

International
**RESCUE DOG
ORGANISATION**



ANNUAL REPORT

2017

Honour to whom honour is due

The world's most ambitious countries 2017

All year round, the IRO offers to its member organisations the opportunity to demonstrate their competences and qualities through testing events, mission readiness tests and competitions. The NROs receive IRO subsidies in accordance with a strict performance principle. This ensures that IRO grants are used for their purpose and according to the high quality standards of the IRO.

The classification of IRO member organisations takes place in a two-year rhythm. It is checked whether the respective organisation is a National rescue-dog organisation, a National rescue-dog handling organisation or an associated member organisation.

With the classification in 2017, IRO has:

50

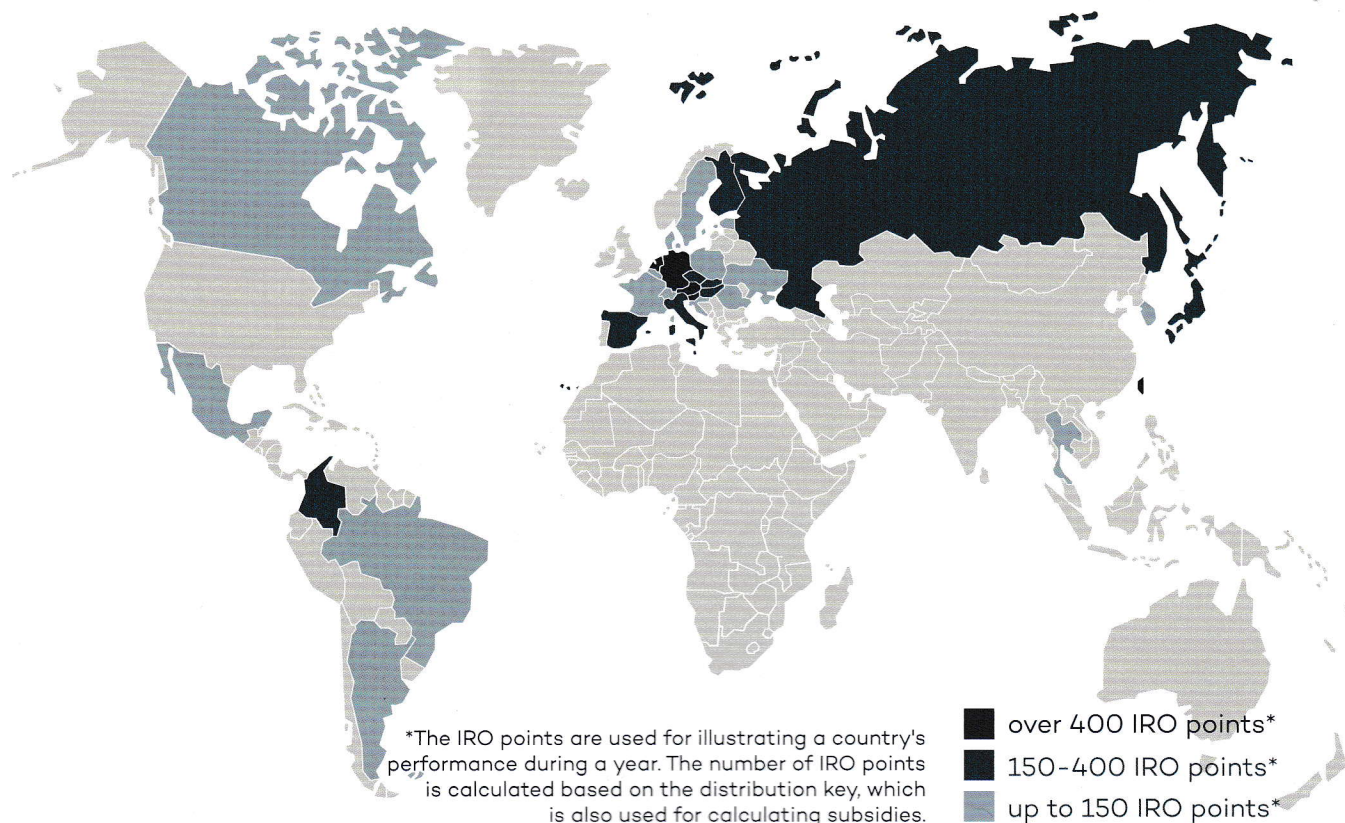
Associated member organisations

58

National search and rescue dog handling organisations

9

National search and rescue dog organisations



¡Hola! IRO-member RESCATE K-SAR

Interview with IRO-Deputy Francisco Gomez of the „Fundacion para la Gestion del Riesgo RESCATE K-SAR”

For years, Francisco Gomez, President of the „Fundacion para la Gestion del Riesgo RESCATE K-SAR” (RESCATE K-SAR) and IRO Deputy for America, has been committed to providing the highest standards of quality in rescue dog training. His organisation has been a member of the International Rescue Dog Organisation since 2004.

Mr. Gomez, you achieved the change of your NRO's status from an associated to a national rescue dog handling member organisation.

How did you achieve this and what does it mean to you and your organisation?

First of all I would like to say that we are very happy about this achievement and that it is a joint effort of many people and organisations in Colombia.

When joining the IRO more than ten years ago, we mistakenly believed that a single group would be able to achieve that goal. But along the way we understood that joining forces is how we were really going to achieve it.

Nowadays, most of the people who work in training search dogs in my country do it in a coordinated and decentralized way.

How is search and rescue dog work valued in Columbia?

In recent years this work has taken much importance in our rescue groups. Now more than ever, it is necessary that with the increase of the units working with search dogs, a unique standard for evaluation and certification is established.

I can proudly say that the National Firefighters Direction of Colombia has standardised its search and rescue dog work which is strongly based on the IRO's evaluation system.

Why did you become an IRO member?

Although our regulations for evaluating our performance have already been very demanding and accepted worldwide, we wanted to be sure

that our dogs were really trained according to international standards. So we decided to join the IRO.

How many search and rescue dogs are deployed on behalf of RESCATE K-SAR?

Thanks to the fact that dogs from different entities such as the Firefighters, the Colombian Red Cross, the National Army and other organisations have been evaluated and certified at this time, more than 20 teams are being deployed in various emergencies inside and outside the country.

How many missions per year do you take part in?

Each year we attend an average of five to six emergencies. In most cases we are searching for peop-

”

We definitely made a great leap forward.

“



le who got lost in forests. Also the consequences of mudslides require our attention, but here the possibility of finding people alive is extremely low. We also have to mention that our region is of high seismic activity and that earthquakes occur from time to time. So we have to be prepared for those cases, too.

What is your focus - area search, tracking, rubble search or avalanche - and why?

Colombia and the Andean area of Latin America are in a zone that has historically been affected by strong

earthquakes. This is the reason why earthquakes are the main concern of our search and rescue teams. During my years as an active dog handler, I could support the search work after two strong earthquakes - one in Colombia and one in Haiti.

How does your organisation and country benefit from integrating IRO standards?

We definitely made a great leap forward. The membership helps us to work harder on aspects we had not considered as important as they should be in the training of our dogs.

Now we are familiar with the work of peer teams in other countries as we have got an insight into how teams are working worldwide. This enabled us to use those experiences to our benefit.

What has changed or improved for you by becoming a member of IRO?

Many things, but there is still the big problem to prematurely think that we are already doing our search dog work well enough and therefore, there is no need to exchange with other experts and organisations.

Joining the IRO especially confirmed our need for exchange with other experts. Training search dogs implies being openminded to discover other forms of work and to apply the styles which work for you.

How do you envisage the future collaboration with the IRO?

I think we are already traveling the path we wanted with the IRO. In Colombia the evaluation is being unified step by step, regardless of the way dogs are trained, and if we add that the expectation is not only to intervene in local emergencies, but to help in the major disasters that may occur in the region, the contact with the IRO also helps us to know and be familiar with the way in which these types of interventions are handled.

Which mistake should not be made when training a rescue dog?

What I usually recommend to people who are interested in joining my group is to be well informed about this activity, and that only when they have realized all that is involved, take the step to acquire a dog and start training. Very often I watch people who already have a dog, many times of breeds that have not shown to be ideal for this work, and come with a lot of enthusiasm, convinced that the results will arrive quickly and without much effort and soon they are disappointed and stop. Sometimes they even have to find a new home for the dog, because they did not even comprehend what it means to be responsible for this companion.

What advice can you give to people who would like to become a rescue dog handler?

That this is definitely an activity that demands commitment, patience, dedication, love, a lot of time and above all, a lot of professionalism, but that also gives great satisfaction, not only from working with a magnificent being as is the dog, but from the contact with people from all over the world who share the same interest, in addition to the possibility of being able to help in situations in which very few people would like to be involved.

IRO Snap shot: Francisco Gomez

Dogs:

Five in 25 active years

Place of residence:

In the city of Bogotá, capital of Colombia.

Marital status:

Married

Occupation:

Advisor in prevention and attention of emergencies in many companies and volunteer firefighter.

Which dog breeds have you already handled?

One mixed, a Labrador Retriever, a Golden Retriever and two Border Collies.

Which disciplines have you trained with your dogs?

Rubble and Area

Is there any particular dog you would like to mention?

Banzai was my first Border Collie and he died just a short time ago. He was my partner for a long time, with whom I achieved the highest number of certifications, as well as missions in real emergencies. He was a great teacher and my unconditional companion for thirteen years.

What has been your best experience as a rescue dog handler?

The access to experiences, people and places that in my career as an Industrial Designer, I could never have accessed.