



## The Ukrainian Deployment - Week One



We have just completed our first week in Ukraine, where we worked alongside the State Emergency Services (SES) to augment their K9 Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) capabilities. During the initial week, we met the team we will be deploying with and trained with the SES at their state-of-the-art facility. We were warmly welcomed, and it was great to share knowledge with such an experienced team and to benchmark ourselves against international standards.

We were invited again to train with the SES USAR team, who are also International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) certified. We began by discussing the training and what our dogs are trained to do.

The USAR team are live-find dogs, while our dogs are dual-purpose. We had a productive conversation about the problem of a dog being more attracted to HR odor than a live person and the fear of the dog alerting on HR instead of a live person.

We explained how Chaos is trained on separate commands for each search and will only alert on the one she has been instructed to find. It was an informative day full of sharing and knowledge transfer. We went outside into the freezing -5 degrees to work with Chaos first.

**Image 1** James Smart (second from left) with Chaos and Kerrin Kruger was pictured with the SES USAR team and their K9s at the training facility.

We put human remains odour (HR) and a live person into the search area, gave Chaos the command for live, and off she went. She acknowledged the HR but went straight to the live person and alerted us. Then we sent her back in on the HR command. She remembered the HR location, went straight to it, and alerted the team.

During the next training exercise, one of the USAR handlers challenged Chaos by hiding the next HR and using a different live person for the rescue. The goal was to test Chaos's ability to locate the scent despite its unfamiliarity. Chaos passed both tests successfully, demonstrating her determination and exceptional skills as a search, rescue, and recovery K9.

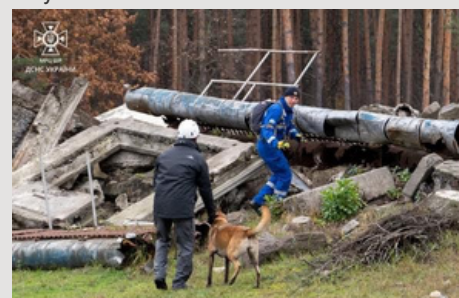
By this point, we were all cold to the bone, so we went back inside for more discussion and coffee. It was remarkable that although we spoke two languages, the dog and training talk bridged the gap, and we could understand each other perfectly. We then went back outside for more training with their dogs and further knowledge-sharing. Our new friends have tremendous knowledge, one being a Search and Rescue (SAR) world champion under the International Rescue Dog Organisation (IRO) and leading the Ukraine team to third place, while the other placed fifth. It was an honor to have this time with such experienced handlers.

Finally, we ended the day by exchanging patches and souvenirs with big smiles and handshakes, and we will wait until next week or the next deployment when we will meet again.

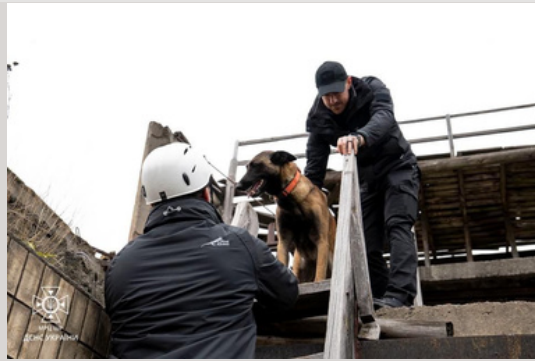
Being isolated in SA can sometimes make us wonder if we measure up to the rest of the world, but after this experience, we know we do.

Building a solid and reliable team that is always prepared to take action is crucial. Our team is on standby 24/7, but fortunately, we have not been called out for deployment in our first week. We are grateful for this since a call-out would signify that someone's world has been shattered.

We believe that one should never sit around doing nothing, and there is always something to learn. Therefore, we train ourselves to be ready for deployment not only in Ukraine but also in different environments and circumstances. Different tactics could be the key to success in various situations, and we want to be prepared for any challenge that comes our way.



Your generous donation is making a difference! By supporting Smart-Tac K9 Search Rescue and Recovery, you enable us to help civilians affected by natural disasters, wars, or humanitarian crises. Your donation is critical in allowing us to train our team and be ready to serve those in need. You have the power to change lives and positively impact our world. We appreciate your support!



**Image 2-3** The second round with Chaos and knowledge sharing occurs between the teams.

**Image 4** Patches and souvenirs received from the SES USAR.



**Image 5 (Above)**  
Chaos - Smart Tac K9 Search, Rescue & Recovery's First Lady.

**Image 6-7 (Right)**  
We have prepared all the necessary equipment in the 'ready room' for a rapid deployment.

