

ment worth more than CZK 3.5 billion. The annual equipment replacement costs, i.e. minimum costs needed to prevent further ageing of the equipment, amount to CZK 900 million. It must be mentioned that the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic has not yet been receiving necessary funds from the government budget. We must therefore do our best to raise them elsewhere. In the last five years or so, for example, we have been able to make use of European structural funds. Under the last two of these programmes, we have either purchased or will buy, by the end of 2018, equipment worth almost CZK 2 billion. Furthermore, we have managed to push through an amendment to the act on liability insurance for damage caused by operation of motor vehicles, and the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic can thus draw money from the so-called Damage Prevention Fund of the Czech Bureau of Insurers to the tune of more than CZK 300 million for the purpose of equipment procurements. Regional Fire Brigades also strive to raise additional funds from other sources, such as regional governments or businesses. The outcome of these efforts is that the average age of rapid response fire tenders of professional firefighters is just slightly above 8 years. However, the average age of high-capacity fire tenders and ladder/basket trucks continues to be a problem, being 16.5 and 17.7 years, respectively.

However, we should not speak only about firefighting vehicles. The Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic invests a lot into equipment that facilitates the

firefighters' job and makes it more efficient, such as thermal cameras, various detectors, personal protection aids, pumps, overpressure fans etc. It may be interesting to note that the rapid response fire tender mentioned above is equipped with more than 200 items of accessories the approximate value of which is CZK 1.5 million.

Funds are also invested into buildings and facilities of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic; existing fire stations are renovated and new ones built, and each project of this type generally represents an investment of several hundred million of Czech Crowns. Two new bases for rescue companies of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic have also been recently built, one in Zbiroh, the other in Jihlava.

The above notwithstanding, lack of operating and particularly investment funds continues to be a major headache of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic. On the other hand, it should be noted that the election programme of the ruling party calls for an increase of these funds.

General, does the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic have a consistent long-term acquisition policy? If so, what is its priority?

The Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic is currently working on a long-term strategy of the service until 2021, with a view until 2030. It is expected to provide a comprehensive insight into where our

organization should move in order to maintain and improve the services we provide to all inhabitants of the Czech Republic in the field of security and safety. It is also necessary to bear in mind that the role of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic is not limited to responses to emergencies, although one of our long-term objectives is to achieve a stabilized cycle of reproduction of firefighting vehicles and equipment where we currently have a substantial internal debt. Our service is also responsible for answering emergency calls, in respect of which we would like to improve the localizing of callers by 2021, operates two Integrated Rescue System radio networks, and also the warning and notification system (the well-known sirens). The radio networks will have to be upgraded by 2021 so that they meet current requirements.

Director, almost all top representatives of executive military, security and rescue organizations have given our magazine an interview this year. Can you, by way of conclusion, evaluate cooperation with other elements of the Integrated Rescue System of the Czech Republic and tell us whether the Czech Republic has again made some progress in this field?

In 2017, we made an assessment of the 25 years since the birth of the idea and initial activities in the field of coordination of various elements and public authorities dealing with emergencies. I am glad we came to a conclusion that the Integrated Rescue System had proved its value, both when dealing with day-to-day emergencies and when facing major natural disasters, such as floods or cyclones we can still remember. The division of emergencies into three coordination levels – tactical, operational, and strategic – is functional, easy to find one's way in, and acceptable by all elements involved in the Integrated Rescue System. Basic IRS documents, such as IRS alarm plans, emergency plans of regions and potentially dangerous industrial facilities, or standard operating procedures for each element participating in a joint response, have been prepared and implemented. IRS operating centers can make use of the National IRS Information System. The reform of civil defence and competencies in the field of protection of popula-

tion which the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic acquired in 2000 have unquestionably contributed to more efficient rescue and disaster relief measures. We have literally resurrected the area of evacuation, warning and emergency survival which today comprises modern and usable emergency-handling procedures.

As of now, the Integrated Rescue System has signed some 350 agreements on planned assistance upon request, which open the door to the IRS for different organizations, institutions and authorities (termed "other IRS elements"). Their number is fairly high, and it is a great challenge for us to employ them properly when dealing with an emergency. This is, as a matter of fact, our latest task. Although it may not seem so, it is an ongoing and permanent task because of the never-ending exchange of personnel in various IRS elements. This is why we run a number of exercises of the IRS elements, whose topics are related to the emergency plans and standard operating procedures on the emergency site; this is why we meet with leaders of IRS elements or run training courses and education programmes in our IRS training facilities. We are trying to implement educational programmes employing virtual reality, e-learning etc. The work in this particular field of professional education and training is very hard, as it involves potentially high numbers of people. It is a well-known fact that it is too late to explain basic principles



of cooperation during an emergency response in which multiple elements are involved.

To answer your question, i.e. whether we have made any progress, I have to say, we have made a great leap forward during those 25 years. Last year, for example, we were making, together with other IRS elements, steps toward better cooperation by introducing new information technologies, equipment, amendments of regulations, and professional training. To put it figuratively, we are not that much interested in the length of the step forward; it is its imprint and the imprint's depth in our everyday rescue and firefighting work. The imprint in the form of more

than 100,000 joint responses, hundreds of rescued and thousands of evacuated people, and saved property worth billions is indisputable, and it is the result of our collective work, the work of all elements of the Integrated Rescue System. I think that our people know very well whom they can turn to for help and that they trust us.

Director, thank you for your answers and good cooperation of the Fire Rescue Service of the Czech Republic with the media during the previous period.

Eva Soukupová



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