

Regional Search and Rescue Seminar (IRC-06-P)
„SAR MISSION – CHALLENGES IMPOSED BY THE FEATURES OF SEE REGION“
(27-28 October 2015)



The seminar „ SAR Mission - Challenges Imposed by the Features of the SEE region” was held on 27th - 28th October 2015 in Tirana, the Republic of Albania. The event was jointly organized by RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation and the Ministry of Defence of Albania.

This activity was a part of the RACVIAC Regional Search and Rescue project, while this Seminar is a continuation of a series of activities organized on this topic. The initial event was held in May 2011 in Belgrade, Republic of Serbia, followed by a Fact-finding Conference held in RACVIAC in November 2012, a Basic SAR Course in April 2013 in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, a SAR mission Coordinator Course on Tara Mountain in the Republic of Serbia and the Regional Search and Rescue Seminar “Coastal Search and Rescue and Mass Casualty Situations” in September 2014 in Split, Republic of Croatia.

In the course of these events it was concluded that there is a need for close cooperation and due communication among different level actors in charge of SAR missions. RACVIAC stands ready to support these efforts by continuing to provide a platform for the South East European region in reaching the common goals in the field of search and rescue.

The aim of the Regional Search and Rescue activity specifically is to continue with the 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.

The main objectives of the seminar were to outline the role and responsibilities of the Search and Rescue mission staff in order to show and enable them to deal with different situations and also to obtain knowledge and best practices needed in order to manage challenging situations.

The seminar was divided into the two parts: a theoretical part, which comprised lecturers, presentations and discussions in the facilities of the Albanian Ministry of Defence, and a practical part – a SAR exercise on the sea conducted in the Albanian Naval Command in Durres.

The Regional Search and Rescue Seminar was officially opened by the RACVIAC Deputy Director, BG Zdravko Jakop and the Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Albania, Mr Petro Koçi.



In his address, BG Zdravko Jakop highlighted that we all witnessed how severe floods affected many parts of the SEE region in 2014, causing loss of human lives and massive destruction of property, farmlands and infrastructure, as well as cross-border concrete cooperation in order to provide an efficient response to this type of disasters. He also emphasized that in November 2014 RACVIAC, in cooperation with the OSCE

mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and UNDP organized a Regional Conference in order to discuss the Lessons Learned and specific areas of regional cooperation where the conference participants agreed that it is necessary to revise bilateral agreements on cooperation in rescue and protection in order to reduce bureaucracy, especially border crossings for SAR teams which are going to neighboring countries to help the people. International, regional, sub-regional and transboundary cooperation remains pivotal in supporting the efforts of the States, their national and local authorities, as well as communities and businesses, to reduce disaster risk. To complement national action and capacities there is a need to enhance international cooperation between developed and developing countries and between States and international organizations. It is important to strengthen the utilization of media, including social media, traditional media, big data and mobile phone networks, support national measures for successful disaster risk communication, as appropriate and in accordance with national laws. In that sense, BG Jakop stressed that RACVIAC stands ready to support these efforts by continuing to provide a platform for the countries of the South East European region in reaching their common goals in the field of disaster reduction.

During the opening session the Deputy Minister of Defence of the Republic of Albania, Mr Petro Koçi, thanked both RACVIAC and the Albanian Ministry of Defence staff for organizing this very important seminar. He underlined that the cooperation in this area among the SEE countries is more than necessary since we are all facing the same challenges. SAR operations are complex and they require the synergy, engagement and deployment of the capabilities



of many institutions in order to intervene in due time, to find, rescue and evacuate people whose life is endangered. We have strong responsibility to develop the Search and Rescue capabilities and to work even closer on some concrete topics on SAR. He stated that the

Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Albania, as the responsible institution for SAR operations and policy implementation, is working to develop the SAR capabilities, updating the SAR policies, plans and procedures. Together with other governmental agencies, the Albanian Armed Forces have conducted a range of SAR operations, which have highlighted the capabilities of the Albanian military capacities, the shortages and areas for improvements.

During the course of the event participants heard presentations by speakers and lecturers on the related topic. Col Ardian Bali, SAR expert from the Albanian General Staff, gave a presentation about the Regional Support Battalion, its mission, tasks, structure, location, equipment, operational capabilities, SAR operations and the way ahead.

The next lecturer was Mr Drago Radić from the Directorate of Civil Aviation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. His presentation, entitled “The Aviation Accidents and Mountain Search and Rescue – Case Study”, focused on SAR services and the SAR system and its improvement, highlighting Mountain Search and Rescue. The important elements of MSAR are nature, physical elements, mental elements, emotional elements



and external influence – the media and mine situation. Mr Radić presented a Case study on the tragic accident that happened in February 2004 in Rotimlje near Mostar, BA, where the Macedonian President Mr Boris Trajkovski and his delegation tragically lost their lives in an aircraft crash.

The following lecturer was LTC Kosta Jano, Chief of operational section - TRADOC, Albanian General Staff. He gave a presentation on Mass Casualty Incidents – Platform for Comprehensive Preparedness Planning. He focused on a wide range of SAR operations – Maritime SAR, Aeronautical and Land SAR, SAR operations in natural disasters and SAR operations in acts of terror. He underlined that there is a need for national and regional comprehensive approach in order to intervene in due time to find, rescue and evacuate people whose life is endangered.



Mr. Tin Kastelić, BA in Defence studies at the Faculty of Social sciences, University of Ljubljana, presented an interesting approach in a SAR mission in his presentation „The use of volunteered geographic information in natural and manmade disasters crisis management“. He stressed that the human being can act as a mobile sensor-an important source of

information. The new technologies, enabling spatial data collection and spatial data and maps as such are of high importance during natural and manmade disasters crisis management. Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) is user generated geographic information, contributed by volunteers with little or no formal qualifications.

The seminar continued with the presentations of the national delegations of RACVIAC member countries (AL, BA, HR, ME, MK and RS) of their respective countries' SAR systems and current challenges in order to reduce disaster risk, their actual constraints and examples of SAR operations.

The last presentation of the first day was on „International Law and Regional cooperation in SAR at sea“, delivered by Captain (Navy) Artur Macollari from the Albanian Training and Doctrine Command. He underlined the risks of saving life at sea with a focus on Maritime SAR cooperation, supported by the International legal basis for cooperation and regional SAR cooperation.



The second day of the activity started with the presentation on „The Internet and social media in SAR operations (positive and negative Impact)“ delivered by Mr Bernd Noggler from Leitstelle Tyrol, AT. The presentation focused on civil protection and „New“ technology in Tyrol as well as the new services supported by the Leitstelle Tyrol and others/private partners.

After Mr Noggler's presentation all participants went to Durres, where the Exercise „Search and Rescue-Durres SAREX 2015“ was conducted in the region of Kepi i Palit, which involved personnel and equipment from the Navy, Air Force, Maritime counter smuggling, Border Police and Migration from Durres, Marine Interagency Operational Center and the Fisheries Inspectorate.

The exercise „Durres SAREX 2015“ was followed closely by the Chief of General Staff of the Albanian Armed Forces Major General Jeronim Bazo, Naval Force Commander Brigadier General Ylber Dogjani, Air Force commander Brigadier General Vladimir Avdiaj, senior officers from the Ministry of Defence, representatives of institutions that had participated in the exercise as well as participants of the seminar on search and rescue conducted in Tirana by RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation.

Exercise scenarios were constructed in a way to test the level of cooperation, interaction and interoperability of actors who have interests in the sea. Vessels from the Navy, Border Police and Counter smuggling enforcement as well as helicopters of the Air Force, coordinated by the Marine Interagency Operational Center demonstrated professional skills in scenarios of blocking the smuggling vessel, providing assistance to the ship in an emergency situation and in a search and rescue operation.

Addressing the participants of the exercise, General Bazo commended them for their professionalism and cooperation demonstrated in the exercise „Durres SAREX 2015“, while Brigadier General Zdravko Jakop, deputy Director of RACVIAC, acknowledged the Chief of General Staff and Commander of the Navy for the opportunity to follow this naval exercise, which corresponds with the objectives of the seminar.

In the course of the event it was concluded that there is a need for close cooperation and due communication among different level actors in charge of SAR missions on the national and regional level. The participants emphasized the following points that need to be considered for the future planning of events and concrete cooperation steps:

1. Negotiation of bilateral and trilateral agreements to determine areas of responsibility for search and rescue with blue border neighboring countries.
2. Establishing direct communication between neighboring RCC and between RCC and their respective ATC Centres.

3. Intensify the use of modern technologies including social media, traditional media, data and mobile phone networks to support national measures for successful disaster risk communication in data collection and data sharing.
4. Capacity building to increase the capability of organizations and individuals to use GeoTechnology for disaster management (organize workshops).
5. Regional efforts should be made to accelerate the acceptance of a regional non-binding arrangement to promote cooperation in the area of search and rescue among SEE countries.
6. Enhancing and strengthening of cooperation to improve search and rescue combined capacities in the SEE region.
7. Renegotiation for drafting and signing of bilateral and trilateral agreements in determining SAR areas of responsibility on the land and sea between neighboring countries.
8. SAR cooperation including possible division of SAR zones.
9. Finalizing Maritime SAR Agreements in the region (despite maritime boundaries delimitation disputes).
10. Facilitation of SAR cooperation through compatible systems and liberal legislation.
11. Open diplomatic clearance for a declared SAR aircraft (border crossing).
12. Modernization of equipment and systems should be considered in line with interoperability and compatibility of equipment across the region.
13. Joint training of personnel dealing with planning, conducting and coordination of SAR operations – SAR School/Courses – a unified approach to training and exercises and certification.
14. Raising awareness of the population to be pro-active in disaster risk reduction and SAR operations (organize visits to schools, use local media - TV, radio, internet).
15. Intensification of the further participation in the Euro Atlantic and regional initiatives, interoperability on the national and international level.
16. It is necessary to work on a unified terminology acceptable to all organizations/institutions dealing with SAR.
17. Work on unified or compatible organized scheme.
18. Work on a unified operational procedure acceptable to all organizations/institutions dealing with SAR in the region.
19. Work on unified (recognizable) insignia for SAR team members travelling abroad.
20. Plan and organize joint regional SAR exercises (annually).

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