



## Soldiers at full stretch

(6 January) The SVK Cabinet agreed to set aside up to 1,000 SVK Armed Forces personnel to carry out medical and sanitary tasks in line with their mandate until 30 June 2021. Soldiers will help patients on beds receiving care and support hospital personnel in critical moments as the hospital bed occupancy rate is alarmingly high across the whole of Slovakia.

150 military personnel, of whom 30 were medical professionals, assisted in rolling out mass testing for COVID-19 in Nitra County. The decision to commit troops to supporting the mass testing campaign across Nitra County was made by the SVK Cabinet. Speaking about the SVK military's readiness to ensure maximum cooperation on the county-wide mass testing, Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "Testing people in a way we have tested them during Op Shared Responsibility has proved to be one of the most impactful solutions to the fight against the rapid and dangerous spread of the infection. That's why we have once again turned to mass testing in this really critical situation in Nitra County."

Responding to a military aid to the civil authorities (MACA) request by Nitra City Council, the organiser of the mass testing, the MOD deployed personnel and provided 15,000 antigen tests so that testing could get underway as soon as possible. As the epidemiological situation got worse and hospitals were under enormous strain, the SVK Armed Forces placed 15 soldiers in the busiest Nitra hospital as of 31 December and, based on a request from the hospital, increased this number to 35 as of 5 January in order to help the medical staff at the Department of Anaesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine, Infectology Ward, Coronavirus Testing Unit and the Vaccination Centre, as well as distributing medicines and medical supplies and disinfecting spaces throughout the hospital. Their work is strictly supervised by the hospital's healthcare professionals.

The SVK Armed Forces have carried out over 100,000 antigen swab tests across military facilities since 10 December 2021, with 8,500 testing positive.

## Military Deed of the Year

(4 January) Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' launched the 24th Military Deed of the Year Awards, which aims to celebrate outstanding achievements and exceptional acts of heroism, rescue, service and assistance by military and civilian personnel who have rescued lives, helped the public or taken forward the good name of the Slovak Armed Forces. Nominations are now open for the Military Deed of the Year Awards, with the deadline set for 28 February 2021.

Outstanding achievements and deeds are recognised in the following categories: Rescue of Life, Assistance to the Public, Friend of the Armed Forces, and Service to the Country, a new category introduced by Chief of Defence Gen Daniel Zmeko. This award recognises distinctive achievements by Servicemen and women who have performed their duties with utmost professionalism and have greatly contributed to building the Slovak Armed Forces at home or abroad. Individual nominations can be forwarded by email to [cin-roka@mod.gov.sk](mailto:cin-roka@mod.gov.sk) or sent by mail to the Marketing Section, Press Office, Office of Defence Minister. Please, write the Military Deed of the Year Awards on top of the envelope. The laureates of individual categories will be decided by a panel of judges from the Ministry of Defence, chaired by the SVK President and Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces. For more information, go to the MOD website.

## Sappers completing provisional bridge over River Hornád

(6 January) Sappers of the Engineer Battalion Sered, joined by firefighters from the Rescue Brigade Humenné are completing a temporary bridge over the River Hornád between Kysak and Veľká Lodina. The original bridge was closed in August last year because it was in poor repair before collapsing in October. As a result, local residents had to take an unsuitable detour several times longer than normal. The bridge is expected to be complete within 10 days. Defence Minister Jaroslav Nad' said: "Despite the critical pandemic situation, the problems people have continue to exist in other areas as well. That's why I am truly proud that, as well as undertaking their business as usual tasks in defence of the State, the Slovak Armed Forces are present everywhere where our citizens need them – whether that be in hospitals or settlements such as Sopotnica where they are building an important road link." The bridge closure has caused complications even for the Integrated Rescue Service (IRS) first responders who have had to take a detour when responding to local incidents. Building work on the provisional bridge started on Monday 4 January 2021, whereas the bridge elements were lent to the District Office by the Material State Reserves.



- With the motto of TEMPO DE AGIR (Time to Act), Portugal has assumed the **Presidency of the Council of the European Union** for the fourth time so far. For the next six months, it wants to contribute to strengthening the European crisis management system, rule of law, democratic values, and the fight against disinformation. It has in the long run been active in the field of CSDP. On defence, Portugal is to focus on the EU's missions and operations, supporting the European defence industry, maritime security, as well as promoting EU-NATO relations.

- Based on the annual review of the Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP), the International Courses Section, Gen M. R. Štefánik Armed Forces Academy, organised the **Tactical Planning Introduction Workshop**. Designed for academics, the workshop was conducted in English and was attended by 22 Ukrainian Armed Forces members. Step by step, they went through tactical planning according to APP-28. The workshop participants from Zhytomyr, Odesa, Kyiv, Lvov and Charkov expressed their satisfaction with the workshop.

- This winter members of the **21st Mechanised Battalion Trebišov** decided to donate clothes and toys to the Centre for Children and Families in Veľké Kapušany. The Battalion offers its patronage to the Centre under the Defence-wide "Find Your Home" project. Working closely with the Military Support Foundation, the kids from Veľké Kapušany received books and fresh fruit baskets as well.

- Members of the **Dukla Banská Bystrica** Military Sports Centre performed very well at the 52nd European Championships in Sigulda, Latvia. Marián Skupek placed 6th and Jozef Husla finished 10th in the men's single seat luge category. Tomáš Vaverčák and Matej Zmij clinched an excellent 4th place in the U23 doubles luge. Katarína Šimoňáková, Tomáš Vaverčák and Matej Zmij took an excellent 5th place in the luge team relay.

- The MOD has issued a traffic warning to motorists as five **Allied road movements**, involving US and Croatian troops, are scheduled to take place across Slovakia from 11 to 17 Jan 2020. The MOD stresses that the Allied transits have been approved in line with SVK Public Health Authority-issued guidelines. Over the same period, the SVK Armed Forces will conduct convoy movements from Zemianske Kostoľany to Nemšová and back, as well as railway movements from Zemianske Kostoľany to Prešov and from Zemianske Kostoľany to Kuchyňa.

## Virtual museum

(5 January) Due to the ongoing adverse epidemiological situation, the exhibition premises of the Military History Museums remain closed to the public. For all fans of Slovak military history, the Institute of Military History (VHU) has prepared a virtual exhibition from the collections of the military museums in Piešťany and Svidník, which is available at this link <https://virtualna.info/>. Both in Slovak and English, the virtual exhibition presents the technical and tactical data of 60 exhibits from the Military History Museum in Svidník and the Military History Museum in Piešťany.



## Record-breaking road move

(6 January) Supported by two members of the National Military Movements Centre, SVK Army vehicles completed their longest road move under NATO's eFP on 28-30 Dec.

A convoy of SVK military vehicles, consisting of a Volkswagen Transporter escort vehicle, two Tatra armoured personnel carriers from Ružomberok and a multilift truck from Prešov, covered a total of 1,318km to Ādaži, Latvia. The convoy route from Žilina to Ādaži was divided into three legs. The first leg of the convoy route took the convoy from Žilina to Poland's Sochaczew air base near Warsaw, the second leg from Sochaczew to the Marijampolė base in Latvia, and the third leg from Marijampolė to Ādaži Training Area. For the last leg, the convoy was escorted by military policemen in three vehicles that joined it at the border crossing between Latvia and Lithuania and escorted it safely to Ādaži, where the vehicles were officially handed over to SVK troops. After reaching the destination, all convoy personnel were tested for COVID-19 in Riga.

Meanwhile, a Slovak Air Force C-27J Spartan touched down in Riga, bringing in the rest of SVK personnel deploying with the eFP BG Latvia. It then flew back to Slovakia, carrying onboard the escort vehicle along with the two members of the SVK Military Movements Centre and the Tatra drivers.

## Active Reserves could be open to a larger number of candidates

(10 January) The Active Reserves project could be open to a larger number of candidates, while service in uniform might no longer be an entry condition. The MOD intends to introduce the details of this legislative proposal in 2021. Defence

Minister said in an interview for TASR News Agency. The MOD has reported low interest in joining the Active Reserves. "Today, the Active Reserves can be joined by a person who completed mandatory military service or served with any military or police forces," explained the Defence Minister. The aim is to edge closer towards the system that is in place in the Czech Republic, where any citizen who complies with medical requirements and a set of rules is eligible to enter the Reserves. Last year, the SVK Armed Forces received 57 applications and planned to train 330 soldiers. 130 Active Reservists had a valid contract. Additionally, changes to Voluntary Military Training (VMT) are

also needed. This scheme could be more oriented towards the current activities of the Armed Forces. "This training should not be artificial, but it should be engaging to as many people as possible," he outlined. According to him, the project



should present an alternative to different paramilitary groups in Slovakia that pose a security risk. He pointed out that "a lot of people join paramilitary groups not because they want to support a right-wing extremist pursuing his own political interests, but because they love the Army and the Armed Forces." Voluntary Military Training (VMT) is aimed at young people, aged 19 and above, who want to undergo military training and develop basic knowledge and skills necessary for service in the Armed Forces and crisis management operations. 40 candidates attended VMT in 2019. Since last year VMT has been suspended due to the pandemic.