD took this decision partly because of the complaints made against the director of Horezza for how she handled the mandatory quarantine places for repatriated SVK citizens. He added that he sincerely wants to thank all employees of the Granit Hotels who are fully committed and dedicated to their work.

Horezza JSC runs the recreational facilities of the SVK Ministry of Defence. The Slovak Republic is the sole shareholder of the company, on behalf of which the SVK MOD is authorised to act.



Repatriation from Cyprus

(2 May) A SVK Air Force C-27J Spartan has landed at the Transport Wing Kuchyňa, bringing 23 repatriates from Cyprus to Slovakia in the evening hours of Saturday.

The SVK MOD has arranged a repatriation flight for 15 Slovak, 3 Czech, 3 Hungarian and 2 Austrian nationals. They were welcomed by Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' at the airbase. He praised the cooperation with the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Ministry of Interior in facilitating the repatriation, adding that on arrival SVK citizens made their way to quarantine centres run by the Ministry of Interior.

Head of the MOD also thanked all airmen, including the aircrew and ground personnel from Kuchyňa, for their dedication and job well done as the emergency situation unfolds. "Even today 825 soldiers are on the ground to provide security and protect the health of our citizens," he added.

Another 23 repatriates from Lebanon touched down at Kuchyňa Air Base on 1 May 2020.

On visiting the air base this evening, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "The coronavirus crisis left our citizens stranded abroad and because of the measures in place they were unable to return home. As part of our capacities, we've arranged for their transport by a military aircraft."

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SVK Armed Forces members have so far transported 17,153 people and 1,531 tonnes of material, covered 731,747km, driven 3,368hrs, and logged 174 flying hours. Special military mobile testing teams have collected 8,445 swab samples and service personnel are continuing to support Police with assistance tasks.

Deepening relations with Israel

(30 April) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' spoke by phone with Israeli Defence Minister Naftali Bennett. They were united in their common interest in furthering the SVK-ISR bilateral relationship, which has seen many palpable outcomes in the field of defence. Minister Bennett was interested to find out more about the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovakia and presented the Israeli response. Minister Nad' updated him on the measures in place and the work done by our service personnel in this field. The Ministers discussed the modernisation programmes planned by the SVK MOD and the economic situation that will have ramifications on the planned purchases.