



**IRO - Mission Readiness Test
Kankov, Czech Republic
11 – 13 November 2005**

This was the third Mission Readiness Test organised by IRO. In Kankov, responsibility for the practical arrangements rested with Svaz Zachrannych Brigad Kynologu Ceske Republiky, SZBK, under the competent supervision of Helena Sabatova.

The first Mission Readiness Test was organised in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2002 and the second a year later in Tirolwerk Austria.

The third test had already been waited for, as the training level of dogs participating in international rescue operations had aroused questions and doubts. Dog teams, like all other rescue teams, are expected to display a high and professional standard of work in the most demanding conditions.

A total of 47 dogs had been entered to the test, from 15 organisations and 10 different countries. The dogs represented a wide variety of breeds, with familiar working breeds such as retrievers and GSDs making up the majority. A little Jack Russell, however, showed that the size is not important as long as the dog has the right motivation and skills.

Mr. Otto Lantz, IRO's Spokesperson for Training and Deployment, had designed a challenging test programme and invited professionals in rescue operations from various countries to assess the work of the teams. All in all, the test provided a comprehensive overview of the standard of the teams' performances.

The test consisted of various day and night-time exercises, carried out individually and in teams over a period of ca. 10 hours, with hardly any breaks. It really tested the dogs and the handlers, both physically and mentally, and required a high level of stamina. The dogs' physical condition was monitored by a vet, who checked the dogs both before and after the exercises.

The event had attracted the interest of also Czech authorities, who observed the teams at several different test points. The various test areas and how they are assessed were explained to the authorities, and naturally they were also provided information about IRO's activities in general.

The purpose of these tests is to evaluate the skills and effectiveness of the rescue dog teams and at the same time, prepare them for the most demanding missions. Successful completion of the test is an absolute requirement for teams that participate in international rescue missions. The tests define uniform requirements for all dog teams, which will certainly improve the standard of their work in international rescue operations and also increase the appreciation of all stakeholders towards skilled rescue dogs.

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