



HDC personnel receive instruction from Supervisor Izzatov Yakub before entering the minefield.
Photo courtesy of Akbarov Firuz.

Building Tajikistan's National Capacity

by Bahriniso Shamsieva [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe]

Headquartered in Vienna, Austria, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is an international organization of 57 member States. Currently conducting 16 field missions, OSCE develops confidence building measures in the field of security while providing conflict-prevention capabilities and a capacity-building process for participating nations. These mine action activities are supported by the OSCE Permanent Council and implemented by field missions via partnerships with the host countries.

Contamination in Tajikistan

The Republic of Tajikistan is contaminated by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) as a result of civil war from 1992 to 1997, insurgent incursions and mines laid along its borders. Tajikistan became a State Party to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) on 1 April 2000. Tajikistan made an explicit request to the OSCE Office in Tajikistan (OiT) to support the Tajikistan National Mine Action Programme in order to meet its obligations under Article 5 of the APMBC.

Supporting Demining Efforts in Tajikistan

In 2003, OSCE OiT began the first mine action program among all OSCE field missions. The mine action unit has a unique combination of capacities in the areas of program management, resource mobilization and management, and facilitation of cross-border cooperation efforts. The OSCE OiT mine action unit is developing and implementing projects on the national and regional levels.

In 2009, OSCE OiT shifted its approach from donor-funded management to self-implemented mine action projects that develop national capacities. Since then, it has contributed to the clearance of over 1.7 million sq m of mine/UXO-affected land and the destruction of over 9,580 mines and UXO through manual and mechanical clearance.

Element of Success: Partnerships

In the frame of the national program, OSCE OiT closely cooperates with the Republic of Tajikistan's Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC). With support from OSCE OiT, Tajikistan's



Quality Assurance Officer Kalandarov Saidnuriddin, and the head of HDC, Firuz Asadbekod, brief Afghan colleagues on humanitarian demining operations during a field visit to the minefield in the Vanj district, Tajikistan.

Photo courtesy of Akbarov Firuz.

MoD has become one of the key actors addressing mine/UXO threats in Tajikistan. The role of Tajikistan's MoD within the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme is significant and ranges from temporarily seconding military personnel to assisting international demining operators in establishing the MoD's own humanitarian demining capacities. In 2012, the Office for Military Cooperation and the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe donated a Mini MineWolf to the MoD to help the humanitarian demining program remove mines located on the Tajik-Afghan border. Tajikistan's MoD plans to use the Mini MineWolf in mine-contaminated areas within the country as well as abroad in peacekeeping operations.

TNMAC is the OSCE OiT counterpart in Tajikistan that facilitates implementation of humanitarian demining operations in close partnership with the MoD. In January 2014, TNMAC was established as a governmental institution with the responsibility to coordinate and regulate mine action-related activities in the country. It provides administrative services and day-to-day oversight of the MoD demining teams in the field on behalf of the Tajikistan office.

Since 2013, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) has been the main donor to the OSCE Mine Action Unit. Funding enables projects that support the government of Tajikistan in meeting its obligations under the

APMBC and assists Tajikistan in developing its humanitarian demining capacity. The project complements the national mine action strategy and annual working plans. The project aims to enhance the national humanitarian demining capacity of the OSCE counterpart, TNMAC, and increase the resources that can be deployed for mine clearance operations in the country.

Strategic Planning

With the support of OSCE OiT, the MoD's 2013–2016 strategic plan on humanitarian demining was developed to sustain Tajikistan's capacities and efforts to fulfil its responsibilities to the APMBC and train subdivisions to participate in on-going peacekeeping operations. The Humanitarian Demining Company (HDC), working within the organizational structure of the MoD, will enhance its own capacity and will operate closely with TNMAC and all mine action stakeholders in Tajikistan.

Additionally, the strategic plan is redefining the role of the MoD by mainstreaming its humanitarian demining capacities in support of building peace and stability through peacekeeping operations beyond 2017. The proposed exit strategy envisions the MoD deploying its humanitarian demining specialists and/or units of the HDC to peacekeeping operations and field missions abroad. Moreover, military and civilian personnel




A Mini MineWolf machine in the Panj district along the Tajik-Afghan border.
Photo courtesy of OSCE/Azamjon Salohov.

who are engaged in mine action and are planning on taking part in U.N. peacekeeping operations in the region will benefit.

Conclusion

Through its mine action unit, OSCE OiT continues to improve public security and build confidence at the national and regional levels. By coordinating tasks among mine action stakeholders in Tajikistan, OSCE OiT supports the government as it fulfills its obligations under Article 5 of the APMBC by April 2020. It is also building a platform for Tajikistan to cooperate with the relevant government institutions and authorities, regional counterparts, as well as the international mine action community and its donors.

After meeting the APMBC deadline, the government of Tajikistan will have a professional humanitarian demining capacity that works in accordance with all international standards and can be deployed to address any residual risk of explosive contamination that may arise. Tajikistan has also demonstrated that its HDC is prepared and equipped to participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations as humanitarian mine action specialists. This would reinforce Tajikistan's full membership in the international community, fostering self-respect and dignity alongside the understanding and adoption of wide-ranging humanitarian principles.

The OSCE mine action unit facilitates the legislative framework for humanitarian mine action in Tajikistan for its capacity development with a long-term, self-sustainable system. OSCE OiT will continue to support Tajikistan in addressing its mine/UXO problem and will continue to emphasize national capacity building. 

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