Regional Search and Rescue

Basic SAR Course

23 - 25 April 2013

IRC-06-P
EXTERNAL REPORT

Background

The event was a follow-up to the Regional Conference on Search and Rescue (SAR), which took place in RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation in November 2012. It was the continuation of a series of activities dedicated to the topic of search and rescue in South-Eastern Europe (SEE), first of which was held in Belgrade in May 2011 and co-organized by RACVIAC and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia. RACVIAC and its Members have thus recognized the importance of efficient SAR structures, national and regional alike, as one of the security issues that should be further discussed and explored. In that regard, this year’s event was aimed at opening the way ahead in the field of search and rescue. The event brought together regional representatives with the knowledge of and experience in supporting SAR capacity building in the SEE countries, thus providing a broad platform for the exchange of information and best practices.

Purpose

The purpose of this event was two-fold: to sign the Letter of Intent of RACVIAC countries aimed at promoting and strengthening further regional cooperation on search and rescue and to conduct a Basic SAR Course.

The main objectives were:

a) To sign the Letter of Intent by way of which the countries outlined their efforts aimed at regional SAR cooperation;

b) To conduct a Basic SAR Course.

Acknowledgements

RACVIAC would like to extend its gratitude to the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to the Tactical Air Command of the Kingdom of Denmark for all its kind support and cooperation.

Venue and participation

The event was held in Sarajevo from 23 to 25 April 2013. The event gathered a total of 32 participants from each of the signatory countries of RACVIAC Agreement, civilian and military officials at decision-making levels and experts representing relevant national institutions dealing with SAR issues: Defence/Armed Forces, national RCC authorities, Civil Aviation Authorities and Civil Emergency Management Authorities.
The Agenda

The activity moderator, Mr Milan Janicijevic, acting RACVIAC IRC Pillar Programme Manager, welcomed the distinguished audience and kindly opened the event, giving the introductory remarks.

Mr Zoran Sajinovic, Assistant Minister for International Cooperation, opened the event on behalf of the host and co-organizer, Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and welcomed all participants. He expressed great appreciation for the initiative of holding the event that is part of the joint efforts to make regional cooperation more productive, task oriented and aimed at yielding tangible results and benefits for the entire region, its member states and, most importantly, its citizens. Mr Sajinovic continued by saying that the basic SAR course and signing of the Letter of Intent on regional cooperation in the SAR area by the representatives of RACVIAC Members was definitely an important step in the right direction. He stressed that this event was a prime example and demonstration of the adherence of all to the strategic objectives outlined in the Letter of Intent, because cooperation and partnership is a two way street. Solidarity, mutual support and the desired end state should be the guiding principles for all. They are aimed at rendering more stability and more security to the citizens through mutual cooperation.

RACVIAC Director, Ambassador Branimir Mandic, delivered the opening remarks. Ambassador Mandic expressed a warm welcome to all participants of the first out of four regional SAR events, which will take place in the course of this and following year in the framework of RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation. Ambassador Mandic informed the audience that initial steps for this activity had been undertaken during the regional SAR event held in November 2012. After this fact-finding event, RACVIAC and its members had recognized the importance of efficient SAR structures, national and regional alike, as one of the security issues that should be further discussed and explored. He said that this year’s event aimed to open a way ahead and thus provide a broad platform for the exchange of information and best practices in the area of search and rescue.

Following the opening remarks, the event proceeded with a presentation delivered by Maj. Ove Urup Madsen, Head of International Cooperation from the Tactical Air Command Denmark, who tackled the concept of SAR and national obligations in accordance with international standards and the SAR development working group composition and necessary mandate. During his presentation he underlined the following:

- **SAR Objective:** to minimize the time from the call about a disaster to a medical facility, ensuring a safe and efficient response in the best interest of the individual in need;

- **SAR Organization:**
  - Governmental responsibility:
    1. Define the SAR task;
    2. Define areas of responsibility;
    3. Point out SAR providing ministries;
    4. Ensure economic foundation;
    5. Legislative provisions;
    6. SAR coordination authorization (RCC).

- **Operational contact group:**
  Representatives from all SAR-involved agencies:
  Deals with:
  1. Operational matters;
  2. Alerting procedures;
  3. SAR asset classification;
4. Procedural development;
5. Equipment implementation;
6. Technical issues;
7. SAR statistics;
8. Post mission analysis;

After his presentation, the floor was open for comments and discussion with an active participation of national representatives. The following remarks were underlined:
- SAR is still not equally established across the countries, according to international needs and standards;
- Coordination of the national SAR Institution is needed;
- National Coordination Group is also needed;
- SAR education and training is necessary;
- Old equipment is currently available;
- Establishment of the RCC is a crucial point for efficient SAR cooperation.

Mr Muhic covered the following items:
- Introduction to Risk Preparedness in DK;
- Definitions of terms - risk assessment terminology;
- EU guidelines for national risk assessment process;
- Society and incidents;
- The black swans;
- Introduction to a new approach - Comprehensive Preparedness Planning (CPP);
- General principles for risk assessment/risk analysis in preparedness planning;
- RVA-Model and risk-based dimensioning of municipal rescue preparedness (RBD).

At the end of the first working day, the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina organized a visit to the military airbase Rajlovac, where the participants could see the available SAR equipment and capabilities. After this, the participants had a chance to see a live SAR exercise that was demonstrated by two helicopters.

The following speaker was Mr Sefik Muhic, Ph.D., from the Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA) who gave a presentation on “The National Laws on SAR Responsibility: A platform for Comprehensive Preparedness Planning – at different levels”. The presentation put forward a civilian point of view with the aim to:
The focus of his presentations was the national SAR providing authorities and the benefits of joining efforts. He showed a video clip of the “MS FAROS” Incident, as an example of a SAR operation. After the video, the following recommendations and lesson learned were highlighted:
- Coordination among the players as the key for a successful SAR operation;
- The important role of SAR Agencies involved in the rescue operation;
- Significance of SAR appropriate equipment and crew;
- Education and on-job training for SAR duties are vital.

The next speaker was Mr Stanislav Geler, SAR Advisor in the Civil Aviation Directorate (CAD) of the Republic of Serbia. Mr Geler outlined the following:
- Legal background of SAR Services;
- Understanding the role and responsibilities of the SAR actors;
- SAR training staff;
- Experience of inclusion in international SAR area.

The last presentation entitled “The development of a National SAR Organization - A Step-by-step Proposal” was given by Major Ove Urup Madsen. This presentation was also a summary of the course. The following remarks and proposals for future consideration were provided by the distinguished lecturer with active participation of the audience:

- In order to move the national SAR process, bottom to top approach is needed;
- There is a need to make SAR visible and communication with the press is necessary;
- There is a need for creating a SAR Working Group in each country (according and with respect to their national decision); In the initial phase leading key players have to take part;
- Identification of SAR-related, state-financed agencies;
- Identification of the agencies financed at a municipal level;
- Identification of national SAR providers: pictures, capabilities, position, alert status, contact details and scramble procedures;
- Identification of specific SAR problem areas;
- Training experiences and needs; In order to met international standards and agreements SAR education and training programmes are needed;
- The most significant move forward and backwards;
- Cross-border initiatives.

The event was closed on a positive note and it proved successful as a platform for security cooperation in the region, designed to support the countries in reaching their common goals. The event paved the way for future learning and experience sharing in the area of search and rescue among the countries of the region. Signing of the SAR Letter of Intent will support upgrading and development of national and regional search and rescue systems and promote their importance. With reference to the Letter of Intent and during Basic SAR Course, the next SAR activity was announced. The next event will be conducted at Tara Mountain in the Republic of Serbia, most probably during the September of 2013. This event will be entitled “SAR Mission Coordinator Course”. In order to move forward with the SAR initiative, it was generally agreed that in the period between the Basic SAR Course and SAR Mission Coordinator Course, remarks and discussions will be considered and possible national responses/inputs explored.

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