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European Commission

EUROPEAN FOREST FIRE EXERCISE

APRIL 18 to 20, 2004

PRESS KIT



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A European exercise regarding natural risks

Under the shield of the European Commission, France organizes the first great scale Community exercise on forest fire fighting. Led by the ministry of Interior, of interior security and local liberties (Direction of Defense and Civil Security), this exercise will be held from April 18 to 20, 2004 in the Bouche-du-Rhône department. It will integrate the 2003 forest fire campaign experience feedbacks, particularly sensible in the whole Mediterranean countries..

Written within the framework of the cooperation between European Union member states, it implements civil protection reinforced mechanism, instituted by the European Union Council Decision dated October 23, 2001. It plans the activation of the Brussels Monitoring and Information centre (MIC), as well as the interconnection with the national operational centres. The security teams of eight European countries will carry out the backup of the French services.

The exercise objective is, for the French part, to appreciate the operational chain of command implementing from the exercise place up to the national level, the department operational centres (COD), the defense zone (COZ), of the ministry of Interior (Crisis Interministerial Management Operational center – COGIC).

Will be tested in the same way, the routing conditions of specialized teams and air means of the participating states (water bombers planes, helicopters, backup columns...) as well as the whole command chains between the member states, the Brussels Monitoring and Information centre and the states victim of disasters.

On the exercise site, a specific command device will be implemented integrating the operation and coordination operational command with the entire member states teams.

The Entente Interdépartemental is responsible of the exercise administrative backup.



THE TOPIC



Several forest fires started in the forest solid clumps in the south of France. After a change of wind orientation and a very unfavourable reinforced weather conditions, fires progress very quickly and threaten the urban zones.

Taking into account the nature of these fires and major risks of evolution, the Brussels Monitoring and Information centre (MIC) is immediately aware of the situation. The MIC inform the European Union member states, with a first request for setting in pre alert the Italian and Spanish air means.

The security teams and the air means are engaged on these fires which have already covered about 10 000 hectares of pine forests, while occurs simultaneously several significant fire departures in the Bouche-du-Rhône department. It becomes imperative to backup the fight device by calling the member states air and terrestrial means.

The French government, throughout the ministry of Interior, interior security and local liberties (Direction of Defense and Civil Security, COGIC) requests the implementation of the civil protection European mechanism.



THE SCENARIO

Monday April 19, - 08:30 a.m., fire departures are noticed on the territory of Gémenos commune. Very quickly the situation becomes alarming and requires significant additional means.

Monday April 19 – 11:00 a.m., Gémenos fires are getting worst. In spite of the engaged means, fire could only be contained, but not be stopped. Protection of sensible points is carried out.

The security operations commander (COS) decided to stop its progression at the level of La Petite Sainte Baume. At the same time fire departures take place in the Sainte Victoire Mountain and in Trets commune.

The general situation is alarming and mobilizes many terrestrial and air fight means, in particular on the Sainte Victoire, at Gémenos and Trets. It is decided to engage the available European backup set up by the Brussels Monitoring and Information Centre (MIC).

Monday April 19, 02:00 p.m., the attempt to stop the fire failed and its progression increases, many sensible points and urban zone needs protection. A new action will be tried around 05:00 p.m. with the support of the whole air means.

Tuesday April 20, 08:30, In spite of the efforts provided the situation became worst during the night and the fire still progressed. The situation requires important terrestrial, air and helicopter fighting means. A new support line will be set up in the south of the fire, to try to definitively stop it.

The European terrestrial teams will be simultaneously engaged with the French teams and the air means will participate in the norias.

ACTORS PRESENTATION

During the exercise all the services implied in forest fire fighting will be present on the ground. Each actor will play his role according to his responsibilities.

Local level:



Bouche-du-Rhône prefecture

The department is the base of Défense and civil security. As a government representative, the prefect of the department has the general competence regarding the non-military defence measures. He manages for this purpose all the decentralized services actions of the state. He is responsible of the public order and the protection of people. In any crisis situation, he is the security operations manager (DOS). A defence operational center (COD) is activated as soon as the situation requests it.



Bouches-du-Rhône fire and security departmental services (SDIS).

Main security actor under its territorial competence and role in proximity service, the SDIS 13 engages important materials and personnel security means, also in operational command installations on the field under the responsibility of a security operation commander (COS).



Marseille Marines Fireman Battalion.

Body of the national marine which involves as a local unit backup, with a headquarter and a forest fire intervention group.



Communal committees forest fire.

They are 85 in the Bouches-du-Rhône, these organizations gather approximately 3 500 volunteers whose objectives are the forest defence, to increase the public awareness regarding forests fire risks, the active prevention and the assistance to the backup security means during interventions.

The foresters.

The organization and the operational use of the Bouches-du-Rhône foresters are under the responsibility of the departmental direction of agriculture and forest (DDAF).

- The Office National des Forêts (ONF) foresters ensure the monitoring, prevention and attack of fire departures missions. On a disaster, they assist the COS.

- The foresters sappers, created by the general council, intervene in the installation and the monitoring of forest solid masses. They are also engaged in missions of primary intervention with light materials.

Zonal level:



Prefecture of the southern defence zone

The southern defence zone covers the Languedoc-Roussillon regions, Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur and Corsica. It is the civilo-military cooperation organization place. Prefect of the region chief town of defence zone, the prefect zone coordinates the implementation of the whole civil defence and security measures. He is assisted by the zonal headquarter (EMZ), equipped with an operational zonal center (COZ). For the southern zone, the prefect of zone is the prefect of Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur region, Bouches-du-Rhône prefect. The COZ is located at Valabre.



The Gard, Vaucluse, Alpes-Maritimes, Hautes-Alpes and Alpes de Haute-Provence fire and security departmental services.

Along with the local means, the SDIS of the bordering departments also engage terrestrial forest fire fighting means within the framework of zonal backup columns.

National Gendarmerie and National Police



Responsible of the public security and order, each one in their zone of competence, ensures the monitoring of the solid masses, population assistance and investigations.

National level:



The Ministry of Interior

In mobilizing the national backup means, the direction of defence and civil security particularly involves by engagement of its air means, instruction and intervention units of civil security (UIISC) and the logistic intervention group.

The crisis interministerial management operational center (COGIC) prepare and coordinates the national security means actions, collects and analyses informations to inform the European level as well as the national political authorities.



The civil safety planes base

Settled at Marignane, it gathers 24 water bomber planes (Canadair, Tracker, Fokker) and 3 command planes (Beechcraft).



The helicopters group

It gathers 22 operational bases on the whole territory. Equipped with standard EC 145, Alouette 3 or Ecureuil, they ensure rescue, backup and command missions.



The instruction and intervention civil security units

Trained for this kind of situation, the UIISC will engage specialized means :

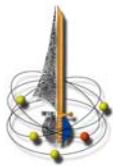
Accidents prevention initiative

The intervention helicopter unit (DIH) consists of twenty men, with Puma army types helicopters, to manage disasters, which are inaccessible by terrestrial way. These types of helicopters have 48 hours autonomy.

The support group is also equipped of two levellers allowing the creation of tracks and firebreaks.

The Logistic intervention group (GIL)

Consists of personnel belonging to the four operational and logistic support of the DDSC, it brings a complete logistic support during catastrophic interventions.



The criminal search institute of the gendarmerie (IRCGN)

Integrated in the technical and scientific system of the gendarmerie, it has a « fires – explosives » department in charge of establishing the nature and the making process of an incendiary product (hydro-carbon, alcohol...).

European level:



The European Commission

The European Commission has a community device to facilitate the cooperation backup in the civil protection assistance interventions. In case of emergency, its objectives consists firstly of a better protection of populations, properties and environment.

The monitoring and information centre (MIC) operates within this device framework. The civil protection unit within the general direction of environment manages it. The MIC will play an important role during the exercise. It will collect, validate, gather and inform the member states. It will process the backup requests and will send them to the participating states, then will send the answers to France. The MIC will contribute to facilitate the deployment of the backup teams by coordinating them with the applicant state.

Participating states

Eight countries answered for actively participate to the exercise and will engage in total approximately 200 people with terrestrial and/or air means:

- Germany: 2 forest fire intervention groups and 2 helicopters
- Belgium: 1 group
- Spain: 1 forest fire column and 2 Canadair
- Greece: 2 Canadair
- Italy: 1 column, 2 Canadair and 2 water bomber helicopters
- Luxembourg: 1 group
- Portugal: 1 group
- Slovenia: 1 group

PRESS RECEPTION

The exercise, as well as the training simulation workshop, are open to the press without conditions.

A **presentation of the exercise** will take place at the southern defence zone headquarter, in Valabre, on **Sunday April 18 at 11:00 a.m.**

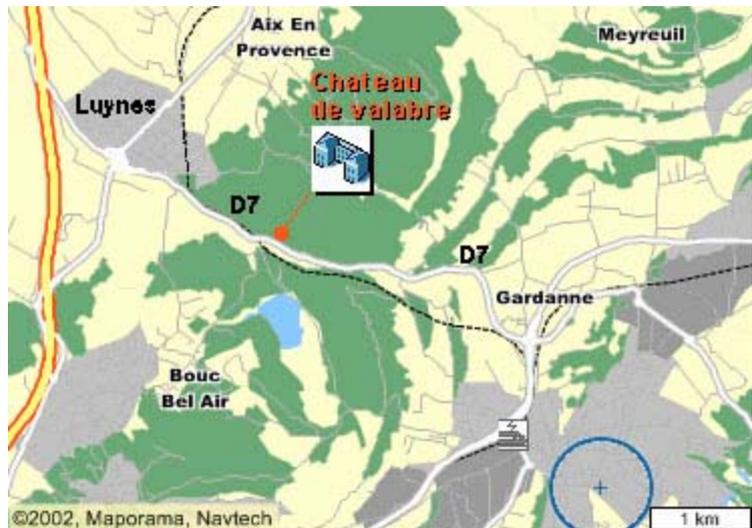
A press conference will take place at Valabre on Tuesday April 20 in the afternoon, at the end of the experience feedback meeting.

A reception point will be set up on the exercise site.

Taking into account the exercise field characteristics, it is recommended to plan an off-road vehicle.

Valabre access

Etat-major de zone de
défense sud
Domaine de Valabre
RD – 7
13120 GARDANNE



For more information...

Ministère de l'Intérieur, de la sécurité intérieure et des libertés locales
Direction de la défense et de la sécurité civiles
Communication cell
Tél. : +33 (0)1 56 04 74 18
Télécopie : +33 (0)1 56 04 72 85
ddsc-presse@interieur.gouv.fr
<http://www.interieur.gouv.fr>

APPENDIX 1

Exercise chronology

Sunday April 18

Morning : exercise presentation

Afternoon : Coordination exercise at Sainte Victoire Mountain
(Procedures setting, security instructions...)

Monday April 19

Morning : 1st phase exercise Gémenos

Afternoon : 2nd phase exercise Gémenos
Signature of bilateral agreements regarding forest fire.
(Prefecture Marseille - to be confirmed)

Tuesday April 20

Morning : 3rd phase exercise Gémenos

Afternoon : means presentation
Experience feedback

APPENDIX 2

French means summary

Air means

Civil security:

- 9 water bomber planes (4 Canadair, 2 Tracker, 1 Fokker)
- 1 coordination plane
- 3 coordination helicopters (2 EC 145, 1 Ecureuil)

Armies:

- 1 coordination helicopter
- 2 tactical helicopters

Gendarmerie :

- 1 helicopter

Terrestrial means

SDIS Bouches-du-Rhône: 120 men, 18 vehicles

BMPM: 22 men, 6 vehicles

SDIS Gard: 40 men, 14 vehicles

SDIS Var: 20 men, 5 vehicles

SDIS Vaucluse: 20 men, 5 vehicles

SDIS Alpes de Haute-Provence: 20 men, 6 vehicles

SDIS Hautes-Alpes: 20 men, 6 vehicles

SDIS Alpes-Maritimes: 20 men, 7 vehicles

UIISC: 70 men, 20 vehicles

APPENDIX 2

European means summary



Germany : 50 men, 15 vehicles, 2 HBE



Belgium : 25 men, 12 vehicles



Spain : 30 men, 12 vehicles, 2 ABE



Greece : 2 ABE



Italy : 50 men, 15 vehicles, 2 ABE, 2 HBE



Luxemburg : 20 men, 4 vehicles



Portugal : 25 men, 7 vehicles



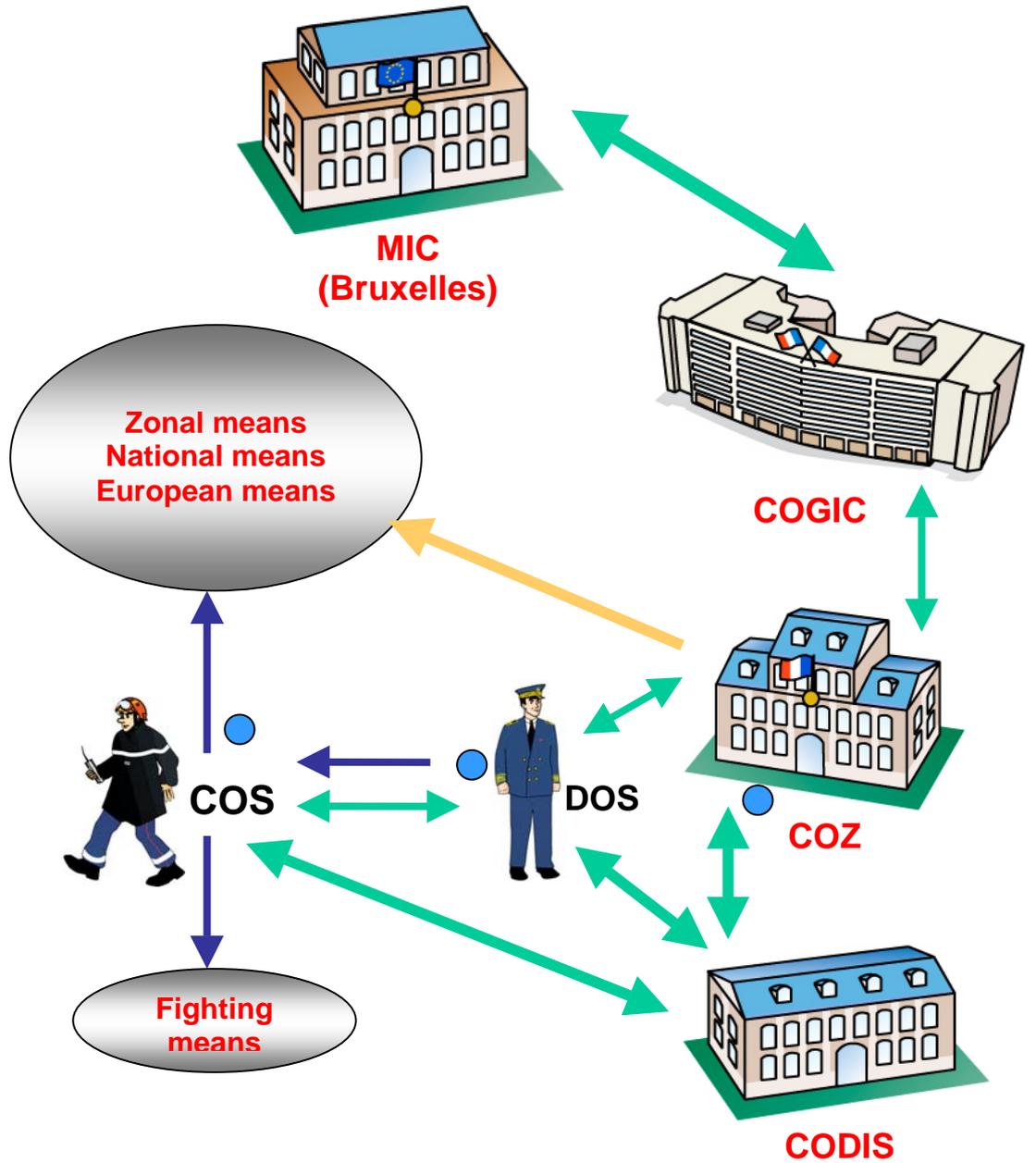
Slovenia : 15 men, 6 vehicles

ABE : water bomber plane

HBE : water bomber helicopter

APPENDIX 3

Command chain



- Liaison officer
- Informations, reports, demands
- Coordination
- Command

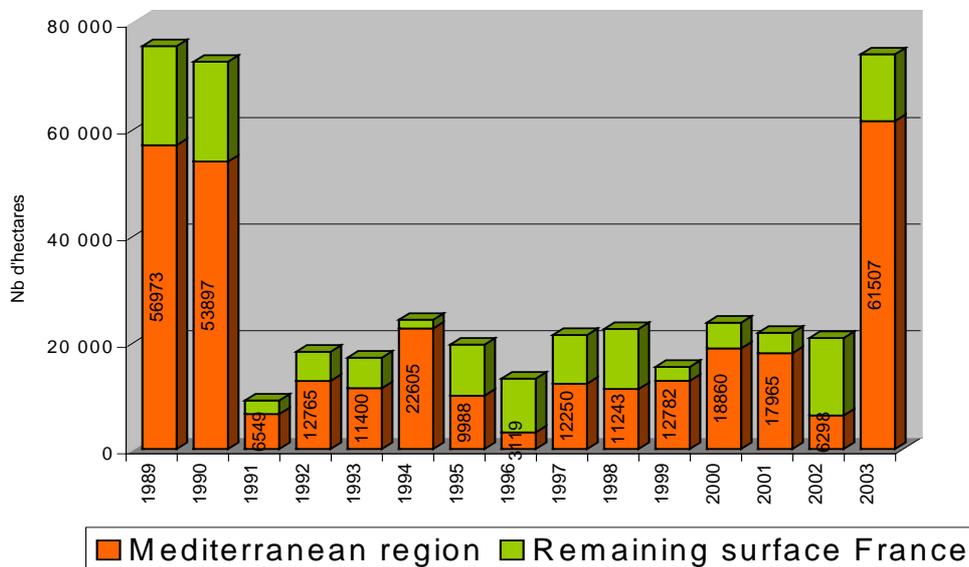
CODIS : centre opérationnel départemental d'incendie et de secours
COS : commandant des opérations de secours
COZ : centre opérationnel de zone
DOS : directeur des opérations de secours
COGIC : centre opérationnel de gestion interministérielle des crises
MIC : monitoring information center (centre d'information et de suivi)

APPENDIX 4

Summary of covered surface

The French forest covers 16 000 000 ha of which 900 000 ha for the south west solid forest mass and 4 300 000 ha in Mediterranean region. Its surface is increasing particularly in the south departments where it has doubled since one century.

Annually burned surfaces in France



	2003 (Surfaces covered by fire)	1992-2002 (Annual averages)
France	74 000 ha	20 200 ha
Espagne	130 000 ha	121 800 ha
Grèce	7000 ha	43 400 ha
Italie	87 000 ha	96 500 ha
Portugal	423 000 ha	103 600 ha

APPENDIX 5

Forest fire fighting training at Valabre school



Created since 1967, the School of Valabre, also called « Centre interrégional de formation de la sécurité civile » (CIFSC), conceives and carries out training activities for population, properties and environment protection, and specially the safeguarding of the Mediterranean forest.

Within this framework and following closely the modernization of defence and civil security, the school is placed in the foreground of high trainings related to forest fires, making many means available for trainees (operation ground, aircrafts, equipped rooms, the only simulation software in the world...) in order to produce at its maximum the field reality, without forgetting the strong implication and the diversity of involved organizations.

The trainings given at the CIFSC of Valabre are mainly for professional and voluntary firemen, but also for the local authorities and government officials. In some cases, civil people can access to these trainings

Virtual reality

The development of simulation, engaged since a few years by the Valabre school, has made it possible to implement a new concept of training being based on virtual reality situation.

Since the last quarter of 2003, the CIFSC has a new simulation software integrating in particular:

- 3d fire automatic modelling;
- The taking into account of actions carried out by the air and terrestrial means
- A new interface of navigation.

This software is based on a 3d cartography of the Bouches-du-Rhône and Var departments whose precision and technical installations allow the choice of more than 100 different exercises.

For more informations :
<http://www.valabre.com>



APPENDIX 6

Entente Interdépartementale For forest and environment protection against fire risks



The Entente Interdépartementale was created on July 3, 1963 on the State initiative in order to study the use of 2 "amphibian" planes purchased by the Civil Protection National Service.

At the beginning it consists of 7 departments, today it gather together the regions of Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur, Languedoc-Roussillon and Corsica and the Ardèche department.

The missions

Public information

Through educational actions on forest protection topics against fire risks not only directed towards schools but also a larger public.

Experimentation and research

A test and research center, " the CEREN " carries out all necessary tests to determine the efficiency of prevention and fire fighting products and materials. It studies the gases given off during vegetation combustion, for their rehabilitation the ground composition variations after fire. It cooperates with many programs backup by the European Community with industrialists, the research and academics environment.

Training

The Entente brings an important financial assistance to the CIFSC of Valabre by making human and material means available. It encourages innovative session developments by funding and subsidizing them: SDIS firemen forest fire training of the member departments.

New technologies.

The "PONT", is a relay backup in the development of technologies related to geographical data processing. Also at the initiative of all the data base constitution methodology allowing the annual edition of update atlas maps of forest contributing to the forest fire defence.

Today, the intention of the Entente is to continue to ensure its missions in terms of environmental protection and to cause new communities adhesion. The year 2004 should lead the Entente to extend its range of activity in the major risks and in particular the risks related to floods after fire.

Centre Francis Arrighi
Domaine de Valabre – RD 7
13120 GARDANNE



CONCEPTION AND REALIZATION : DDSC/COMMUNICATION
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