

March 2017



OVERVIEW

ACHILLES 17

Earthquake Disaster Response
Urban Search and Rescue
(USAR) Exercise

Location

USAR Training village of Swiss
Armed Forces in Geneva

Date

From 8 to 10 May 2017

Duration

48 hours

In brief

- Simulated emergency situation after heavy earthquake
- All operational stages from initial alert to demobilisation
- Exercise for 5 USAR teams
- Applying INSARAG methodology
- INSARAG re-classification

Participating USAR Teams



Swiss Rescue (SR)



Federal Agency for
Technical Relief, Germany



I.S.A.R. Germany



@fire Germany/S.A.R.A.I.D.



UIISC 1 France



Swiss rescuers at work ©DEZA

ACHILLES 17 - Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Exercise in Switzerland

This exercise simulates an emergency situation after an earthquake and is conducted by five USAR partner organisations: Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), I.S.A.R. Germany, @fire Germany/S.A.R.A.I.D., UIISC 1 France and Swiss Rescue. During the 48-hour-simulation, the teams practice deployment, locating and rescuing as well as providing medical support to survivors trapped underneath the rubble in a race against time. The event is hosted by Switzerland, in particular Swiss Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Armed Forces.

Scenario

*"Good international
coordination saves time
and makes life saving
more efficient"*

*Manuel Bessler, Delegate for
Humanitarian Aid*

A virtual earthquake measuring 7.5 on the Richter scale jolts the "Free Republic of JURENEVA". The epicentre of the quake, which kills more than 1,000 people and injures many, is located about 20 kilometres southwest of Geneva. Approximately 24 hours after the government of JURENEVA called for international assistance, five USAR teams from Germany, Switzerland and France start arriving at Payerne military airport. From there, the rescuers are taken to the simulated disaster area at the training village of the Swiss Armed Forces in Geneva (Epeisses), where the rescue activities begin.

Objectives

One of the main goals is to improve the coordination of all USAR activities within the international disaster management mechanism of the United Nations (INSARAG). Participants practice how to conduct assessments, develop plans and fulfil tasks accordingly. They find out more about INSARAG methodology, including reporting to the Local Emergency Management Authority (LEMA), working with INSARAG marking and signalling tools as well as utilising INSARAG documentation. The rescue teams will have to communicate with the local affected population by taking their customs and cultures into consideration. During the exercise, the two German teams – the Federal Agency for Technical Relief (THW) as well as I.S.A.R. Germany - will undergo their INSARAG re-classification, which is due every five years after initial classification. For Swiss Rescue this event is a good preparation for its re-classification in 2020 as well as for working with the new size of its team, which has been reduced by 25%. @fire Germany/S.A.R.A.I.D. and UIISC 1 France will participate with one management unit each and not as a fully-fledged team.

Timeline of the exercise

- Swiss Seismological Service (SED) issues alert
- Summoning of Crisis Management Unit
- Dispatch of Swiss Rescue Team
- Government's call for international assistance
- Integration of four additional USAR teams from Germany and France
- Mobilisation / relocation / location of victims / rescue / base of operation / demobilisation
- Humanitarian fact-finding missions in preparation for the next phase – survival assistance
- Integration of Crisis Cell of Canton Valais

Participating USAR teams



Swiss Rescue (SR)

- Founded in 1981 after quakes in Algeria and Italy
- Consists of 76 members, 8 rescue dogs and 17 tonnes of rescue equipment and logistics material
- Maintains international USAR heavy team
- Specialises in location, rescue and distribution of emergency medical supplies
- Ready to take off within 8 to 12 hours after a decision is made to deploy
- Consists of private and public, civilian and military partner organisations managed Swiss Humanitarian Aid



German Federal Agency for Technical Relief THW

- Founded in 1950 as civil protection agency of the Ministry of Interior
- 900 full staff members and 80,000 volunteers
- Rapid Deployment Unit for Urban Search & Rescue (SEEBA) founded in 1988
- Heavy USAR team with 73 members, 8 rescue dogs and 15 tons of equipment that are deployable within 10 hours
- INSARAG-classified as Heavy USAR in 2007, registered as HUSAR module in the EU voluntary pool



International Search and Rescue Germany (ISAR)

- Founded in 2003
- Consists of 170 voluntary rescuers from fire brigades & other aid organisations
- Assists national crisis managements in affected countries
- Medical team of 25 persons can be jointly deployed with UN-classified USAR medium teams
- Operates under the umbrella of the United Nations



@fire Germany/S.A.R.A.I.D.

- Joint USAR Team for ACHILLES, deployed together to Nepal 2015
- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)
- Specialized in Urban Search and Rescue, Wildland Firefighting and Local Resilience building
- Members of INSARAG Light International USAR Team Working Group



UIISC 1 France

- Founded in 1978 as sub-unit of the Paris fire brigade. Since 1988 belongs to the ForMiSC, a French civil protection military unit
- Composed of 575 persons and 140 vehicles
- UIISC 1 is able to be deployed within 3 hours after COGIC notification
- Has been deployed 22 times, from Algeria (1980) to Japan (2011)
- Specializes in firefighting, technical disasters, search and rescue as well as emergency medical response

Other participating parties

- Swiss Humanitarian Aid (SHA) and other partner institutions of Swiss Rescue
- Disaster Response Battalion 34 of the Rescue Troupes of Swiss Armed Forces
- Canton Valais Crisis Cell
- Classification Team of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)



The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)

is a global network of more than 80 countries and organisations under the United Nations umbrella. INSARAG deals with urban search and rescue (USAR) related issues aiming to establish minimum international standards for USAR teams and methodology for international coordination in earthquake response. The standards are based on the INSARAG Guidelines endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 57/150 of 2002, on "Strengthening the Effectiveness and Coordination of International Urban Search and Rescue Assistance".

The INSARAG External (Re-)Classification (IEC/IER)

system aims at providing a better understanding of the individual abilities of USAR teams making themselves available for international assistance. The classification, which is done according to certain standards, will enable disaster-affected countries to prioritise acceptance of international response support from USAR teams that can add proven value to their national capacity. The IEC/IER is an independent, verifiable, voluntary process that has received unanimous acceptance through INSARAG. So far, over 40 international USAR teams have been classified and partly re-classified, with main geographical focus on Europe and Asia.

Further Information

SDC
Humanitarian Aid and SHA Unit
Effingerstrasse 27
CH-3003 Bern
Tel.: +41 (0)58 462 31 24
E-Mail: hh@deza.admin.ch
www.deza.admin.ch

[@SwissHumAidUnit](https://twitter.com/SwissHumAidUnit)

Media contact:
Information FDFA
Bundeshaus West
CH-3003 Bern
Tel.: +41 (0)58 462 31 53
Fax: +41 (0)58 464 90 47
E-Mail: info@eda.admin.ch
www.eda.admin.ch