



# Reaching the summit

**Chief Superintendent Catalin Dragota, Director of the Directorate for Combating Organised Crime, and Detective Chief Inspector Dorin Grosu, Chief of Strategic Materials and NBC Unit within the Romanian Police, tell Gwyn Winfield about their CBRN capability**

Someone is doing something right in Romania. This is a country which has the world's largest secular Muslim state on its borders; it is, by the admission of its own Defence State Secretary (see P.10), facing an arc of instability across the Black Sea, and it has the ever-troublesome Balkans on its left flank. Yet there are no home-grown fundamentalist Muslim groups trying to bring down this Nato country that has soldiers in Iraq, and non-religious terrorist groups are also rare (though there are suspicions some PKK cells are operating in the territory). Romania also handled the Nato Summit in April, including the arrival of Russian President Putin; there were no attacks and neither were there the large-scale demonstrations that are a feature of other Summits and G8s – which is even more surprising when you consider it is both easy and cheap to reach Bucharest. Clearly someone is doing something right.

The right stuff  
Neither Chief Superintendent Dragota nor Chief Inspector Grosu can tell me what the magic formula is, however,

though they can elaborate on their strong CBRN capability. Director Dragota explained. "In a CBRN incident, the police force has the role of the first responder, especially where there is information about the presence, or suspicions of, CBRN agents, or other precursors for WMD," he said. "Following a direct alert or a request from Special Forces – the Anti-terrorist Brigade, Police Bomb Squad, Inspectorate of Emergency Situations, etc – the special Hazmat unit from the Directorate for Combating Organised Crime responds to the crime scene and performs monitoring, detection, identification, sampling and crime scene investigation.

"The unit is called the Strategic Materials and NBC Service, and is composed of specialist investigative officers who are also trained to use PPE, detectors and monitors and to sample contaminated areas. Improvised devices are dealt with by other elements of the police forces (the Bomb Squad) or the Anti-terrorist Brigade from Romanian Intelligence Service. In terms of IEDs with CBRN agents, the Strategic Materials and NBC Service, along with

the bomb squad, perform their actions following a standard operating procedure (SOP) approved by the Chief of Police."

Yet just having a unit is no guarantee of success; response time, size of unit, capability and training all have a major influence on how competent the unit might be. There is a great deal of talk in Western Europe and the US about being able to operate in the "Golden Hour" – the first stage of the incident before it balloons out of all proportion. How do the Romanian's feel that they fit into this timeframe? "In Bucharest, our immediate incident response time is 60 minutes," said Chief Inspector Grosu. "I have the equipment and cars ready at Police HQ and there is a system ensuring the permanence of command over the despatch. I also have three or four experts permanently in Bucharest who cannot leave the city while they are in this kind of service. So I have experts 24-7 to answer an incident and the capability to put those experts at the crime scene within 60 minutes. For incident response, everything, such as monitors and sampling, has been organised as a first

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responder would. There are one or two cars with detectors and the minimum PPE included, and they will answer a call and assess the crime scene. Then, if there is something on-site, the second level response including decon, a cordon – the normal shooting match – would take up to an additional 3-4 hours, depending on where the officers are. These people are investigators working at the Directorate for Combating Organised Crime and on normal times we are working with prosecutors and performing crime scene investigation in these sports of crimes."

Chief Inspector Grosu explained the history of the unit. "In the 1990s, after the Communist regime, there was a lack of investigators in this field – first it was with the bomb squad, then our equivalent of the ATF, then it bounced between the two. Then there were some incidents – you can find out about them in the IAEA database – with criminals trafficking Uranium pellets, radiological contamination, orphaned sources, etc, so there was a need for a specialised unit to undertake criminal investigation related to NBC traffic. Then there was a project between the Romanian Police and FBI – which provided help, equipment and expertise – and they wondered how we could do it.

"They moved the capability into the Directorate for Combating Organised Crime in 2001, because all the punishment for trafficking in strategic materials, or using CBRN agents against the population, are crimes that are directly under the Prosecutors' responsibility, and the Organised Crime Unit works directly with the Prosecutors from the General Prosecutors Office – like the FBI do. From 2001 it developed into a fully grown unit that can do intervention, monitoring and detection, both in Bucharest and at strategic points. We identified protocols and action plans with friends in Special Forces units and developed a national plan."

## Getting around

The one thing about Bucharest that becomes apparent as soon as you leave the airport is that it takes at least an hour to get anywhere – the traffic is terrible. Even assuming the sirens and lights have the desired effect on the near-parked

traffic as they should, it is not too cynical to see any response taking well over the hour (much like the trip from the airport). Chief Inspector Grosu laughed: "You should have said – I could have given you a lift! We go fast and strong. As well as our normal response cars we also have our special vehicles – a special detection car designed through a research project. Since the unit is inside the Police, and that is inside the Ministry of the Interior and Administration Reform, which is composed of the Inspectorate of Emergency Situations, (Civil Protection), the Inspectorate of Gendarmerie, Border Police and Aviation – so I can have access to assets that are not Romanian police assets, such as boats and helicopters, and I can also have access to the MoD's assets, with whom we have direct co-operation. So, as well as MoD helicopters, the Ministry of Interior Administration Reform have their emergency helicopter – that is available 24/7, but the fastest answer in Bucharest would be by marked police car."

The special vehicle is a relatively new product, and is designed and built in Romania – albeit with international detectors. Chief Inspector Grosu explained. "Inside each national institute we have the opportunity to receive some funds for research," he said. "We had the opportunity to propose a research project to design a vehicle for this role – we put on paper what we would like to have from an intervention vehicle, not only for police investigators but also as a CBRN intervention team. So the paper went to the Ministry of Research which provided the money and expertise, and the National Institute made it. It has a container for radioactive substances, a glovebox for other hazardous substances and our equipment on special shelves – emergency lights and comms, etc. It is already operational – we took it to the Nato exercise in Croatia in 2007, where we had more than three mission a day with it. Some of them were decon, some rescue, some were sampling, and we did ok. We got a positive mark!"

As mentioned earlier, the Summit was as a quiet affair – no attacks, foiled attacks or even angry massed crowds of placard wavers. It wasn't planned that way, unsurprisingly; because so many of the Romanian agencies are plugged into

each other there was a mass of exercises and preparation during the run-up to the Summit. Equally, once the Summit started, there were regular CBRN sweeps with mobile monitoring units cruising the route from the airport to the Palace and other sensitive areas. So what were the lessons learned and the examples of good agency interaction? "It is so hard to say that you had real lessons when you didn't have a CBRN incident," said Chief Inspector Grosu. "We worked hard preventively to monitor areas, regardless of the threat. For radiological detection we did buildings roads and people – all needed to be scanned and monitored. We worked closely with the MoD, Emergency Situation Department, and we did it for real – all the instruments worked, the bottles were filled, everyone was alert and we were ready.

"We had a very successful experience, worked together and closed a nice chapter in co-ordination of the agencies. Any lessons were the same as everyone suffers – communication glitches, not having exactly the same procedures, not having the same kit, or equipment readings in different languages or measurement units. So we had some different issues in the command centre as to how to report an integrated picture – but nothing big or insurmountable."

In terms of the conference in September ([www.cbrnworld.com](http://www.cbrnworld.com)) is there anything that the Bucharest Police are looking forward to seeing? Chief Superintendent Dragota admitted there was. "We are interested in radiological dispersal device (RDD) reaction – the intervention procedures and equipment," he said. "Also, any new improvements in on-site biological procedures – things such as advanced instruments, rapid tests, air sampling and also forensic sampling. Finally, anything that could offer more compact decontamination capabilities would be welcome." With speakers on decontamination, biological detection and the Litvienko murder, CBRNe Convergence will offer the Police a range of experience, but clearly with a new Scene Survey vehicle and a summit under the belt (as well as being able to keep the genie of home-grown terrorists bottled up), the Romanian Police will be able to repay in kind.

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