

20 January 2000

**REPORT ON THE PARTICIPATION OF FINNISH CHEMICAL RESPONSE GROUP IN
COMPROTEX 99**

Finland participated in COMPROTEX 99 command post exercise 6 – 7 October 1999 and in field exercise 5 – 7 November 1999 in Slovakia, Austria and Hungary. Finland sent 5 observers and a chemical response group with “TOKEVA” chemical equipment container with a team of 7 people.

The memorandum concerning CPX is as an annex.

Observers

The Finnish observers participated in the observer programme, which included a tour in several exercise sites in all three countries. The programme was profoundly planned, but as is usually the case, there is no guarantee that at the arrival of observers on-site there is still rescue activities going on. In many places we could follow the activities but in some places there was not much to see because of coming too late or too early on the spot. The observers didn't have any possibility to visit command centres or posts in order to get a general view of the situation in the field or the work of rescue leaders.

There were many interesting demonstrations or exhibitions of working places like monitoring stations, medical treatment, water purification, decontamination stations. Our observers found this part of the programme most interesting. One point which was unnecessary was the explosion of a building which took so long a time that we had to skip part of the programme.

Chemical response group

Finland sent the “TOKEVA” container with a truck from Finland so that it arrived in Vienna 3 November. The Vienna fire brigade kept the container in safe place in their premises and it was ready to be sent to Slovakia on 6 November. A two man advance party arrived in Vienna on 4 November and the rest of the team on 5 November. The Finnish chemical response group left Vienna early in the morning of 6 November. The team was heading to Slovakia to MATADOREX exercise place in order to participate in decontamination activities, but was kept at the border crossing point (Berg) too long. This meant that we not ready when the action started. We could invite some of the international observers to watch our decontamination measures but we could have shown more. Still there were many interesting questions which we could answer.

On Sunday 7 November there was a demonstration in the Hippodrom area where we planned to show our container. Due to late arrival of international observers we could only demonstrate the container to local authorities and people which showed great interest. We also distributed information material to those present in Hippodrome.

Conclusions

Finland is very grateful in having this opportunity to participate in COMPROTEX exercise, because we got experience in international notification and alerting system, planning of our mission for field exercise, transporting the “TOKEVA” container to Central Europe and comparing different working methods with other international teams.

All in all we consider the COMPROTEX exercise very useful an experience and we could disseminate information about “TOKEVA” procedures even though the most important target group was missed.

Finland is of the opinion that further development of these ideas would contribute to improvement of procedures and measures needed in combating chemical accidents.

Counsellor

Tero Paasiluoto

**FINNISH EXPERIENCE ON COMPROTEX COMMAND POST EXERCISE
OCTOBER 1999**

5 – 7

General

Finland participated in COMPROTEX 99 Exercise in part 1 Command Post Exercise (CPX) by National Emergency Response Centre (POC) in Helsinki and a response cell in Rescue Department of Ministry of the Interior (Focal Point, FP). The national responsibility was carried by preparedness unit where two persons with the help of a secretary was on duty. As a resource person acted one person responsible for international affairs. Deputy Director General of Rescue Services acted as a duty officer giving back up services.

The Finnish system for receiving international notifications of disasters and making alerts is based on POC which is working on 24 hour basis. The POC disseminates the information to MOI during office hours and to its duty officer outside office hours. These contact numbers have been submitted to international organisations, like UN/OCHA, EU/DG XI and NATO / EADRCC.

The aim of CPX

The aim of CPX was to test measures of early notification, request of bilateral and international assistance in a chemical disaster source being in Bratislava, Slovakia.

Finland, being a remote nation to Slovakia, participated only in request and response of international assistance. The CPX instructions stated that Slovakia (POC SK) sends its messages to UN/OCHA and NATO/EADRCC and Austria (POC AT) to EU/DG XI. The POCs of International Organisations were to forward the messages to POC of Participating countries, such as Finland (see Annex).

CPX Test period 5 October 1999

Test of communication started on 5 October at 9.00 o'clock loc/ 7.00 o'clock UTC. The time in Finland was 10.00 at the beginning of the test period.

POC FI received:

- one test message from NATO / EADRCC at 11.15
- one test message from UN / OCHA at 13.57
- one test message from EU at 16.26
- four messages from DISTAFF.

CPX Exercise phase 6 – 7 October 1999

The CPX started on 6 October at 8.00 o'clock loc / 06.00 o'clock UTC and 09.00 Finnish time.

Finland received the following number of messages on 6 October:

1) International (according to CPX instructions):

- 6 messages from UN / OCHA. First one at 11.26 Finnish time
- 4 messages from EU / DG XI. First one at 12.49 Finnish time
- 12 messages from NATO /EADRCC. First one at 16.58 Finnish time.
- 3 from DISTAFF

2) National (against the instructions):

- 10 messages from POC SK. First one at 12.50 Finnish time
- 3 messages from POC HU. First one at 13.55 Finnish time
- 6 messages from POC AT. First one at 17.17 Finnish time
- 1 message from POC S at 19.01 Finnish time.

Finland received the following number of messages on 7 October:

1) International (according to CPX instructions):

- 7 messages from NATO /EADRCC. First one at 10.17 Finnish time.
- 2 messages from EU / DG XI. First one at 10.53 Finnish time
- 3 messages from UN / OCHA. First one at 12.36 Finnish time
- 3 messages from DISTAFF .

2) National (against the instructions):

- 3 messages from POC SK. First one at 13. 34 Finnish time.

During the exercise Finland offered to send experts, container to combat chemicals (TOKEVA), medical aid and blankets.

Conclusions of CPX exercise

In general messages by fax were first received by POC FI. In the beginning messages from UN OCHA were sent, against agreed procedures, directly to Rescue Department, MOI. This was corrected later by Finnish MOI. The answer messages from Rescue Department were sent during office hours directly to POC of international organisations and not via POC FI. This method was found useful.

The quality of facsimiles coming from POC SK was very bad. This fact impaired the reading of messages and created misinterpretations.

Faxes having the same content were sent for several times, unnecessary repetition, causing waste of time to read them and to answer. The best way would be that one international POC should be nominated as the primary POC delivering messages to all POCs. If the other international POCs would have a special function, like co-ordination of air lift, then it would be the one to deliver these messages to all relevant POCs. The same procedure should be in use for national answers: one answer to primary POC and not to all three. It should be up to the international POCs to exchange relevant information among each other.

The CPX as such was very useful. It learnt many lessons, but it was very laborious including too many messages.

One measure to be solved would be, how to make certain that the message sent has been received and read. Some way to give "roger" signal would wash away any uncertainty.