



Round 4 of mass testing

(22 November) Round 4 of the mass population testing for the presence of COVID-19 got underway across 458 municipalities in Slovakia as part of Op Shared Responsibility, with 537 test sites open and 541 testing teams available for swab testing.

Testing was smooth, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said at a test site in Púchov. "Compared to the previous round of testing, around 1/3 of people have turned out for a test. People are coming gradually, no queues are being formed, and no cases of people coming from other regions to get tested in the selected municipalities have been reported," he said.

Minister Nad' was thankful to all mayors of cities, towns and villages participating in the mass testing for their interest and help. He underlined that all test sites are open in every municipality as planned.

Test data shows that 110,609 residents took part in Round 4 of the voluntary and free testing for COVID-19, with 2,501 testing positive or 2.26%.

Compared to the 31 Oct - 1 Nov countrywide testing, the latest test data from 458 municipalities shows that there is a moderate increase in positivity rates. All data in the comparison comes from the same municipalities over the last two consecutive weekends. Turnout represented 30.49% of the total number of people tested in the same municipalities under the country-wide testing programme.

Mr Nad' said: "I very much appreciate the approach of all 110,609 people who have proved that they are not indifferent to the issues of health and responsibility to themselves and to others. In this situation we need such a responsible stance, because we can help Slovakia only when we pull together in one direction." He pointed out that the next steps, conditions and form of testing will be decided by the Central Crisis Management Staff and the SVK Government.

According to the Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko, the Armed Forces have accomplished their mission. Meanwhile, they are delivering the test results to individual Regional Health Authorities and they are ready to help digitalise the test data.

Among the 4,876 people involved in Phase 4 of the mass population testing were 1,366 soldiers, 539 police officers, 1,928 medical personnel, 62 members of the Financial Administration Authority, 30 firefighters, 921 administrative aids and 30 volunteers.



Jaroslav Nad' joins EU defence leaders in discussing defence

(20 November) The EU's Foreign Affairs Council (Defence) debated current issues of EU security and defence policy, the latest security developments, and ways to deepen and strengthen the existing initiatives. Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' met his counterparts over video conference. On EU activities, Ministers focused on Op IRINI and the ongoing situation in Libya. They took note of the need for the activities of EUTM Mali and EUCAP Sahel Mali to be resumed in order to bolster the EU's efforts in the country. They discussed ways to strengthen the existing policies and initiatives.

Another major theme was the direction of defence cooperation under the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP). "Much attention was paid to the preparation of the Strategic Compass. The latest developments in the security environment clearly point to the need to strengthen the defence and resilience of the State and society. Therefore, we must also unequivocally devote our attention to cyber and hybrid threats, in particular to disinformation," said Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad', adding that the strategic partnership with NATO in this field is of special importance to the EU. EU defence leaders looked at the progress and advances made in the strategic review of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO). Still that day, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' spoke via a video link with EU Defence Ministers whose political parties are members of the European People's Party Group (EPP Group).



- On 19 Nov, SVK President Zuzana Čaputová handed over Letters of Credence to **new ambassadors**. They will be transferring to new Diplomatic Service appointments. Peter Bátor has been appointed as Head of the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO, Radovan Javorčík as SVK Ambassador to the USA, Róbert Ondrejčák as SVK Ambassador to the UK, Ľubomír Reháč as SVK Ambassador to the Russian Federation, and František Ružička as Head of the Permanent Delegation of the Slovak Republic to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

- Defence State Secretary **Marian Majer** and his Hungarian counterpart István Szabó held talks on current issues of the SVK -HUN defence cooperation via video conference. They reviewed NATO, EU, V4 cooperation so far and ways to take this cooperation forward, including the SVK contribution to the NATO Headquarters Multinational Division Centre (HQ MND-C).

- Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family **Milan Krajniak** has assured service and police personnel that no way will the Pensions (Amendment) Bill change the terms and conditions of Service pensions for members of the Armed Forces and of the Police Corps. All schemes will be preserved as they exist.

- **A Science Week** with the motto of "Science Has Many Faces" was hosted by the Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy (AOS), with its departments and workplaces showcasing their updated scientific projects on the Academy's website. Due to the COVID-19 preventive measures in place, the Science Week was for the first time organised online by the Science and Foreign Affairs Section, AOS.

- Mayor of Humenné Miloš Merička and kids from Rabča Primary School and Rabča Nursery School in thanked Commander **2nd Mechanised Brigade** Brig Gen Vladimír Kubáň and the members of the 2nd Mechanised Brigade for their support to the country-wide testing for COVID-19 as part of Op Shared Responsibility.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as five Allied **road movements** involving US and Polish troops are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 23-29 November 2020. Over the same period, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct convoy movements from/to: Prešov - Trebišov and back, Sliac - Martin, Trebišov - Kamenica na Cirochou and back, Trebišov - Veľké Ozorovce and back, Hlohovec - Moldava nad Bodvou and back, Veľké Ozorovce - Kamenica nad Cirochou and back, Hlohovec - Nemecká, CV Lešť - Nitra, Nitra - Zemianske Kostofány and back, Zemianske Kostofány - Rožňava and back, Zemianske Kostofány - Žilina and back, Zemianske Kostofány - Martin and back, Sliac - Zemianske Kostofány and back, and Nitra - Veľké Zálužie and back. Also scheduled are SVK Armed Forces rail movements from/to: Vlkánová - Zemianske Kostofány and Trenčianska Teplá - Michalovce.

Under the aegis of UN

(20 November) In a video call, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' spoke with UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. Topics of discussion included SVK armed forces in the service of UN. Mr Lacroix appreciated the service of 240 SVK soldiers with UNFICYP in Cyprus. SLOVCON peacekeepers have performed operational duties in Sector 4, of which they have had full responsibility since 2018. On servicewomen in the SVK military, Minister Nad' pointed to the rising numbers of female soldiers in the Slovak Armed Forces, equating to 12% of the strength. 23 SVK servicewomen are deployed to Cyprus and a total of 211 SVK servicewomen have served with UNFICYP to day.

CARD released by EDA

(20 November) EU Defence Ministers were presented with the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD) by the European Defence Agency. The report provides an overview of activities, covering defence planning, defence expenditure and defence cooperation, undertaken by 26 EDA Member States and identifies 55 collaborative opportunities in capability development in all operational domains and 56 related opportunities for R&T cooperation. These can be carried out as PESCO projects, under EDA, or bilaterally or multilaterally outside the said frameworks.

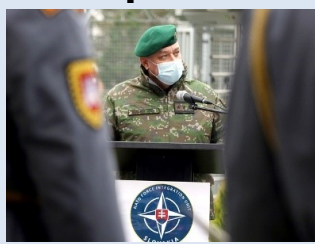


Unstoppable Vlhová (SVK)

(22 November) Petra Vlhová, of the Dukla Banská Bystrica Military Sports Club, achieved a double win in the new ski season at the Audi FIS Alpine Ski World Cup Women's Slalom in Levi, Finland. After her Saturday's triumph, the 25-year-old ambitious Slovak ski racer added another triumph on Sunday, placing ahead of Michelle Gisin of Switzerland by 0.31sec after both rounds. Thanks to her fifth consecutive slalom win at the World Cup, she tied the all-time record held by Marlies Schild of Austria. Last year she picked up three wins in Zagreb, Flachau and Kranjska Gora, while this season she added another two wins within 24 hours in Levi. Her 10th slalom win, 16th World Cup win in her career, and 37th podium placement has made her the leader not only for a crystal globe in slalom, but also for the big crystal globe.

NFIU SVK reconfirms its full operational capability (FOC)

(19 November) Three years on since declaring its full operational capability (FOC), on 26-30 Oct 2020 the NATO Force Integration Unit Slovakia (NFIU SVK) underwent re-certification to conduct NATO taskings. The NFIU SVK, based at Vajnory Barracks, passed the comprehensive assessment process with NATO observers on the ground and with excellent results. It culminated today with the certification ceremony where Deputy Chief of Defence Lt Gen Josef Pokorný handed the Certificate of Full Operational Capability over to Commander NFIU SVK Colonel Peter Brauner, in the presence of Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' and invited guests. As part of the "Field Evaluation" with an evaluation exercise (EVALEX), the NFIU



SVK provided the reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) of 33 Austrian military medics to support Op Shared Responsibility as the COVID-19 mass testing programme was rolled out across Slovakia.

Commander NFIU SVK Colonel Peter Brauner was appreciative of the NFIU members' active and professional approach to preparing and executing tasks in the unit certification process. The NFIU SVK reached its full operational capability for the first time in May 2017. Its compliance with NATO standards is maintained through the three-year certification cycle. Commander NFIU SVK Colonel Peter Brauner is in command of 39 military personnel from eight countries.