

Iceland withdraws from co-operation with Norway on purchase of rescue helicopters

Icelandic authorities have decided to end the co-operation as a consequence of great restrictions on public expenditures in Iceland. New rescue helicopters involve large investment requirements which the Icelandic government cannot guarantee in the coming years. Icelandic authorities will instead enter into a leasing agreement for two helicopters in addition to what Iceland already possesses, in order to ensure that three rescue helicopters are available for the Icelandic Coast Guard.

On 30 November 2007, the Norwegian and Icelandic justice ministers signed a co-operation agreement on the purchase of new long-range rescue helicopters for Iceland. From the time the agreement was signed, the two countries have jointly prepared for the purchase of one new rescue helicopter for Iceland with estimated delivery in 2018-2020 and with an option for another two.

The co-operation between Iceland and Norway has been genuine and good, and Norwegian authorities have expressed their understanding for the position Iceland is in and the decision Icelandic authorities have taken to cancel the co-operation agreement. The Icelandic Minister of the Interior has sent the Norwegian Minister of Justice a formal letter in which the co-operation agreement is terminated. It is not expected that the decision will affect or delay the Norwegian procurement process.

The ministers also agree that cancellation of this co-operation on purchase of rescue helicopters does not affect the countries' declaration of co-operation on security and defence matters that was signed on 26 April 2007.