



Project Macedonia

News Bulletin – Week 1



FIRE ENGINES ARRIVE SAFE AND SOUND

After 12 months of preparation Operation Florian's Macedonian project to help rebuild the capacity of the Macedonian Fire Service has now begun. The project has now burst into action and the first stage has now begun.

On Saturday 4th May four fire engines left the UK bound for the destinations in Macedonia with a challenging drive across Europe.

At the same time a small team, led by Steve Jordan, flew across to Macedonia to get to work setting up the project ensuring everything was in place to receive and welcome the fire engines arrival and make the necessary preparations for the commencement of training once the equipment had arrived and was in place.

During this project set up week the project team had an opportunity to catch up with old friends and establish new relationships and to introduce Operation Florian and the objectives of the project. Aside from the meetings with the Mayors of all receiving Municipalities an opportunity to meet the British Ambassador, Mr Andrew Key, was made available when the project team were invited to a EU evening event on the invitation of Andreas, a member of the Macedonian Lions Club

In the early hours of the morning of Friday 9th May after a long haul the fire engines arrived with many tired faces but with big smiles on. After an initial reception at Skopje Fire Station the fire engines were then led to their Municipalities.

Now with the equipment in place we can move to the next stage of delivering the training. Watch this space!!!!



Siemens Gostivar fire engine driving through Montenegro

BEHIND THE WHEEL-A DRIVERS PERSPECTIVE FROM BRIAN WILLIAMS

On Wednesday 7th May after travelling virtually non stop through Europe for five days, the convoy stopped for the night at Pedagogical in Montenegro.

They stayed at the Fire station with old friends that had been trained by Operation Florian on a previous project.

On Thursday morning at 07.00hrs they set off again on the penultimate leg of their journey into Kosovo then finally into Macedonia, along with the usual Balkan border delays and customs problems, which were painstakingly overcome with the essential help of Carl Underwood (OSCE) and Alex Dane.

The convoy then proceeded to Skopje central fire station where the equipment for Skopje was unloaded and the inventories checked before their last leg to their final destinations.

Firefighters from the different Municipalities were at Skopje to assist lead 'their' trucks to their new homes.

The two trucks destined for Sveti Nikole crewed by the Grampian and Suffolk boys set off but still had 90Km to go.

Upon arrival at Sveti Nikole and very tired the boys spent half an hour with the welcome committee before parking up the trucks and finally retiring to bed at 04.30hrs.

At 08.30 (yes! Only 4hrs sleep) we were up again for breakfast and preparing for a press/media conference with the Mayor and other Municipality officials and also the ceremonial handing over of the keys to the Mayor and fire chief, then finally it was the compulsory 'Rakia and stickies' in the Mayors office!!



Equipment displayed at Veles Fire Station for the Municipality of Veles press conference



Young Bury Lions Club members sending off the Lions Veles Fire Engine

The two Manchester based trucks crewed by Manchester and North Wales firefighters were travelling from Skopje to Veles and Gostivar.

The Veles bound pump was cheered away from Manchester central fire station by members of various Lions clubs in the North West of England.

The Gostivar bound pump left Manchester in its striking new livery, kindly sponsored by Siemens UK.

The Veles crew arrived in Veles at 03.00 and were greeted at the fire station by the Chief Fire Officer and some representatives of the Municipality. The crew soon retired to bed at their hotel only to be up again at 07.00am to clean and check the equipment for a ceremonial handover to the Mayor of Veles at 12.30pm.

At the handover two television crews and several representatives from both the local and national media attended. Also on this day 10th May it was National European day in Veles and the British firefighters were invited to the event.

Children from all the EU countries participated and the British children were shocked to see us there.

The Gostivar (Siemens) crew arrived in Gostivar at around 02.30am, again were greeted by the local firefighters who were delighted with their new arrival.

Early the next morning this truck was stripped of equipment and everything checked before training commences on Monday 12th May.

The official handover here will be at the end of the training when the Mayor of Gostivar could attend. At this moment in time (Sunday 11th May) the appliance takes pride of place sitting on the block paved yard of Gostivar fire station. This is a great achievement on behalf of the Gostivar fire department as on Thursday morning (8th May) the back yard of the station was surrounded by 30 tonnes of hardcore in one great pile, 10,000 paving blocks and one man with a shovel!

Operation Florian project team meeting Mr Andrew Kay, British Ambassador – Macedonia (second on right)



A NOTE OF THANKS TO ALL OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

At this point all the members of the team and the firefighters from Macedonia would like to say a big thank you. The support you have given has already changed lives and communities. Everyone has expressed extreme gratitude and in return for all our efforts they have been formidable hosts and extremely keen and motivated to learn how to use the equipment. The next newsletter will give you all more information on the development of the training and further success of all the project team.

Once again many thanks for all of your support and we look forward to providing you with more information on the developments of the project.

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