

## Swedish Armed Forces and the Corona Pandemic

The resources of the armed forces have already been used to a large extent in the ongoing crisis. Military hospitals have been assembled in Stockholm and Gothenburg and personnel, mainly from the Home Guard, have put up medical tents at hospitals in a number of Swedish regions. To mention but a few things.

Naturally, the Corona outbreak have had a huge impact on the Swedish Armed Forces in other aspects also, as well as it has in the rest of our society. However, a reflection we at SAMO makes is that the military organization is better equipped, both structurally and psychologically, to handle the crisis compared to many civilian institutions.

This is also valid regarding union related issues. For SAMO, it is much more an issue of “business as usual” (with a lot of practical ad hoc adaptations of course, such as office staff working from home, cancelled meetings and courses, video conferences instead of face to face, etc.) compared to other workforce organizations.

Many other Swedish unions are in much more of “crisis mode”. Off course this has a lot of reasons. For one, our members do not stand the risk of losing their jobs due to this crisis, which is the case for many other unions. Secondly, our collective agreements and union contracts with the employer already handles workplace issues ranging from peacetime conditions all the way to war. Thirdly, our staff is mostly former military, hence trained and prepared for extraordinary conditions.

We also differ from most other Swedish unions and organizations in that we do not send out that much information regarding the corona crisis to our members. This is due to our belief that there should be one line of communication in a situation like this. We strictly tell our members to get their information regarding aspects of the corona crisis from the employer side, The Swedish Armed Forces. However, we are in close contact and collaborate with the employer regarding what information is conveyed.

Practically, we have daily meetings with the employer regarding interpretations of our collective agreements concerning the situation we are in. We, together with the employer, regularly send out recommendations and advice to the organization on how to act when it comes to crisis related workplace issues, such as overtime, when staff gets sick, cancelled vacations, etc.

For the armed forces, a lot of restrictions have been implemented, as for the rest of the society. Strict travel restrictions both domestic and abroad, cancelled exercises, and so forth. The armed forces have produced and regularly updates its own instructions for its personnel and organization, based on the recommendations from Swedish disease control authorities.

Relevant links (in Swedish language):

The Corona virus and the Swedish Armed Forces:

<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/coronaviruset-och-forsvarsmakten/>

Field Hospital constructed in Stockholm:

<https://www.dn.se/sthlm/militaren-bygger-faltsjukhus-for-coronapatienter-i-stockholmsmassan/>

Military personnel back from Iraq:

<https://www.forsvarsmakten.se/sv/aktuellt/2020/03/personal-fran-irak-ater-pa-svensk-mark/>