

COVID-19: Portuguese military personnel have treated more than 1,000 patients of the SNS (*Serviço Nacional de Saúde – National Health Service*) and conducted more than 188,000 inquiries.

Portuguese Armed Forces have treated 1,050 covid-19 patients from the SNS in the HFAR (*Hospital das Forças Armadas - Armed Forces Hospital*) centers in Lisbon and Oporto since the beginning of the Covid-19 epidemic, one year ago.

In addition to receiving SNS patients in their hospital institutions, Portuguese Armed Forces carried out more than 188 thousand epidemiological inquiries.

From the National Authority for Emergency and Civil Protection (ANEPC), Portuguese Armed Forces received 325 requests, for beds, volunteers, transport, infrastructure, training, disinfection, hospitalizations. 323 are already satisfied. The two missing are grants of space for vaccination and distribution of goods.

In addition, there are several awareness and training actions, requested by the Ministry of Labor, Solidarity and Social Security (MTSSS) for 2,772 homes. 2,176 have already been carried out. There are also virtual training sessions, in a total of 70 for 32 entities, covering 574 people, through the Military Health Directorate.

Concerning SNS patients, at the HFAR, in the beginning there were 96 inpatient beds and five intensive care beds, at the Lisbon hub. Those were increased to 147 inpatient beds and 10 more intensive care beds, only for Covid-19. In Oporto, there were 74 beds. Now, there are 57 more and 431 SNS patients have already been treated there. In addition to the two HFAR poles (Lisbon and Oporto), 12 Covid-19 reception centers are also in operation, from North to South and on the Islands (Azores and Madeira), such as at Beja Air Base, at Lisbon Naval Base (Alfeite), or at the old Belém Military Hospital, among other places, totalling 774 beds where 448 patients have already passed.

There are also 43 teams, with 803 military personnel, conducting epidemiological surveys. More than 188 thousand were already made, which implied 334 thousand phone contacts.

At the Joint Command for Military Operations, which operates 24 hours a day, is placed the coordinator of the National Vaccination Plan Against Covid-19, a Vice Admiral and support staff (seven elements) and, since February 3rd, the General Staff of the Immediate Reaction Force (20 elements), in connection with the set of Civil Protection cells: Permanent Crisis Center, Joint Logistics Center and Movement Control Center, to guarantee coordination and harmony.

This strategy was conceived in February 2020, with three essential vectors: preventing infections internally in the Armed Forces (preventive and outbreak control measures), preserving the response capacity of the Armed Forces (work and distance training and reducing training and exercises) and make available the capacities available to the SNS, Civil Protection and MTSSS.

At the same time, the necessary means were maintained to fulfill the essential missions in the national territory (search and rescue and aero-medical support) and also of the FND (*Força Nacional Destacada - Detached National Forces*), in missions abroad, which along with the reduction of members, the difficulties in recruitment and retention, imply a huge workload and effort for the portuguese soldiers.

Anyway, at the moment, there are only 613 soldiers unavailable due to Covid-19, in the three branches of the Armed Forces (including the FND), in line with the decrease in infections that has been occurring in the country.

As of Monday, March 1st, there have already been 2,200 military personnel vaccinated and, this week, is expected that there will be another 1,500.