

Department of Humanitarian Affairs

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP

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Report on

**Meeting of Leaders of
International Search and Rescue (SAR) Teams**

27 - 29 May 1996

**Denver, Colorado
United States of America**



United Nations

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**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP
(INSARAG)**

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International Search and Rescue (SAR) Teams**

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I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Meeting of Leaders of International Search and Rescue Teams, hosted by the Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), was held under the auspices of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), from 27 - 29 May 1996 in Denver, Colorado, to coincide with the United States National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) Response '96 Conference (29 May - 1 June). The Meeting was chaired by Mr. Toni Frisch, Switzerland, Chairman of INSARAG, and Mr. Pete Bradford, United States, Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group for the Americas. It was attended by 33 participants from 12 countries, representing the key players likely to respond during the aftermath of a major earthquake to assist in urban search and rescue and disaster relief operations. They included officials from National Emergency Management Agencies and team leaders or commanders responsible for operational issues. Each delegation outlined the national arrangements for deploying a SAR Team outside its borders and DHA presented the latest coordination tools available to the international community, developed in cooperation with INSARAG.
2. The meeting provided a forum to promote and generate discussion, aimed at improving disaster response preparedness and coordination. Working Groups discussed preparedness, mobilization and criteria with regard to international search and rescue teams, in addition to future developments.
3. DHA was requested to convene, in early 1997, an **International Emergency Response Forum** for governments and other major participants in international humanitarian assistance operations, including representatives of potentially affected countries. The Forum is intended to provide a much needed opportunity for disaster management practitioners across the whole spectrum of humanitarian assistance to build on the results of improved disaster response achieved in recent years. It will promote the effective use and coordination of national assets, including human, technical and logistics resources, in support of international emergency response operations and seek to develop further, consultative arrangements in strengthening the response capacity of the international community, including vulnerable and potentially affected countries.
4. It was also recommended that an **International Disaster Response Advisory Group (INDIRAG)**, built around the participation of the INSARAG Steering Group, be formed with the purpose of: preparing the agenda and programme of work of the Forum; providing a focal point for the work of *ad hoc* working groups identified by the Forum; and undertaking consultations on specific humanitarian topics and response operations
5. In addition, the participants communicated their need for technical meetings, to take place on a regular, preferably annual, basis to strengthen the process of exchange of information and network-building as well as the further development of categories and standards for urban search and rescue. It was recognized that such meetings had financial implications which would have to be resolved and that cost-saving mechanisms had to be sought.
6. The representative of the Government of the United States invited the Leaders of International Search and Rescue Teams to meet from 26 - 28 May 1997, in Richmond, Virginia, to coincide with the next NASAR Conference, Response '97.

II OPENING OF MEETING

7. Mr. Bill Garvelink, Deputy Director, Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), representing the host country, welcomed participants to the meeting. He underlined the importance of fostering cooperation between national emergency managers both at the policy making and technical levels from around the world. The incidence of natural disasters had increased and given that, by the year 2000, half of the world's population would be living in large urban centres, any country that was earthquake-prone, regardless of its level of development, might have to call for international search and rescue assistance in the case of a major earthquake.
8. Mr. Chuck Mills, Programme Director, United States National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR), indicated the interest of NASAR in participating in a global approach to complementary standards. INSARAG provided an important forum for this work and he welcomed the renewed exchange of information and techniques taking place in Denver. Further steps were urgently needed to ensure that the work of international response teams would be more effective in a major emergency. He believed that such meetings should take place on a regular basis since they provided a mechanism for cooperation at a technical level.
9. Mr. Toni Frisch, Switzerland, Chairman of INSARAG, spoke of the achievements of INSARAG, particularly the development of the network of emergency practitioners who were in constant contact and thus contributing to a more effective and timely response to emergency situations. He mentioned the development of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system, several of whose Team members were participating in the meeting, its new links with Latin America and the benefits of its improved assessment and monitoring of disasters. However, he warned that in economic terms the gap between needs and response was widening and he pointed out that frequently the funds provided for humanitarian response were taken from development aid programmes. Another new phenomenon was the expansion in the number of organizations participating in relief operations which could lead to confusion in coordination and competition for a share of the limited funds available. The work of INSARAG had demonstrated that the impact of the immediate response to a disaster, which had been its original focus was inextricably linked to the emergency relief phase. He welcomed this opportunity to work towards the INSARAG objectives of enhancing the quality of assistance provided to a disaster stricken country and of further developing the partnership between search and rescue response through personal contacts and round table discussions.
10. Mr. Pete Bradford, United States, Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group for the Americas, underlined the catalytic role of INSARAG in bringing together emergency managers both at the policy making and at the technical levels to improve the quality of response to disasters and to increase awareness of the vastly improved coordinating capacity of DHA in supporting multilateral operations of many countries. He explained that the United States Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of USAID continues to implement its intensive programme of training with emergency managers in countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. He was pleased to welcome the INSARAG Liaison representative with the countries of Latin America to the meeting. He also welcomed and introduced Mr. Sean

Foohy of the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency and thanked him for his participation.

11. Mr. Dietrich Lapke, Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe, Germany, welcomed this new milestone in the follow-up to the INSARAG mandate approved in Beuggen in 1991.

12. Mr. Ola Almgren, Chief, Field Coordination Support Unit, Relief Coordination Branch, DHA, spoke of the importance of building cooperation between international responders and with the local population of a disaster affected country. He underlined that the ownership of the INSARAG mandate and goals belonged to the members of the Group and that the United Nations would always endeavour to provide a forum where cooperation and exchange of views could take place. The objective of the meeting was to bring those involved in international search and rescue together to work on standards required and to create a better and more realistic understanding of how to meet relief needs effectively and to improve response preparedness. DHA promoted national capacity building, regional cooperation in response and an effective and efficient fully-fledged international response where required. The new DHA Field Coordination Support Unit would continue the development of tools to ensure an effective United Nations presence at the site of an emergency and its objective was to provide added value to the international response to an emergency. DHA was convinced that international assistance must be needs driven, must give priority to skills rather than good intentions and achieve sustainability rather than *ad hoc* solutions.

III PRESENTATIONS BY TEAMS/GOVERNMENTS

13. Participants from each country made brief presentations, on behalf of their Teams/Organizations and Governments, covering mobilizing procedures, team structure, equipment, training and previous experience in international SAR operations.

United States
of America:

Mr. Daniel Cuoco, Division Chief, Special Operations Division, Metropolitan Dade County, and Mr. Jim Strickland, Deputy Fire Chief, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department, of the United States Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART), United States

Israel:

Colonel (res.) Udi Ben Uri, Leader, National Rescue Unit, Home Front Command IDF, Israel

Russian
Federation:

Mr. Vladimir Melnik, Emergency Expert, International Cooperation Department, EMERCOM of Russia, Russian Federation

Austria:

Colonel Norbert Furstenhofer, Commanding Officer, NBC Defence School and Austrian Forces Disaster Relief Unit (AFDRU), Austria

- Germany: Mr. Ralph Tiesler, Head of Operation Division, Bundesanstalt Technisches Hilfswerk (THW), Rapid Deployment Unit Search and Rescue (SEEBA), Germany
- Switzerland: Mr. Toni Frisch Leader, Mission Leader Swiss Rescue, and Mr. Beat Künzi, Deputy Leader Swiss Rescue, Div. of Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Disaster Relief, Switzerland
- Venezuela: Mr. Manuel Santana, Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, Federal District Fire Service, Venezuela
- United Kingdom: Mr. Edward Pearn, H.M. Inspector of Fire Services, Fire Service Inspectorate, on behalf of the Overseas Development Administration and the UK Fire Service Search and Rescue Team, and Mr. Willie McMartin, International Rescue Corps (GB), United Kingdom
- Sweden: Mr. Lars Bjergestam, Head of Division, Swedish Rescue Services Agency, Swedish Rescue Team, Sweden
- Denmark: Captain Peter Bro-Jørgensen, Danish Emergency Management Agency, Mobile Disaster Relief Unit (MDRU), Denmark
- Iceland: Ms. Solveig Thorvald, Director, National Civil Defence of Iceland
- Australia: Mr. Trevor Haines, Emergency Management Development Officer, Emergency Management Australia
Mr. Jeff R. Godfredson, Chief Fire Officer, Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board
- USA: Mr. Sean Patrick Foohey, Deputy Director, Response and Planning Division, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), United States

IV DHA EMERGENCY RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

14. Mr. Joe Bishop, DHA, described the three levels of coordination activated by DHA, at the international level in New York and Geneva, at the UNDP Office in the capital of an affected country and, last but not least, coordination at the site of a disaster. The function of each level of coordination was explained with special emphasis on "on-site" coordination, and two of the main field emergency management tools available to DHA were identified: the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) Team and the On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC).

15. ~~Mr. Bishop went on to explain that the OSOCC would play an important part in securing the smooth running of any major international relief operation by acting as the~~

interface between the Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA) of the affected country and the international SAR Teams on-site. DHA could provide the main framework for on-site coordination, but would need to rely heavily on the support of SAR personnel, through secondment to the OSOCC, to secure efficient and effective coordination.

16. In addition, the OSOCC could be supported logistically in such areas as communications, transport, accommodation, food, etc., through Service Package Agreements currently being developed with the Governments of the United Kingdom, Sweden and Denmark.

V DISCUSSION GROUPS ON PREPAREDNESS AND MOBILIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL SAR TEAMS

17. Participants exchanged information on the procedures in place for the preparedness and mobilization of their teams/organizations and identified areas where further progress was required. It was felt that the provision of information was a key element in decisions taken to authorize the mobilization and deployment of teams. Information obtained from national embassies in the affected country, from DHA, scientific sources and from agencies/NGOs in-country, provided the basis for decision-making. Media reports could be useful but could also create pressure for an inappropriate response to an emergency. DHA was an important focal point for an exchange of information on the potential bilateral assistance of a SAR team.

18. It was important to raise awareness in affected countries of the need for speedy and accurate assessment of the needs that could not be met by local and national resources.

19. When the disaster had occurred, rapid UNDAC missions provided an early and continued assessment of the needs. Teams should maintain close contact with their country's local representative. It was important to remember the need for a flexible approach to operations, taking account of religious and cultural differences that might be found in an affected country.

VI DISCUSSION GROUPS ON CRITERIA FOR INTERNATIONAL SAR TEAMS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

20. The participants considered the minimum standards (already established by INSARAG in 1991) for international search and rescue teams together with future action that could be taken towards the active implementation of these standards. Comments included the following:

21. While it was recognized that there were various levels of readiness, it was considered that deployment should be achievable in a minimum of 6 and maximum of 12 hours following an alert. Self-sufficiency in shelter, food, international/in-country telecommunications, and medical care for SAR Team members and search dogs for a minimum of 7 and maximum of 14 days should be assured. In readiness for an international

alert, all SAR team members available for international deployment should have received the necessary standard vaccinations (recommended by WHO) for persons likely to be despatched to emergency situations. Equally, all search dogs should have up-to-date vaccinations/inoculations and documentation.

22. Before deployment international teams should maintain updated lists including personal details of personnel, their levels of training, and precise details of equipment for entry and departure from an affected country. Data-bases were needed to list customs clearance requirements of potential requesting countries and information should be provided on customs agreements for facilitation of emergency operations. It might be advisable to establish bilateral/multilateral memoranda of understanding or an open agreement to facilitate international SAR response

23. The number of members in a team should take account of the need for 24-hour urban search, rescue and medical care operations. It was suggested that for heavy search and rescue operations this might imply the deployment of 60-70 persons. The importance of adequate logistics support was underlined, including international/in country telecommunications and lighting equipment to facilitate operations around the clock.

24. The Search component should ideally consist of both canine and technical capabilities.

25. The Rescue component should consist of equipment for lifting, shoring, cutting and breaking heavy reinforced concrete structures. Structural engineers and safety specialists should form part of a team. Teams should have a haz-mat monitoring capacity.

26. The Medical component should cover needs of the team members and victims. It should include a minimum of a doctor and 2 assistants, trained in confined space medicine, crush syndrome and trauma management

27. It was underlined that any country, regardless of its level of development, might require international assistance following the occurrence of a major earthquake affecting a heavily populated urban area.

Future developments

28. Participants believed that teams and national organizations forming part of the INSARAG network should foster international cooperation in training courses. Such international/regional courses and exercises should cover issues relevant to international operations such as the liaison role of OSOCC, UNDAC, etc. The network should promote the sharing of training materials and methodology.

29. Standards could be categorized for teams having a national and/or international capability. It was pointed out that a region could have particular needs specific to the area and these should be identified.

VII DOCUMENTATION PRESENTED

e. **INSARAG achievements and future strategy**

30. This document (see Annex 1), prepared as a consolidation of INSARAG achievements to date and reflecting the future strategy to be followed, as agreed with members of the INSARAG Steering Group in consultations in August 1995, was circulated to participants.

f. **Proposals on SAR Techniques, drafted by the Working Group on SAR Techniques of the INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe**

31. Following the establishment of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) at Beuggen, Germany in December 1991, the Regional Group for Africa and Europe set up a Working Group on Search and Rescue (SAR) Techniques. The Working Group was composed of participants from Austria, Germany and Switzerland and held meetings throughout 1993 and 1994. It had considered the following issues:

1. Tasks and technical equipment of SAR teams participating in urban search rescue following a major international disaster, including the use of Telecommunications by SAR teams
2. The "Search" component in international urban search and rescue, including operational rules/tactics for search operations and the establishment of draft guidelines for testing search dogs to be used for urban search and rescue
3. Marking by international urban search and rescue teams on destroyed buildings

32. The INSARAG Secretariat is now circulating the proposals made by the Working Group to interested members of INSARAG with a view to finalizing these guidelines as INSARAG recommendations.

g. **Programme of Work for the Third Regional Meeting of the INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe**

33. Mr. Dietrich Lapke, Germany, Chairman of the INSARAG Regional Group for Africa/Europe, presented the provisional agenda of the Third Regional Meeting of the Group, to be held from 27 - 30 April, 1997 at the THW Federal Training Centre, Neuhausen, near Stuttgart, Germany. The objectives of the meeting would be to present the achievements of INSARAG and to give disaster-prone countries a platform for participating more fully in the system. The intention was to structure the meeting around the scenario of a simulated earthquake, to convey the feeling of the conditions that would exist and the problems that would arise in coping with a sudden onset disaster. The meeting would be entitled "If it happens tomorrow?"

h. Seminar "1996 - Perspective on Spitak Earthquake"

34. Information was circulated on the seminar "1996 - Perspective on Spitak Earthquake" to be held in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia from 10 - 12 July 1996, under the sponsorship of the Emergency Management Administration of the Republic of Armenia, the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Council of Europe EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement. The aim of the seminar is to make an evaluation of the efforts made by national and international teams during the Spitak Rescue Operations, following the Armenia Earthquake in 1988, as well as to review areas of importance for future cooperation. The Seminar will consider: assessment of the rescue operations after the Spitak earthquake; problems of interaction between professional and volunteer rescue teams; and International cooperation between rescue forces of different countries.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

Establishment of an International Emergency Response Forum and International Disaster Response Advisory Group (INDIRAG)

35. In order to build on the results of improved disaster response achieved in recent years and to take full account of developments that have occurred in international humanitarian assistance since the establishment of INSARAG in 1991, DHA was recommended by participants to convene in early 1997 a meeting for governments and other major participants in international humanitarian assistance operations, including representatives of potentially affected countries, entitled the **International Emergency Response Forum**.

Objectives

- to promote the effective use and coordination of national assets, including human, technical and logistics resources, in support of international emergency response operations;
- to promote and support the strengthening of the capacity and self-sufficiency of vulnerable countries;
- to develop further, consultative arrangements in strengthening the capacity of the international community, including vulnerable and potentially affected countries, to respond with national assets in emergency situations;
- to ensure that an international emergency response involving national assets is appropriate and timely, and corresponds to needs which cannot be met by an affected country;

- to strengthen the networks of major participants in international emergency response operations in order to facilitate future coordination mechanisms at the international, national and on-site levels during such operations;
- to identify issues to be discussed in technical and operational ad hoc or permanent working groups (for example urban search and rescue, development and maintenance of government "service packages", capacity building and training) ensuring that emergency managers from disaster-prone developing countries are able to participate with regard to issues that directly affect them.

36. In addition, it was recommended that an **International Disaster Response Advisory Group**, built on the participation of the INSARAG Steering Group, be formed with the purpose of:

- preparing the agenda and programme of work of the Forum;
- providing a focal point for the work of the ad hoc working groups identified by the Forum;
- undertaking consultations on specific humanitarian topics and response operations.

Establishment of INSARAG Guidelines for International SAR Teams

37. Participants felt that since the publication of the INSARAG Protocols and the DHA Directory of International Search and Rescue Teams, which had served as foundation documents to promote these initiatives, not enough had been done to secure common standards and an acceptable level of performance review of international SAR Teams.

38. They concurred that now would be the appropriate time to embark on a two-phase approach to take advantage of the interest demonstrated and take international SAR into the future. This should include Guidelines for International SAR Teams, which would serve as a Code of Good Practice and reference documents for equipment, mobilization, working in the OSOCC, marking of collapsed structures, SAR Teams' performance levels, communications, etc.

39. The salient points from the Guidelines containing important information of an operational nature, would be included in a Field Operations Booklet to be used as a quick reference guide in the field. DHA was requested to work with participants to draw up a draft outline and table of contents for such Guidelines.

IX FUTURE MEETINGS

40. The participants communicated their need for technical meetings, to take place on a regular, preferably annual, basis to strengthen the process of exchange of information and network-building as well as the further development of categories and standards for urban

search and rescue. It was recognized that such meetings had financial implications which would have to be resolved and that cost-saving mechanisms had to be sought.

41. Mr. Bill Garvelink, United States, Deputy Director, Office of United States Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), on behalf of the Government of the United States invited the Leaders of International Search and Rescue Teams to meet from 26 - 28 May 1997, in Richmond, Virginia, to coincide with the next NASAR Conference, Response '97.

X ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

42. Mr. Toni Frisch, Chairman of INSARAG, on behalf of all the participants expressed his appreciation to OFDA, NASAR and to FEMA for the excellent facilities and support provided for the meeting. He considered it had been an important step in maintaining close contact between emergency managers and leaders of international search and rescue teams and in developing the INSARAG concept to better meet the requirements of a well coordinated and effective international emergency operation in support of an affected population.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH AND RESCUE ADVISORY GROUP (INSARAG)

INSARAG ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE STRATEGY

August 1995

1. Consolidation of INSARAG results to date

Since it was formed in 1991, the INSARAG has achieved very tangible results. Not the least of these results is the ongoing support and earmarking of contributions by member countries to the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA for the Operational Coordination Programme within the Relief Coordination Branch. Therefore DHA has been recommended to prepare a publication for wide dissemination drawing attention to these achievements such as:

- a. the development of the **On-Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC)** concept;
- b. the establishment of the **UNDAC Team**, and its expansion to include members from **Asia and the Pacific and Latin America**;
- c. the **standards required of international relief teams**;
- d. the **responsibilities of affected and assisting countries**;
- e. the practical work carried out by the **regional working groups**.

Members and institutions participating in the INSARAG should take every opportunity, at the **national, regional and international levels**, to disseminate the philosophy motivating the group and, where possible, to incorporate these issues at the policy-making level. The continuing implementation of the strategy agreed by the Steering Group in Kuopio, Finland in June 1994 (see annex) has been confirmed as the cornerstone for the future of the INSARAG.

2. INSARAG consultations in emergency response

The "INSARAG principle", has been defined as the establishment of an informal network which is activated particularly upon the occurrence of an emergency situation. The emergency managers who had worked together on the principles and standards for emergency response had a channel for informal consultations with their counterparts from other countries and with DHA, during the decision-making process for a response to a specific emergency. This has led to a more efficient, cost effective response and provided an opportunity for close cooperation among INSARAG members and the international emergency response resources that they represent.

3. INSARAG - potential for the future

- INSARAG tools

From the outset, INSARAG has addressed the full range of issues related to the provision of relief resources in all types of emergencies, in addition to urban search and rescue.

The approach taken by DHA in emergency response, focuses on the importance of providing coordination support at the country level for the operational actors to achieve the objectives of a relief operation. It is clear that for the future the tools that have been developed under the auspices of INSARAG, initially for natural disasters, including the establishment of memoranda of understanding with operators of relief resources, should be used by DHA for all emergencies, where appropriate. Provision should be made for specific training programmes in order to take account of the requirement for an effective response to different types of emergency.

In the light of experience to date, it is vital that DHA use all the resources at its disposal for all types of emergencies. Most INSARAG participants provide resources in response both to natural disasters and complex emergencies. They have expressed the opinion that the DHA field support presence as a facilitator for coordination of international relief and resources suppliers is of great importance, as demonstrated in the setting up of the UNREO office in Kigali. The instruments for coordination support have been developed as a result of years of experience in providing a professional service to affected countries. In order to be successful, when their use is expanded, they will need to be strengthened.

- Structure

The reason for the success of the INSARAG was that it is a relatively small group of highly-motivated emergency management practitioners who work in an informal non-bureaucratic way and above all that it is non-political.

At the same time, it is felt that there is a need to have a broad-based international forum for emergency responders. There should be representation both at the decision-making and at the technical level, and it is considered that in order to be effective it is important that such a forum be non-political. The forum that had been provided formerly by the NERS has been mentioned. However, it is felt that a **more practical orientation** of the discussions of such a forum would be more effective. This would **strengthen and extend the networking** that had proved so valuable within INSARAG. To maintain a closer contact, it could be complemented by a consultative group for ongoing interaction with DHA which could form working groups on technical issues, as necessary. Such a structure would be logical to integrate the work of INSARAG and that of the Military and Civil Defence (MCD) Standing Coordinating Group. Participation in the consultative group should include representatives from United Nations Agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and other bodies concerned with emergency management.



International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)

Meeting of Leaders of International Search and Rescue Teams

27 - 29 May 1996, Denver, United States of America

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Australia

Jeff R. Godfredson

Chief Fire Officer
Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board
456 Albert Street
East Melbourne, Victoria, 3002
tel: +61 3 9665 4212
fax: +61 3 9665 4522
E-mail: jgodfred@mfb.vic.gov.au

Trevor Haines

Emergency Management Development Officer
Emergency Management Australia
P.O. Box 1020
Dickson
tel: +61 6 266 5169
fax: +61 6 257 1490

Austria

Norbert Fürstenhofer

Commanding Officer
NBC Defence School and AFDRU
Camp Wilhelm
Vorgartenstr. 223
A-1020 Vienna
tel: +43 1 72761 6620
fax: +43 1 72761 66 02

Denmark

Peter Bro-Jørgensen

Danish Emergency Management Agency
16 Datavej
3460 Birkerød
tel: +45 45 82 54 00
fax: +45 45 82 65 65

Germany

Dietrich Lapke

Deputy Director
Bundesanstalt Technisches Hilfswerk (THW)
Postfach 20 03 51, Deutschherrenstrasse 93
53133 Bonn
tel: +49 228 940 11 00
fax: +49 228 940 11 44

Ralph Tiesler

Head of Operation Division
Bundesanstalt Technisches Hilfswerk (THW)
Postfach 20 03 51, Deutschherrenstrasse 93
53133 Bonn
tel: +49 228 940 11 64
fax: +49 228 940 11 44

Iceland

Solveig Thorvald

Director, National Civil Defence of Iceland
Saljavegi 32, 101 Reykjavik
tel: +354 552 5588
fax: +354 562 2665

Israel

Udi Ben Uri

Leader, National Rescue Unit
Home Front Command IDF
Lt. Col. Peter Brown
Doar Tsvat 02673, Tsahal
tel: +972 8 923 9312
fax: +972 8 922 1488

Russian Federation

Michail Faleev

Head of Russian Airmobile Rescue Service
EMERCOM of Russia
Teatralny proezd, 3
103012 Moscow
tel: +70 95 923 63 18
fax: +70 95 924 84 10

Vyacheslav Klimets

Head of Regional SAR Service in Volga River Area
EMERCOM of Russia
Teatralny proezd, 3
103012 Moscow
tel: +70 95 923 63 18
fax: +70 95 924 84 10

Vladimir Melnik

Emergency Expert
International Cooperation Department
EMERCOM of Russia
Teatralny proezd, 3
103012 Moscow
tel: +70 95 923 63 18, 926 35 90
fax: +70 95 924 84 10

Sweden

Lars Bjergestam

Head of Division
Swedish Rescue Services Agency
Karolinen
65180 Karlstad
tel: +46 54 104 309
fax: +46 54 103 344
E-mail: lars.bjergestam@kd.srv.se

Omar Harrami

Fire Protection Engineer
Swedish Rescue Services Agency
Karolinen
65180 Karlstad
tel: +46 54 104 359
fax: +46 54 103 344
E-mail: omar.harrami@kd.srv.se

Switzerland

Toni Frisch

Deputy Head, Mission Leader Swiss Rescue
Div. of Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Disaster Relief
Eigerstrasse 71, CH - 3003 Berne
tel: +41 31 322 3124
fax: +41 31 324 1694
E-mail: toni.frisch@admin-deh.admin.ch

Beat Künzi

Programme Coordinator, Deputy Leader Swiss Rescue
Div. of Humanitarian Aid and Swiss Disaster Relief
Eigerstrasse 71, CH-3003 Berne
tel: +41 31 322 3124
fax: +41 31 371 1694
E-mail: beat.kuenzi@admin-deh.admin.ch

United Kingdom

Willie McMartin

International Rescue Corps (GB)
Office 2B, 1 Kerse Road
Grangemouth FK3 8HW, Stirlingshire
tel: + 44 1324 665 011
fax: + 44 1324 666 130

Edward G. Pearn

H.M. Inspector of Fire Services
Fire Service Inspectorate
Fire and Emergency Planning Dept
Home Office, Horseferry House
Dean Ryle Street
London SW1P 2AW
tel: +44 171 217 8689, mobile: +44 850 402 478
fax: +44 171 217 8731
Pager no: +44 399 1133 - 786951

United States

Bill Garvelink

Deputy Director
USAID
Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)
Room 1262-A, NS
Washington, D. C. 20523,
tel: +1 202 647 5916
fax: +1 202 647 5269
E-mail: wgarvelink@usaid.gov

Ruben Almaguer

Lieutenant/Response Readiness Coordinator
Metropolitan Dade County,
Florida Fire Rescue Department
6000 S.W. 87th Avenue
Miami, Florida 33173-1698
tel: +1 305 596 8036, 233 5000
fax: +1 305 596 8933, 253 4854

Pete Bradford

Assistant Director for Operations Support
USAID, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
(OFDA)
Room 1262-A, NS
Washington, D. C. 20523,
United States of America
tel: +1 703 875 1553
fax: +1 703 875 1708
E-mail: pbradford@usaid.gov

Raul Chavez

Lieutenant/Technical Assistance Coordinator
Metropolitan Dade County,
Florida Fire Rescue Department
6000 S.W. 87th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33173-1698
tel: +1 305 596 8036, 233 5000
fax: +1 305 596 8933, 253 4854

Daniel Cuoco

Division Chief, Special Operations Division
Metropolitan Dade County,
Florida Fire Rescue Department
6000 S.W. 87th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33173-1698
tel: +1 305 596 8036, 233 5000
fax: +1 305 596 8933, 253 4854

Angel Delafuente

Firefighter/Operations Support Specialist
Metropolitan Dade County, Florida Fire Rescue
Department
6000 S.W. 87th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33173-1698
tel: +1 305 596 8036, 233 5000
fax: +1 305 596 8933, 253 4854

Sean Patrick Foohey

Deputy Director, Response and Planning Division
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
500 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20472
tel: +1 202 646 3597, 24-hour: +1 800 634 7084
fax: +1 202 646 2901, 24-hour: +1 202 898 6100
E-mail: sfoohey@fema.gov

Tom Frey

Disaster Management Specialist
USAID, Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
(OFDA)
Room 1262-A, NS
Washington, D. C. 20523,
United States of America
tel: +1 202 647 5916
fax: +1 703 875 1708
E-mail: tfrey@usaid.gov

Ricardo Garcia

Captain, and Officer in Charge of Disaster Preparedness
and Response Bureau
Metropolitan Dade County,
Florida Fire Rescue Department
6000 S.W. 87th Avenue, Miami, Florida 33173-1698
tel: +1 305 596 8036, 233 5000
fax: +1 305 596 8933, 253 4854

Chuck Mills

National Association for Search and Rescue
4500 Southgate Place, Suite 100
Chantilly VA 22021
tel: +1 703 222 6277,
fax: +1 703 222 6283
E-mail: chuckm@nasar.org

Steven Rhea
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department
4100 Chain Bridge Rd.
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
tel: +1 703 591 0273
fax: +1 703 273 0792

Robert Rhea
Captain
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department
4100 Chain Bridge Rd.
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
tel: +1 703 631 8121
fax: +1 703 378 5347

Jim Strickland
Deputy Fire Chief
Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department
4100 Chain Bridge Rd.
Fairfax, Virginia 22030
tel: +1 703 876 1834
fax: +1 703 560 3188

Craig Washington
National Association for Search and Rescue
4500 Southgate Place, Suite 100
Chantilly, VA 22021
tel: +1 703 222 6277
fax: +1 703 222 6283
E-mail: craigw@nasar.org

Venezuela

Manuel Santana
Disaster Preparedness Coordinator
Federal District Fire Service
Av. Lecuna Cruce con Fuerzas Armadas,
Edif. Victoriano Jordan, 5° piso
Caracas
tel: +58 2 545 5924, COE (Emergency Centre): +58 2
545 7765
fax: +58 2 545 7765 (24-hr); +58 2 545 0331
E-mail: manuels@ven.net

DHA

Ola Almgren
Chief, Field Coordination Support Unit
Relief Coordination Branch
Department of Humanitarian Affairs
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10
tel: +41 22 917 3279
fax: +41 22 917 0023
E-mail: ola.almgren@dha.unicc.org

Joseph Bishop

Emergency Management Consultant
20 Witham's Road, Gibraltar
tel: +350 41125
fax: +350 41125

Juliette de Rivero

Field Coordination Support Unit
Relief Coordination Branch
Department of Humanitarian Affairs
Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10
tel: +41 22 917 3513
fax: +41 22 917 0023
E-mail: juliette.de.rivero@dha.unicc.org