Kosovo

Country Profile

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KOSOVO

HISTORY: Serbia and Montenegro are the only two remaining Yugoslavian republics. The federation began to dissolve in June 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. The Republic of Serbia has two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which are administratively a part of Serbia. Most of the population in Kosovo is Albanian.

LANDMINE AND UXO OVERVIEW: Information on the problem in Kosovo remains inconclusive. Yugoslav forces, paramilitary troops and KLA fighters have laid mines and booby traps. UXO litters the area. The border areas are the most affected. There are more than 10,000 known defensive mines on the borders, but only the Yugoslav army has information about the miles of land affected. A Senior Survey Officer for HALO Trust estimated that there are at least 500,000 mines in the ground and there may be 3,000 UXO. Ordnance can also be found in the surrounding waters. Under the terms of the Military Technical Agreement, NATO land forces are responsible for clearing roads and military locations. Serbian forces are responsible for supplying NATO with detailed records of all mines and UXO with the hope that Serbian forces will clear the Kosovo/Macedonia border areas. Serbian officers have been arriving in Pristina to implement these roles. The KLA does not have records of mine field planting. Many international mine clearance agencies believe that mine fields will be easier to locate than they were in Bosnia. The war in Kosovo was shorter than the one in Bosnia; the geographical area is smaller and there may be more information available regarding mine field location. In Kosovo, the most affected areas are roads, houses and schools, and forests. An estimated 50 percent of Kosovo’s livestock is dead or missing from the crisis.

Victims and Casualties: AP and AT mines are the most immediate obstacles for refugees returning home. In the first week ethnic Albanians began returning to Kosovo there were over 30 mines and UXO accidents. Some reports have stated that at least 27 people have been killed in 61 reported mine incidents just for the month of June 1999, according to NATO figures. This would put mine casualties as high as 11 per 100,000 people. About 20 percent of casualties have been KLA defenders. The World Health Organization in Pristina reported that between June 13, 1999 and July 12, 1999 there were as many as 170 deaths in Kosovo caused by mines and UXO. Despite the economic and social problems in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they have a developed legal and rehabilitation services for landmine victims. The Institute of Prosthetics in Belgrade is the only institution in FRY that can provide full treatment for landmine victims to include orthotics, rehabilitation, reintegration and prosthetic production. Landmine survivors during their rehabilitation process are provided skills training compatible with their disability.

Demining: Approximately 12 mine action organizations are now operating in Kosovo. These include CARE, NPA and MINETECH. Thirteen dog teams with 26 dogs have been deployed. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees has intensified demining work with priority areas including Pristina, Urosevac, Prizren, Suva Reka, Djakovica, Peć, Podujevo, Gnjilane and Glogovac. The VIJ has reported 425 protective mine fields to NATO. Where VIJ forces established headquarters often in houses and villages, nuisance mines and booby traps were placed for denying movement to KLA forces and terrorizing local populations. Many of these mines are trip-wired fragmentation mines. As part of the peace settlement the KLA were required to clear these mines and have reported completion of this activity. UXO dropped by NATO aircraft on VIJ positions with Glogovac Umbis to be the main cause of contamination. NATO dropped over 1,000 cluster bombs over Serbia, including Kosovo. Recent reports have indicated that the demining process is not continuing at the required rate and many claim this is because of the lack of technical means. The UNMAC estimates that it takes from 5 to 21 days to clear a cluster bomb strike after it has been located. Kosovo civilians are being forced to demine by international aid organizations and have cleared 400 mines.

War Reality Check: The ICRC concluded from its Psychosocial Needs Assessment that ethnic reconciliation cannot become realizable. “Kosovo isseep in pain, hatred and desire for revenge against the Serbs, Kosovars do not speak of reconciliation. Hatred is the accepted norm transferred from adults to youth.”

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MOLDOVA

HISTORY: Moldova is split into two main regions, Transnistria and Transnistria. Transnistria is in the eastern part of historic Moldova and is mostly Romanian while Transnistria is the land on the eastern bank of the Nistru River and is mostly Slavic (Ukrainians and Russians). After the Russo-Turkish War in 1806-12, Transnistria ceded to Russia. Finally on Aug. 27, 1991, Moldova declared its independence from the USSR and was recognized by the United States in December of that same year as they opened an embassy in its capital in 1992. A new constitution was adopted on July 28, 1994, which forever replaced the Soviet Union’s constitution and was a symbol of the complete break away from the USSR.

Landmines and UXO Overview: In August 1996, over 4,500 mines were destroyed in Transdniestra in the span of two months. Many believe that the disposal of these mines is very important for the safety of the people while the Republic says that the explosions are destroying the environment and will arrest and prosecute anyone who attempts to do so. Bessarabia was being used as a field for demining by international aid organizations and they have cleared 400 mines.

War Reality Check: Moldovan governmental officials as well as the army have been working over time to clear as much land as possible. During the 1991-1992 conflict in Transdniestra, Separatist and RussianCosacks mined much of the village’s fields and roads that surrounded the center of the war zone, leaving most people little access to their homes. After the War ended, over 371 acres still remained mined. Moldovan soldiers killed and Vladimir Munteanu, chief of the demining unit in the Staff of the Army, announced that countless vineyards and forests surrounding the villages of Cosina and Pogrebea needed to be demined. These two areas are of the greatest priority because there are no maps defining the position of the landmines for the deminers. Sgt. Boris Milhallov and Put. Ion Frunza were killed while searching for and demining the landmines in these regions. Other landmine incidents have continued to occur all throughout the country. Three other Moldovan soldiers were killed while 24 others were severely wounded during a peacekeeping operation in a security zone.

Vladimir Bodnar, Joint Control Commission Transnistrian co-chairman, believes that Moldova should not exclude the funds that are being negotiated with the United States. These funds are needed for demining all throughout Moldova but specifically in the region of the Pogrebea village. Bodnar does not want American forces and experts flooding into Moldova. He explains that he simply wants funding for specialized equipment and machinery to help with the overall demining process. His plan is for an indigenous team of local workers to be paid and funded by other countries, but have Moldavans working to preserve and restructure what is left of Moldova.

Victims and Medical Facilities: Thousands of people have been affected by the presence of landmines within this country as well as hundreds of other countries. The Moldova Foreign Ministry reported that in one incident from 1992 to 1993, two Moldovan peacekeepers were killed, eight injured and six severely wounded. Landmine explosions are not only devastating to a single individual. For every person harmed, there is a family in need and suffering due to the unfortunate explosion. The facilities in Moldova leave much to be desired, as there is a shortage of good doctors and necessary equipment. These facilities can offer the basic, minimum treatment, which leaves most to fend for themselves.

Contact Information: Not available