

RESCUE AND CIVIL PROTECTION

UN State in Poznań

Tomasz Daszkiewicz



About 10,000 participants from all over the world gathered on the Climate Change Conference COP-14 in Poznań. Providing them with security was a real challenge for many services. Let the numbers speak for themselves: almost 1,500 officers of the Police, the State Fire Service, the Government Protection Bureau and Border Guards were engaged to protect the event.

The conference lasted from 1 to 12 December 2008. Representatives of the UN General Assembly, about 200 official government delegations and heads of states invited by the president and the prime minister of the Republic of Poland came to the meeting, which was held in the facilities of Poznań International Fair. This was the largest political summit that has ever been organized in Poland and in this part of Europe. If for Poznań and the whole region the event was a great chance for promotion, for the services responsible for safety and security this entailed enormous effort. This was a specific readiness test for the services providing security for large international events before Euro 2012 championships.

According to the agreement concluded between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and the UN Department of Safety and Security a security zone, which was subject to the control of the United Nations was created on the area of Poznań International Fair for the needs of the conference. The zone was given extraterritorial status; therefore the entry to the zone was limited only to the participants to the conference and services on presentation of a special permit.

Preparations for such a large project started already in April 2008 with a visit of UN representatives. In the case of the State Fire Service the preparations were of two-track nature: concerning control and reconnaissance as well as operational issues. To a great extent the range and scope of preparations reflected the expectations of the UN service.

Control and Reconnaissance Preparations

Control and reconnaissance actions in all the facilities of Poznań International Fair were planned and conducted in June and July 2008. What was established during those actions served as a basis for eliminating irregularities. Created extraterritorial zone and rebuilding the facilities to a great extent determined the decision of the Poznań International Fair management about preparing fire protection analysis, which served later for drawing up a motion to the Regional Chief Fire Officer of the Wielkopolska province for exemption from the statutory solutions. Having verified the motion, including the analysis of the fire safety conditions in the fair facilities at that time, the technical expertise and the vision of the Poznań International Fair, the Regional Chief Fire Officer of the Wielkopolska province gave his consent to the application of interim solutions in the period from 1 to 13 December 2008.

The links between pavilions aroused interest of the services responsible for security, also of the UN. Doors, divisions specifying the borders of fire areas, were made in EI 60 class. Each door was provided with anti-panic mechanisms. Additionally driving lanes equipped with quickly-opening gates were designed and constructed in the links.

Since the climate change conference was organized it was necessary to conduct numerous controls of the accommodation facilities. The total number of ninety hotels recommended to the conference participants was controlled – in the city of Poznań, in the Poznań district and in several adjacent districts. The control finished with administrative actions taken in order to eliminate the threats, which were found. An analysis summarizing the control results was prepared for the Regional HQ of the SFS in Poznań.

Another requirement of the UN services included performing practical completion inspection of the extraterritorial zone and issuing a document confirming that the facilities with

their fitting were constructed in accordance with the national fire safety provisions. Moreover, a UN representative responsible for safety asked for a fire safety instruction with an evacuation plan with the approval of the District Chief Fire Officer in Poznań concerning the adopted solutions. On the day before the conference the UN asked for instructions regarding evacuation of its personnel.

Operational Preparations

The operational preparations were preceded by an analysis of possible threats which can appear while such a great project is organized. While the analysis was being prepared, it was necessary to use knowledge of the Police and other services responsible for security and safety. The catalogue of threats, which was drawn up, indicated that it is necessary to be prepared for terrorist or pseudo-terrorist threats. The next stage of works included developing a rescue plan taking into account possible threats and verifying the equipment used by rescue and extinguishing units in Poznań. It was established that for reaching acceptable security level it is necessary to purchase and inspect devices identifying immediately ionizing radiation, biological pathogens and chemicals. Therefore, the Central Operational Support Specialist Group of Chemical and Ecological Rescue "Poznań 6" was equipped in *First Defender* portable detector of dangerous substances. This device identifies precisely a broad range of organic and inorganic compounds in the form of fluids, solid substances and mixtures. Moreover, tests for biological threats identification were purchased, including tests for anthrax, botulinum toxin, ricin etc. Another extremely important step concerned providing the units based near the zone with measures for organizing decontamination. Decontamination kit applying active foam and temporary clothing for persons which would have to be decontaminated were ready to be used. A mobile weather station with computers with professional software and databases was an additional element making the threat analysis possible.

The analysis of equipment showed also that a device for quick identification of military gases is necessary in reserve, since the standard detecting tubes could be inadequate. The District HQ of the SFS in Katowice helped here lending RAID M 100 device – an ion mobility spectrometer, which can detect, classify, identify and specify the concentration of chemical substances, especially military gases.

Planning Documentation

“Framework plan of the climate change conference protection provided by the State Fire Service” fit into a broader context of documents specifying the functioning and responsibilities of particular services in the case of fire, local threats and other threats to the safety and security of the conference participants. The agreement between the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration and the UN Department of Safety and Security specifies the range of duties of particular services: the Police, the SFS, the Government Protection Bureau, the UN service, the subjects of Emergency Medical Service. “Detailed Plan of Service Operation and Cooperation and of Information Circulation” (prepared by the Wielkopolska province governor) specified the rules of the exchange of information among services protecting the conference and cooperating entities. The aims of the “Framework plan of the climate change conference protection provided by the State Fire Service” included an analysis of threats, specification of framework procedures in the case of fire and local threats and determining the rescue potential of the SFS. The rescue plans of the district and of the province defined the rules of receiving notifications about a threat, rescue procedures in the case of threats and a list of the SFS resources and of the resources of the entities cooperating with the National Rescue and Firefighting System.

Operational Protection in Practice

Taking into account the expectations expressed by the UN and the provisions of “Framework plan of the climate change conference protection provided by the State Fire Service,” the following solutions were adopted:

1. Rescue and extinguishing vehicles were constantly on duty in hall no.1 of Poznań International Fair – an extinguishing vehicle, a vehicle of technical rescue, permanent decontamination point (the UN representatives set down a requirement of taking intervention within three minutes).
2. A specialist group of chemical and ecological rescue was being stationed in the closest fire and rescue unit.
3. Operational readiness of the fire and rescue units subordinate to the District HQ of the SFS in Poznań was increased. Officers speaking English were selected for duties in a UN joint control room.
4. Firefighters speaking English were selected for patrols in the exterritorial zone (two-man patrols).
5. District Alarm and Dispatch Center provided service in six languages (English, German, Russian, French, Spanish, Portuguese)

Coordinating Training, or How Are We Prepared

Upon the application of the Regional Chief Fire Officer, the Wielkopolska province governor undertook to coordinate the training of rescue services included in the conference protection plans. The training took place on 27 November. The goals set for the participants included:

- training the targets of “Framework plan of the climate change conference protection provided by the State Fire Service,”
- testing the circulation of information about threats,
- checking the real time the resources need to come to an incident site,
- checking the preparation of Fire and Rescue Units in case of a chemical and ecological threat on the area of Poznań International Fair.

The training scenario assumed the following incident: the joint control room receives a notification from a foot patrol that an unidentified substance was spilled in one of the fair pavilions (extraterritorial zone). Two summit participants lost consciousness, two other persons are in pain and do not feel well. People who are around rush to the exits, which causes local panic. At the same time the information reaches the District Alarm and Dispatch Center in Poznań through emergency number 112.

Undoubtedly, the training achieved the intended goal and finished with creating a list of elements, which still had to be worked on. The following elements were indicated:

- difficulties with reaching the incident site because of the gateways in tunnels linking fair halls being opened too late,
- difficulties with entering the fair hall no. 9 because of closed emergency exits,
- no rules of stopping pedestrian traffic in the links between fair halls in the case of services driving through,
- prolonged time of the rescue services reaching the incident site,
- difficulties in the circulation of information about threats.

All irregularities, which were found, were eliminated due to the good cooperation between the services and the representatives of Poznań International Fair. It has to be underlined that the Wielkopolska province governor personally undertook to coordinate the training.

And It Was Calm

No more serious incidents were stated during the COP14 conference, which would require an intervention by the resources based in pavilion no.1 and fire and rescue units in Poznań.

Two not serious dustbin fires happened on the area supervised by the UN during the summit. The SFS officers of the foot patrol administered also qualified medical aid and reported the necessity of dispatching medical service to a Malaysian man who fainted during the session. Fire alarm system was activated several times. The SFS was dispatched also to incidents, where the Police played the key role. Those incidents included mainly suspicion of planting explosives. Therefore, the assumptions were confirmed that pseudo-terrorist incidents can pose the greatest challenge.

The organization of the conference in Poznań brought many benefits. It was an impulse for a comprehensive assessment of fire safety of most of the accommodation facilities and Poznań International Fair area, which has led to many administrative actions. The firefighters on Poznań added to their equipment specialist measuring and detecting devices and gained valuable experience when it comes to the protection of international events.

Cooperation: Junior Brigadier Piotr Koper

Capt. Tomasz Daszkiewicz and Junior Brigadier Piotr Koper work in the District HQ of the SFS in Poznań

Conclusions From the Conference

1. In the process of preparing the planning documentation it is extremely important to rely on an existing rescue code of practice, without creating any additional structures and new procedures. Such an approach makes it possible to use rescuers' potential and skills optimally. Firefighters act according to the rules they have known for years; therefore, the probability of making a mistake is lower.
2. Created for the conference, the UN joint control room fulfilled its task being a link between all the services. Such a solution enabled the services to fulfill the tasks according to their own competences and, at the same time, to exchange information smoothly.
3. Introducing the foot patrols proved to be effective, both with respect to prevention and operational abilities, and in one case it is most likely to have helped to save a human life. Patrols made it possible to detect quickly threats and impediments which could influence evacuation. When organizing services of this type it is justified to equip the patrols in latex safety gloves, which will enable the rescuers to administer medical care when necessary.
4. Selecting firefighters speaking English for patrol service and for the District Alarm and Dispatch Center was a good solution. The patrols helped conference participants many times.

5. Using the equipment of the Regional Police HQ to organize communications was a great solution, which allowed the services to avoid the necessity of leasing connection systems from commercial operators.
6. Because the staffing of the Fire and Rescue Units was significantly increased, generating a significant number of overtime hours is a serious problem of such a large project.
7. Purchase of specialist detectors of chemical and biological threats, equipment specifying contamination zones and devices used for decontamination was undoubtedly an advantage resulting from the conference.
8. Organization of such a large undertaking is a valuable experience for all the services responsible for safety and security, especially in the time of preparing themselves for Euro 2012.
9. The experience from the service of foreign language calls indicate that it is easier to prepare the SFS dispatchers with respect to their language skills than to rely on skills of experts speaking different languages.