

VIMIMED 2020, a European model

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VIMIMED is the annual conference of the military medical systems of the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Hungary within the initiatives of the Visegrad Group, or V4 as they simply say. From 24 to 28 February 2020 in Prague (CZE) a successful event has been exploring the future challenges of the V4 military medical support together with experts coming from the NATO Centre of Excellence for Military Medicine who contributed to the discussions linking specific projects to the wider transformational processes already ongoing in NATO community.

WISEGRAD GROUP

www.visegradgroup.eu



The Group has been established in 1991 with the Visegrad Declaration on cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in striving for European integration. **Members periodically meet in thematic groups** at political, cultural, scientific, military and economic level, and from the high-level meetings of prime ministers and heads of states to expert consultations, **supporting each other with cohesive solutions and initiatives** to develop an integrated response to common challenges. The **similarity of their recent historical and cultural background** when joining the European Union generated converging interests and objectives. Some of the most important founding principles are:

- full restitution of state independence, democracy and freedom,
- elimination of all existing social, economic and spiritual aspects of the totalitarian system,
- construction of a parliamentary democracy, a modern State of Law, respect for human rights and freedoms,
- creation of a modern free market economy,
- full involvement in the European political and economic system, as well as the system of security and legislation.

The Visegrad Group **does not have any institutional structure** but relies on collaborative exchange of information, experience and knowledge that over time has become a model **to enhance the European integration**.

VIMIMED 2020 started with speeches of national delegates, addressing the current situation within their own capabilities, investments, areas of cooperation, strategic views and risk management for expected threats or anticipated shortfalls. Speakers focused their approach on V4 resources in the perspective of possible contributions to the **EU and NATO collective healthcare systems that still provide the main references and standards**. So, international bodies such as the NATO Centre of Excellence for Military Medicine (MILMED COE), the NATO Allied Command Operations Medical Division Head (ACO MEDAD) and the Multinational Medical

Coordination Centre/European Medical Command (MMCC/EMC) could have the chance to integrate the V4 view with leading projects in the multinational environment.

Col Jozef Ragan, MD (Slovakia) outlined the **possible contributions of SVK to the future medical support concept of the Alliance** in reaction to possible instability situations, exploring the nature of progress in crisis, the identification of requirements to support modern warfare, the multinational medical framework, the technological innovations in a global security context, the risks of future conflicts and corporate solutions to share the burden of collective defence by maintaining sovereignty, autonomy and independence.

Col Emil Lisiak, MD (Poland) well explained the national doctrine on medical support and capabilities needed to deliver healthcare in combat operations which are clearly designed to defend polish borders, and to assist soldiers and civilians in case of crisis within the national territory. The efficient management of such medical resources with a simple command and control structure represent one of the main **factors to successfully deliver medical services to all residents in peacetime** and to upkeep the skills of personnel with the effectiveness of facilities in order to be ready for wartime, emergencies and deployments.

For Hungary, the head of delegation Col Maria Matyus, MD, announced a new medical strategic organization within the Ministry of Defence which will be operational from July 2020 and is expected to **offer a more flexible and valuable system in the domains of medical governance and administrative performance**. The Military Hospital in Budapest is the main hub to care for the widest range of beneficiaries among service members and civilians, integrating resources for best practices during daily activities and adversities. Current investments are concentrating in medevac assets turnover and top-level training for deployable medical teams.

The Czech presentation was given by BG Zoltan Bubenik, MD, who was also representing the CZE 2019/2020 presidency of the Visegrad Group. In his agenda he mentioned the current organization of the CZE medical service with future projections for sustainability, the responsibility for care delivery in either deployments or national territory and the ambitious project of two medical battalions capable of assisting combat brigades in hostilities. The clear picture of available capabilities and the perspective of **continuous innovation represent a rational and practical way of directing affordable efforts in the areas of more need** for the improvement of national assets according to allied standards.

International remarks, practical standing initiatives, multinational projects and strategic NATO operational scenario were addressed by Col Attila Lengyel, MD (Deputy Director of the MILMED COE), BG Laszlo Fazekas, MD (ACO MEDAD) and BG Stefan Kowitz, MD (Director of the MMCC/EMC). At the end of the day, **participants were provided with the most up-to-date picture of the V4 and allied medical situation** in order to best contribute to the specific topic-related working groups that met for the remainder activities in agenda.

On the following days experts from V4 countries gathered in syndicates and discussed the following topics:

- Multinational Training,
- Aeromedical Evacuation,
- Veterinary Support,
- Military Medical Logistic,
- Military Psychology,
- Force Health Protection,
- Pre-Hospital Emergency Care - Blood and Blood Products in military operations.

V4 Nations compared their available resources and capabilities suitable for international cooperation, outlining a detailed description of their current status for **reciprocal awareness** and creating conditions for a **collective improvement** of medical facilities, training, interoperability, assets, equipment, healthcare and prevention. Conclusive remarks for each panel and common agreed proposals were finally delivered by the chairmen with useful takeaways, ideas to be further developed and to be the founding impulse for next year meeting.