Background

Pursuant to the RACVIAC 2013 Programme, the International and Regional Cooperation with focus on Euro-Atlantic Integration Pillar organized and conducted a Regional Search and Rescue Coordinator Course at the Tara Mountain resort, Republic of Serbia, on 8-12 September 2013.

The subject activity is part of the RACVIAC Regional Search and Rescue project, while this Course is a continuation of a series of activities organized on this topic. Initial event was held in May 2011 in Belgrade, Serbia, followed by a fact-finding conference held in RACVIAC in November 2012 and Basic SAR Course in April 2013, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During the last regional SAR event the countries of South-Eastern European region signed an important SAR Letter of Intent aimed at promoting and strengthening further regional cooperation on search and rescue. The signing of the SAR Letter of Intent will support upgrading and development of national and regional search and rescue systems and promote their importance.

The aim of the SAR Mission Coordinator Course was to continue with positive practices and provide a successful platform for security cooperation in the region, designed to support the countries in reaching their common goals in the field of search and rescue.

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC) Course was to inform and educate the designated persons from national institutions selected to direct and coordinate operations of a specific search and rescue mission.

The objectives were as follows:
- To outline the role and responsibilities of the SMC;
- To outline best practices and obtain the knowledge needed in order to manage the Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) staff, as well as make key decisions and generate plans for the management of response and rescue;
- To learn about the IAMSAR processes guiding the response to and coordination of every SAR Mission.

**Organizers**

The event was organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia with the support from the Tactical Air Command Denmark as part of the RACVIAC Regional Search and Rescue project.

**Venue, duration and participation**

The Course took place at the Tara Mountain resort, Serbia, on 08 – 12 September 2013. It gathered 56 participants, who included representatives of each of the RACVIAC Agreement signatory countries, RACVIAC MAG countries, civilian and military officials at decision-making levels and experts representing relevant national institutions dealing with SAR issues, such as Defence/Armed Forces, national RCC authorities, national Directorates for Search and Protection, Civil Aviation Authorities, Ministries of the Interior, Civil Emergency Management Authorities, Medical Trauma Centres and NGOs.

**Content**

The Course was opened on Monday, 9th September by welcome speeches given by Ambassador Branimir Mandić, RACVIAC Director, Mr Miroslav Jovanović, Assistant Minister for Defence Policy, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Serbia and LtCol Ove Urup-Madsen, Head of International Cooperation, Ministry of Defence of Denmark.

In his welcome speech Ambassador Branimir Mandić highlighted that SAR refers to search for and aid to the citizens who are in distress or imminent danger. He pointed out that search and rescue services, especially aeronautical ones, were organized in respect of persons who seem to be in distress and in need of help. He further stressed that close cooperation and coordination among the countries had become mandatory in order to ensure successful search and rescue operations. He also underlined that the issue of search and rescue had grown in importance in light of recent major natural disasters and accidents and the number of human losses resulting therefrom.

Mr Jovanović noted the importance of these activities for the region, pointing out that security doesn’t stop at the borders of one country and that mutual cooperation is need to foster dialog and promote security issues in the SEE region. He also highlighted excellent cooperation between RACVIAC and MoD and endorsed continuation of the courses on SAR.

After opening remarks the course curriculum and objectives were introduced by LtCol Ove Urup-Madsen, Course Coordinator.
He outlined SAR regulating principals (Government, IMO, ICAO, National SAR Handbooks, cross-border SAR agreements). Afterwards, Major Per Horsholm, Head of the JRCC Denmark, gave an overview of the RCC (definitions, task and remit, required personnel, etc.)

Cdr. Pantaleo Dell’Olio from the Italian Satellite Station Cospas-Sarsat outlined the COSPAS SARSAT system and discussed its operation.

The first day was closed with a visit to the wooden town of “Mokra Gora”, where discussions were continued in a relaxed atmosphere.

The second day was dedicated to education and training outlined by Major Per Horsholm (JRCC Denmark), who elaborated on recruiting and education of a fully qualified Danish SAR Mission Coordinator (SMC), annual training and qualification tests, cross-border SMC initiatives, national meetings and international meetings.

Capt. Jens Falk-Adamsen (SAM), SAR Alert Helicopter Commander from the Royal Danish Air Force EH-101, provided an in-depth description of a SAR case, SMC obligations and authority, as well as reports and statistics.

Col Miroslav Pavlović from the Serbian Aeronautical Medical Institution gave an insight into medical considerations.

The third working day provided a platform for discussing civil risk assessment and preparedness planning at the institutional level, presented by Sefik Muhic, Ph.D., from the International Department – IBR Danish Emergency Management Agency (DEMA).

Capt. Jens Falk-Adamsen (SAM), SAR Alert Helicopter Commander from the Royal Danish Air Force EH-101, outlined the SAR alert helicopter, explaining the crew composition, SAR alert status, medical equipment on-board and statistics.

Country presentations were given by representatives of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro and Republic of Serbia. They described recent developments regarding national SAR agreements, cross-border SAR agreements, new equipment and highlighted critical areas which needed further support.

The third day was rounded up with a closing ceremony. Ms Marija Žužek, MSc, the RACVIAC IRC Pillar Programme Manager, gave closing remarks recapping key points and highlighting the importance of further development of the platform for security cooperation in the region with the aim to support the countries in reaching

---

* Turkey recognizes the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
their common goals in the field of search and rescue. She also underlined the significance of SAR courses in that regard and their role in the future cooperation in the field of SAR.

Afterwards, Ambassador Branimir Mandić distributed certificates of attendance to participants, thus closing the Course. In the evening, Ambassador Mandić hosted a closing dinner to mark the end of yet another successful SAR course.

Attending the Course

Closing remarks

The following key points were highlighted:

1) Special emphasis was put on cooperation and due communication among different levels of actors in charge of SAR missions. It is important to know who is responsible for which stage of mission. That is why it is of great significance to organize different types of exercises throughout the year in which all those involved in SAR missions would have clearly defined duties (starting from the ministries to the personnel in the field).

2) These exercises can be small-, medium- and large-scale exercises. Case studies outlined during the course show that they are relevant, because only appropriately trained personnel can achieve true success in the real mission.

3) Responsibilities and jurisdiction over each component of SAR should be clear, while responses should be faster so that in the event of urgencies everybody knows exactly what to do, how and when.

4) Cooperation between civil and military institutions and agencies should also be intensified.

5) Contacts in the region are also key to successful SAR missions, especially in the places near the borders.

6) The most important thing to remember is that the entire SAR system is here to protect and serve public interest.

7) Participants should apply the knowledge they gained in the course back in their countries and try to implement it in their institutions and share it with their colleagues. Only then will this seminar become truly successful and reflect real regional cooperation. RACVIAC stands ready to support these efforts by continuing to provide a platform for the countries of South-East European region in reaching their common goals in the field of search and rescue.