



CLIENT STORY



International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian organization, providing assistance without discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions.

«Only those who
are networked can
help globally.»

Hugh Peterken, Head of Information
Systems Department, IFRC

«We work under a range of difficult circumstances which may be of a financial, personnel or environmental nature. This means that we must be able to **rely on communication**. And we can.»

Hugh Peterken, Head of Information Systems Department, IFRC

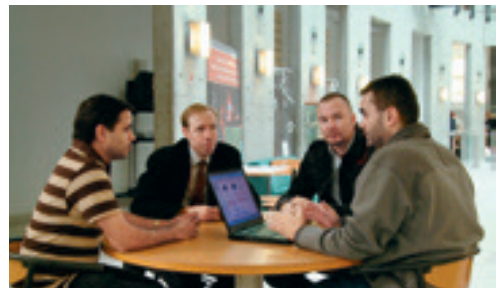
Global communication required

The IFRC has its headquarters in Geneva and seven key regional centers, located in Senegal, Malaysia, Panama, South Africa, Kenya and Hungary. A regional hub in the Middle East is in the process of being finalized. The regional centers support both the National Societies, and the IFRC offices located where the humanitarian need is greatest. The IFRC pays particular attention to ensure that the donor funds it receives contribute to a consistently high service quality. The regional centers must be able to rely on secure communication to Geneva, but must also have cost effective access to National Societies and IFRC offices in their region.

The comprehensive network of National Societies, covering almost every country in the world, is the Federation's unique strength. The IFRC facilitates cooperation between the National Societies in order to increase their capacity for helping those in need. Consequently, for the IFRC, information exchange and effective communication is of paramount importance. A key requirement on the IFRC is to react and mobilize resources that can assist in any disaster. These resources can be local volunteers in the affected communities or international specialists mobilized from distant countries. The IFRC is able to coordinate communication at the community and international levels, and thus perform its vital work, only thanks to the use of new, innovative technologies. Hugh Peterken, Head of the Information Systems Department at the IFRC, expresses it briefly and precisely: «Communication is the key to coping with disasters. And in our case, of course, communication must be possible worldwide.»

Founded in 1919, the International Federation comprises 186 member Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, a secretariat in Geneva and more than 60 delegations strategically located to support activities around the world. The Federation carries out relief operations to assist victims of disasters, and combines this with development work to strengthen the capacities of its member National Societies. The Federation's work focuses on four core areas: promoting humanitarian values, disaster response, disaster preparedness, and health and community care.

www.ifrc.org



Complicated requirements

The IFRC operates under difficult conditions. The nature of its work frequently involves adverse physical environments. There are often challenges in securing the necessary technical experts. And yet the IFRC communications systems have to meet the requirements of today's applications and processes. Working under such circumstances means that IFRC's employees rely heavily on the security and accessibility of the global communication infrastructure. Systems failures mean more than merely lost revenues; they are often life and death situations for the affected populations. To meet these requirements, the systems are constantly tested and modernized. That also means that the infrastructure must be continually monitored and that rapid responses are possible round the clock. This is precisely what Mission Control Security Services from Open Systems offer.

«We have to **innovate in technology** in order to provide systems that are cost effective but also provide for our specific needs working in the areas where we have to work.»

Hugh Peterken, Head of Information Systems Department, IFRC

Optimum cooperation

«We must introduce new technologies so that we can offer systems that are cost efficient, but at the same time that also take our special requirements into consideration in the particular areas where we are active,» says Hugh Peterken, referring to the use of Mission Control Security Services. In collaboration with Open systems, the IFRC succeeds in meeting the operational and security requirements with limited personnel and constrained financial resources. The IFRC's IT team has placed its trust in Mission Control Operation Center's experts, who guarantee the necessary reactions and support around the clock, throughout the year. A centralized infrastructure in Geneva allows the IFRC to deliver services securely to its international centers, whenever necessary. Team members throughout the world are informed in real time about relevant events with regard to the security and accessibility of the entire infrastructure. The cooperation with Open Systems permits the IFRC to manage communications costs and, at the same time, guarantees that the quality and accessibility requirements of the communication network are fulfilled.

Security through diverse connections

Each of the regional locations is linked to the network via two connections, namely a local internet access and an MPLS connection (Multiprotocol Label Switching). Redundant Mission Control Security Gateways guarantee permanent protection of the locations and direct the traffic to the appropriate link. Voice over IP and traffic to IFRC's Geneva data center is routed directly via the MPLS connection. Internet browsing and access to non-IFRC applications is all directed over the local internet connection. If the MPLS connection fails, Open Systems' security gateways seamlessly redirect the data traffic via VPN to the internet. According to Peterken, amongst other things, the system brings three major advantages to the IFRC. «Our IT specialists can concentrate on fulfilling employees' requirements and do not have to grapple with highly complex security and connection problems. In addition, the equipment in the seven centers is standardized, which reduces costs and effort. And what is probably the most important: In the end, we are in a position to offer our employees and volunteers the services they really need.»

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