



IRO Mission August 1999 Earthquake in Turkey

On 17 August, 1999 at 3:00 am, a nearly one minute long earthquake of magnitude 7.1 was recorded in Turkey. The epicenter was located in the Asian part of the country in the area near Izmit.

The IRO became aware of the earthquake at 8:00 am through radio reports and issued a preliminary alert through the Head Office in consultation with the president to its units in Austria (ÖRHB, Fire Department), Germany (BRH), Slovenia (DVRPS and ERPS) and the Czech Republic.

Offers of Assistance were extended to both the Turkish embassy in Austria and the Austrian embassy in Ankara. After numerous telephone calls, the offer was accepted by Turkey at 6:00 pm.

At approximately midday, it became clear that the Fire Department-KHD would fly to the disaster scene along with the Austrian Army (AFDRU) and would therefore operate under AFDRU auspices for the duration of the mission. The IRO would therefore not have to take KHD transport into consideration for the rest of the contingent. Almost simultaneously it was learned from German sources that the BRH itself would be taking part in the mission and would be departing from Frankfurt.

Dusan Necak informed the IRO that both Slovenian NRO's with a total of 10 dog handlers were mission-ready and prepared for departure and that he would be available to lead the contingent himself. The ÖRHB was prepared to send 10 dog handlers, 1 assistant, and one mission leader as well. The transport of the whole contingent under the auspices of the IRO to Ankara on 18 August was organised by the IRO Head Office with all of the necessary details being arranged with Turkish Airways. The IRO Head Office Manager was mobilized in the KDH Vienna Unit of the AFDRU contingent and was therefore able to make arrangements directly from Ankara for the further transport of the IRO contingent from the airport to the disaster scene, as well as for the accommodations in Yalowa.

The IRO contingent arrived in the Austrian Camp in Yalowa in the evening of 18 August. Communication was established with the Camp Commander by Christiane Geritzer and dogs were sent on their first search mission at midnight. During the whole mission, IRO dog handlers were twice requested to search disaster scenes with the Austrian Army in order to relieve AFDRU dogs, which also belong to an IRO National Rescue Organisation (Fire Dept. KHD Vienna).

The most challenging assignment during the Turkey Mission was in the city of Gözlük, located approximately 50km east of Yalowa and very near the epicenter of the earthquake. This assignment required the utmost concentration and effort on the part of the team and continued for a period of 16 hours.

Daily contact with the Head Office and/or the President was maintained by Christiane Geritzer, H. Fragner and D. Necak. The departure of the IRO contingent from the camp in Yalowa took place on Sunday morning after initial difficulties and the return flight was completed on the morning of 23 August.

Participating IRO Dog Handlers in Turkey:

A - ÖRHB: Dog Handlers: Freudenthaler Christian, Frisch Birgit, Pollhammer Christa, Poszvek Veronika, Pototcnik Manfred, Reischl Alois, Salomon Michael, Thürriedl Andreas, Winkler Harald, Winkler Gerhard and without dog Fragner Herbert (BEL), Fritz Gerhard.

SLO – DVRPS und ERPS: Dog Handlers: Cankar Matevz, Dimic Damijan, Grad Dr. Anton, Kogovsek Franc, Mikolic Vera, Sirc Stane, Skrabar Stanko, Speh Matej, Sterle Andrej, Weber Dusan and without dog Necak Dusan (IRO-EL)

A – Fire Dept. (- under auspices of the AFDRU): Schüler Peter, Roman Röttig, Magdalena Koczera, Evelyn Brunner, Michaela Marschall, Maria Mosgan, Christiane Geritzer, Elena Macoratti.