Overview

As UK ISAR enter its 30th year of conception since 1992 it gives us a great honour to be included in this INSARAG after action review. This deployment certainly tested UK ISAR, with the last earthquake deployment back in 2015 in Nepal. UK ISAR demonstrated that it still has the ability to deploy a highly effective heavy team in excellent response times. Since the recovery phase from Covid-19 duties, UK ISAR has been preparing hard for such a testing deployment and demonstrated intent to improve with the fastest response team since 2001.

This significant event in Turkey has tested the preparation of a newly forming innovative UK ISAR team based on the foundation of a well-established international search and rescue classified team.

The team leader and his 77-strong team with four K9’s answered the call with a truly inspirational UK ISAR response supported by UK incident room reach back. The flexibility of the team supported new innovative changes imposed due to the significant risk and challenges faced as the rescuers. The lessons learned from this event will mould the further improvement of the UK ISAR team and the necessary recommendations will be reviewed and the necessary viable improvements made through accepted actions.

UK ISAR Highlights.

UK ISAR received the verbal green light to deploy from UK Government on the 6th February. The full UK ISAR mobilisation followed the recognised process with teams at the National Point of departure (NPOD) by 18:00hrs arriving in Gazientep on the 7th Feb.

The UK ISAR response included 77 personnel from 14 United Kingdom Fire & Rescue Services including 4 search dogs, 5 Usar medical professionals known as UMT, 1 Structural/Demolition Engineer and 1 Vet with all associated equipment and BoO for an INSARAG Classified Heavy Rescue Response. This also included a 24-hour dedicated UK reach back team of a further 8 personnel in the UK Incident room.

UK ISAR supported the UCC and SCC in the area of Hatay in arduous conditions and provided donated in kind assistance on behalf of UK Aid.

This was a very successful mission for UK ISAR with regards to time for response being the fastest since 2001 (22 years previously) and a test of the team since FCDO and the lead authority took over the governance of the team.

UK ISAR Team learning

• Team arduous condition and cold weather preparations and development ensured UK ISAR was primed for cold weather operations in minus temperatures that this situation posed with the right PPE and previous exposure.
• Team worked tirelessly to support the saving of life in very difficult operations.

INSARAG Learning concepts

• The Structural/demolition engineer was instrumental in the safety of rescuers.
• Coordination save lives.
• Effective use of local information sources/ translators and liaison personnel.