



MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

DIRECTORATE NATIONAL

FIRE AND EMERGENCY SAFETY SERVICE

171A, Pirotska str., 1309 Sofia, BULGARIA, te.: 00 359 2 822 15 25; 00 359 2 9821 206, Fax: 00 359 2 822 01 53; 00 359 2 988 50 76, E-mail; nspab@mvr.bg; smateeva.nspab@mvr.bg

Eastern European, Near East and Central Asian States Exercise on Wildland Fire Information and Resources Exchange 2005 (EASTEX FIRE 2005)

Report and Analysis by the Host Country Bulgaria

The International exercise "EASTEX FIRE 2005" on forest fire extinguishing was held at the field exercise area "Koren", Haskovo Region, Bulgaria, 20-22 April 2005, with the participation of forces and equipment of fire services from the Republic of Bulgaria and neighbouring Balkan countries

This exercise was held in pursuance of the written statement approved by the "Conference on Forest Fire Management and International Cooperation in Fire Emergencies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and adjoining Regions of the Near East and Central Asia" which was held in Antalya, Turkey, 30 March - 3 April 2004.

This event was organized in accordance with the "Working plan 2005 of the Standing Committee for management of forces and equipment of Ministry of the Interior during crisis situations", as well as the "Annual working plan 2005 of the Standing Committee on population protection in case of disasters, emergencies and crashes at the Council of Ministers" of Bulgaria.

The exercise was a practical drill with imitation of real situation. Participants in this event were the institutions responsible for the prevention and extinguishing of forest fires in the Republic of Bulgaria and fire crews from the Balkan countries.

Objectives of this exercise were as follows:

1. Improvement of the interaction between competent bodies from Balkan countries during forest fires management.

2. Carrying out of united management of forces and equipment in the conditions of forest fires and working off the procedures on interaction and co-ordination between institutions responsible for crisis management in the Republic of Bulgaria and the leaders of international crews.
3. Provision of logistics for the needs of participants in similar operations.

This exercise was held in two main stages:

- First stage – organization actions and staff drill.
- Second stage – practical actions of specialized crews within the zone of the wildfire crisis.

Following activities were included in the first stage of this exercise:

- Receiving of a call with a report on the outbreak of the fire. Undertaking of due measures by the competent institutions from the Republic of Bulgaria. Concentration of forces and equipment at the fire location.
- Provision of permanent information exchange concerning fire development between the head of firefighting operations and representatives of executive and local authorities. Alerting, information and taking immediate measures for the deployment of forces and equipment in the zone of crisis situation.
- Introduction of action plans for crisis situations intended for institutions responsible for extinguishing of forest fires, which might develop into emergency situations.
- Provision of information to neighbour countries about the crisis situation and implementation of procedures for request of assistance. Creation of organization for reception and escorting of foreign crews.

Following practical actions of participants were included in the second stage:

- Survey and observation of the fire region; management of forces and equipment; emergency rescue and fire fighting operations; closing off the disaster area; provision of escorting and movement of crews taking part in the operation; creation of additional organization of moving within crisis zone; medical and psychological assistance for the sufferers and personnel, taking part in firefighting and their transportation to the hospitals; specifying the places of natural and man-made barriers suitable for fire spread stopping; determination the needs of equipment for making of cuttings.
- Creation of organization for reception of foreign fire crews from neighbour countries at border control checkpoints and their escorting to the place of crisis situation. Provision of communication with the forces, dispatch to render assistance for fire elimination. All participating crews were instructed about labour safety measures during extinguishing of a forest fire.

In the course of exercise different tactical actions intended for extinguishing of forest fires were worked off depending on the equipment of participants. Representatives of the countries having predominant deciduous vegetation like the Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina used backpack fire extinguishers and impulse fire extinguishing systems for fighting forest fires of low intensities. Representatives of fire service of Romania used equipment for water supply from the natural and man-made water sources. Crews from the Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Greece and Republic of Turkey, where coniferous vegetation is predominant, used fire vehicles with high cross-country capability and larger quantities of fire extinguishing media, owing to the lack of enough water sources at the territories of their countries. Heavy engineering equipment was used for cutting firebreaks with the purpose of limiting the fire spread.

Following results were achieved during the exercise:

- There was good organization for efficient co-ordination and interaction between institutions in the Republic of Bulgaria responsible for the forest fires elimination and leaders of foreign crews during the operations for limitation and elimination of the forest fire.
- United centralized management of all operations and efficient communication between all participants in the exercise EASTEX FIRE 2005 were realized.
- This exercise contributed to the strengthening of cross-border co-operation with respect to management of forces and equipment of Balkan countries during elimination of forest fires developed into crisis situations.
- EASTEX FIRE 2005 was a further step towards the establishment of the Regional Southeast Europe Wildland Fire Network under the Global Wildland Fire Network of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster reduction (UNISDR) and its cooperative activities between the Balkan countries. It is closely related to the initiative of Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) within the framework of European Union program INTERREG III B, priority zone 4 "Environment Protection, Resources Management and Risk Prevention". The Central Adriatic Danube Southeast Region (CADSES) is referred.
- This exercise contributed to the strengthening of international co-operation with respect to forest fire management and mitigation of their consequences; the improvement of co-operation between competent institutions at the Balkans responsible for extinguishing of forest fires; the consolidation of capacity for fire management.

EASTEX FIRE 2005 demonstrated the capacity of Balkan countries to cope with forest fires, spreading on large areas and having undesirable environment impact.