August 2003

U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Programs in the Balkans and Caucasus

Whitney Tolliver

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol7/iss2/1

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Focus

Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Programs in the Balkans and Caucasus

Since the establishment of the Republic of Slovenia's International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance (ITF) in 1998, the United States has provided more than $52 million (U.S.) in humanitarian demining assistance to the countries in southeast Europe. This includes the recent expansion of funding assistance to countries in the Caucasus region. Together, the United States, the ITF, the mine-affected countries in the region and an impressive number of donors have demonstrated the success of regional cooperation.

Introduction

The demise of the former Soviet Empire brought about a great number of changes for the people of the Caucasus and Balkan regions. As Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia asserted their independence from the Soviet Union, the Socialistic Federal Republic of Yugoslavia separated into five separate countries: Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovenia. Ethnic and political conflicts plagued some of these transitions, erupting into violence and leaving behind millions of landmines and pieces of UXO.

The U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program has provided humanitarian mine action assistance to Albania, BiH, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, beginning with BiH in 1995. The United States has also expanded its funding to Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus region and hopes to begin assistance to Georgia in the near future. In 1998, the U.S. Congress appropriated $20 million to support the mine action activities in the Balkan and Caucasus. The United States continues to work hard to help restore the safety and livelihood of the people of these regions.

Progress in the Balkan Region

Albania

Albania is largely an agricultural nation. Therefore, the threat of mines and UXO hinders the population's livelihood. The United States has assisted Albania's effort to rid the country of landmines through donations to the ITF. In 2002, the United States joined with the European Union and with the governments of Switzerland and Denmark to channel funds through the ITF to support two projects in Albania. The Swiss Federation for Mine Clearance implemented the first project, which began in April 2002. By the end of November, their efforts succeeded in clearing 104,576 square meters of land and extracting 480 pieces of UXO and 491 mines.

In September 2002, DanChurch Aid (DCA) began three months of operation with the use of four teams to remove 1,588 mines and clear 24,136 square meters of land. An additional six million square meters were surveyed and released back to the local population.

In addition to cleanup efforts, U.S. funds enabled the ITF to arrange for the rehabilitation of 21 Albanian mine victims at the Institute for Rehabilitation of Slovenia. An additional 30 victims will receive care at the Institute before the end of 2003.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

There are 2,130 square kilometers of suspected mine-contaminated land in BiH, the equivalent of 526,334 acres. This equals approximately 4.2 percent of the country's total area. Almost 40 million square meters of land have been cleared as far. In 2002, with funds from a number of donors, the ITF awarded 118 demining contracts to cover a total of 3.4 million square meters and 2.8 million square meters were cleared in 2002, with eight demining companies yet to conclude operations in 2003. New regulations in BiH allowed the ITF's progress for a time and clearance rates were below the target of 3.5 million square meters. Activities have since picked up and the deminers have uncovered 1,047 mines and 547 pieces of UXO.

In addition to training, surveying and physical mine clearance, the United States has also financed the development of a locally manufactured remote-controlled mini-mine field vault, and in a funding partnership with U.S. winemakers and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Roots of Peace, has made donations to the ITF for the clearance of mines in wine producing regions of Croatia. Both of these projects have significant economic as well as humanitarian benefits. The mini-flail has proven to be highly successful in Croatia and has potential for export to other mine-affected countries while the clearance of the wine producing regions of Croatia contributes to the rehabilitation of the Croatian wine industry.

Macedonia

Landmines and UXO contaminate 21 square kilometers of Macedonian land along the Kosovo border. U.S. support through the ITF began in 2001. By July 4, 2002, more than 3.5 million square meters of land had been cleared, including more than 3,000 houses and buildings.

Croatia

U.S. humanitarian demining assistance to Croatia began in 1998 and to date totals over $11,435,000. All but $800,000 of which has been provided through the ITF. The U.S.-funded demining projects have returned nearly 3.64 million square meters of land to safe use and have removed over 2,200 mines and 880 pieces of UXO. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, the United States contributed $5.6 million of the money given to the ITF to Croatia. As a result, 83 different demining projects were completed and more than 6.35 million square meters of land were cleared—which was more than planned.

In addition to training, surveying and physical mine clearance, the United States has also financed the development of a locally manufactured remote-controlled mini-mine field vault, and in a funding partnership with U.S. winemakers and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Roots of Peace, has made donations to the ITF for the clearance of mines in wine producing regions of Croatia. Both of these projects have significant economic as well as humanitarian benefits. The mini-flail has proven to be highly successful in Croatia and has potential for export to other mine-affected countries while the clearance of the wine producing regions of Croatia contributes to the rehabilitation of the Croatian wine industry.

Serbia and Montenegro

Recently, the United States, joining with other donors, the ITF, and the government of Serbia and Montenegro, helped to establish the Mine Action Center (MAC) Belgrade, which commenced activities on February 14, 2002. Two months later, in April 2002, a group of American and Slovenian EOD experts-assisted Serbian survey teams in identifying and locating landmines and pieces of UXO. They defined four regions with priority status: the Belgrade city center, Barajinka, Zvezdara and Avala. Landmine disposal in these areas began in the beginning of 2003.

MAC Belgrade initiative another general technical survey from August 8 to September 15, 2002, in the northern section of the border between Serbia and Montenegro and Croatia. Both Serbian and Croatian experts worked on this six-week project and estimated that landmines affect approximately 10 square kilometers of land. At the end of 2002, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) funded an ITF contract for RAC for the Nis airport and the NGO Stop Mines. The operations began in Spring 2003.

In Montenegro, the Regional Center for Underwater Demining (RCUD) was officially established on September 24, 2002 in Bijela. The center began the first part of the underwater EOD Training at the Training Center for Civil Protection and disaster relief in September. In Slovenia, the second phase of training was...
completed at RCUD in Belja. Ten div­ ing experts from RH, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro attended the course. Although the province of Kosovo was deemed "impact free" at the end of 2001, there remains a residual problem with UXO, and UXO clearance efforts funded by the United States and other donors continue with Handicap International (HI) France monitoring the removal of land­ mines in the Kosovo region so far. A peace­ keeping mission also provided training on mine deployment and clearance techniques.

Since FY 1993, the United States has provided more than $21,545,000 in humanitarian demining assistance to the Caucasus region. This money has supported the training and equipping of deminers in all three countries, including more than 100 deminers in Azerbaijan, 97 in Armenia and 45 in Georgia. The United States has also provided training on MRE, emergency medical treatment, communications and special courses of instruction for survey personnel.

Azerbaijan

During the 1988–1994 conflict between Azerbaijanis and Armenians, Azerbaijan occupied nearly 20 percent of Azerbaijan's territory. As a result, the

Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) estimated that there were more than 60 million square meters of land are contaminated by mines and UXO, including 64 villages in 11 districts—specifically in the Naxcivan and Karabakh regions.

The United States has supported ANAMA since 2000, contributing over $60 million to the demining effort. Mine clearance began in the country in early 2001 with the deployment of a 27­ man team from the local NGO Relief International. ANAMA at this time, however, lacked adequate resources necessary to demonstrate the success and durability of its program and as a result, donor confidence decreased. In response, in 2002 the United States significantly increased funding to ANAMA to help bring stability and confidence to its mine action programs. With renewed support, Azerbaijan has expanded its mine detecting dog (MDD) capacity from six to 20 and has removed 13 AT­ mines, 34 AP mines and 939 pieces of UXO, which has cleared more than 1 million square meters of land in the Naxcivan and Ganzaboy regions.

Azerbaijan's landmine problem is still large and a significant amount of U.S. support through the next two years will be required. It is expected, however, that by FY 2005, Azerbaijan's mine action program will generate enough international donor support to allow the United States to reduce involvement in the country.

Armenia

Approximately 90,000 landmines contaminate 1,800–2,500 square kilometers of land in Armenia. The country's requested U.S. humanitarian demining assistance at the end of 1999 and in March 2002, the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center opened and became one of the fastest in­operation indigenous capacity demining programs. During the five months subsequent to its opening, the DOS and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) provided over $12 million in support to the Armenian Humanitarian Awareness and Information Management sections, a survey team, an MDD section and a demining company. The Center began its first mine clearance operation in a neighborhood near Tavush in 2002.

The Armenian deminers surveyed and marked over 700,000 square meters of land, and cleared approximately 5,000 square meters of land that was heavily shelled during the country's internal conflict.

In FY 2003, the United States will provide nearly $5.5 million to continue the provision of training and resources to Armenia. U.S. support has been on a par with the EU, and the United States funds channeled through the ITF for management training conducted by Cranfield University. In February 2003, the United States, assisted by the Armenian Demining Cadre, began training a second demining company, another MDD section and four additional medical in Basic and Advance Trauma Life Support. The Center also received an Armed Personnel Carrier (BTR­60) mounted flat bed for demining and will soon begin training operators and mechanics. Armenia also recently completed five months of MRE training in the areas of photogrammetry, aerial survey and equipment. The Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center has progressed quickly and at a result, the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program aims to eventually reduce funding levels and place the country in the self­sustainment phase by the end of 2004.

Georgia

During the 1992–93 conflict between the Georgians and Abkhaz forces, an unknown number of AT­ mines and AP­ mines, all of Soviet origin, were laid across four regions of Abkhazia. Unfortunately, neither side kept accurate records of the maps during the conflict. HALO Trust estimates that there are 15,000–20,000 land­mines remaining in Georgia based on local patterns and depth of the minefields cleared in the country so far. A peace­keeping force removed some of the landmines immediately after the subsequent cease­fire, and there have been reports that the local population continue to use these areas. Unexploded ordnance was removed by groups of deminers who are difficult to estimate, however, as they did not record their clearance numbers and many local incident reports involving a total of 16 people, of which eight people were killed and eight seriously injured. Of the 16 reported incidents, 11 involved children. Up to mid June 2003, there have been reported incidents so far, of these three people have been killed and ten seriously injured, nine of these incidents involved children. Most of the incidents since 2002 have been due to the victims tampering with items of UXO, most commonly cluster bombs and grenades.

Clearance Since Transfer of Responsibilities

Since the transfer of responsibilities in 2001, the KPC EOD teams and HI have cleared the following areas of ordnance:

• 11 AT and AP mines
• 257 cluster munitions
• 33 items of UXO

Kosovo, After the UNMACC and Beyond, continued from page 38

• 344,195 square meters of land cleared by KFOR has continued to conduct EOD response tasks reported by members of the public and the police and have recovered a large number of items of UXO from all the Multi-National Brigade areas as follows:
  • 267 AT and AP mines
  • 340 cluster munitions
  • 5,861 items of UXO

Future Vision for Kosovo

In the future, the responsibility for UXO and mine clearance in Kosovo will be transferred from UNSMIK to the national authorities with the KPC EOD teams taking on the responsibility for EOD response when KFOR has downsized. The KPC EOD teams training and development is progressing to a point where it is hoped that by the end of 2004 the EOD management section will be able to hand over operational control of the day to day running of the EOD teams to the KPC Chief Engineer. It is hoped that these teams will work in close coordination with the remaining suspicious areas will have been surveyed and either declared free or removed, and their experience gained during the ejection of UXO will be passed to the EOD teams through hands­on experience.

Kosovo: After the UNMACC and Beyond,

according to an interview with Chief of EOD Management Section, Office of the KPC Coordinator, UNSMIK.

Steve Saunders
Chief of EOD Management Section
Office of the KPC Coordinator, UNSMIK
Tel: (387) 38 50460 (ext. 5358)
Fax: (387) 38 504604 (ext. 5359)
E-mail: saunders@unsmik.org

Contact Information
Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program in the Balkans and Caucasus

Progress in the Caucasus Region

Since FY 1993, the United States has provided more than $21,545,000 in humanitarian demining assistance to the Caucasus region. This money has supported the training and equipping of deminers in all three countries, including more than 100 deminers in Azerbaijan, 97 in Armenia and 45 in Georgia. The United States has also provided training on MRE, emergency medical treatment, communications and special courses of instruction for survey personnel.

Azerbaijan

During the 1988-1994 conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Azerbaijan occupied nearly 20 percent of Armenian territory. As a result, the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) estimated that over 60 million square meters of land are contaminated by mines and UXO, including 64 villages in 11 districts—mostly concentrated in the Nagorno-Karabakh regions. The United States has supported ANAMA since 2000, contributing over $6.7 million to the demining component. Mine clearance began in the country in early 2001 with the deployment of a 27-person team from the local NGO ReliefAzerbaijan. ANAMA at this time, however, lacked adequate resources necessary to demonstrate the success and durability of its program and as a result, donor confidence decreased. In response, in 2002 the United States significantly increased funding to ANAMA to help bring stability and confidence to its mine action operations. With renewed support, Azerbaijan has expanded its mine detection and dog (MDD) capacity from six to 20 and has removed 13 AT mines, 34 AP mines and 939 pieces of UXO, which has cleared more than 4 million square meters of land in the Jalilabad and Gencey regions.

Azerbaijan's landmine problem is still large and a significant amount of U.S. support throughout the next two years will be required. It is expected, however, that by FY 2005, Azerbaijan’s mine action program will generate enough international donor support to allow the United States to reduce involvement in the country.

Armenia

Approximately 90,000 landmines contaminate 1,800-2,500 square kilometers of land in Armenia. The country has requested U.S. humanitarian demining assistance at the end of 1999 and in March 2002, the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center opened and became one of the fastest inceptions to operations indigenous capacity demining programs. During the first 15 months of the program, the Azerbaijani and Armenian forces, an unknown number of AT mines and AP mines, all of Soviet origin, were laid across four regions of Azerbaijan. Unfortunately, there is not the kind of effective record keeping by the country's concerns that are required by the Centre for Landmine Awareness and Information Management sections, a survey team, an MDD section and a demining company. The Center began its first mine clearance operation in the city of Halabja in 2002.

The Armenian deminers surveyed and marked over 700,000 square meters of land, and cleared approximately 5,500 square meters of land in a village that was heavily shelled during the country's internal conflict. In FY 2003, the United States will provide nearly $7.5 million to continue the provision of training and resources to Armenia. U.S. support has been on a train, assess, train (TAT) model for the past three years. In FY 2004 U.S. funds channeled through the ITF for management training conducted by Cranfield University. In February 2003, the United States, assisted by the Armenian Demining Cadre, began training a second demining company, another MDD section and four additional medical teams in Basic and Advance Trauma Life Support. The Center also received an Armed Personnel Carrier (BTR-60) mounted flat for medical demining and will soon begin training operators and medics. Armenia also recently completed five months of MRE training in the areas of sampling, effects and analysis.

The Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center has progressed quickly and as a result, the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program aims to eventually reduce funding levels and place the country in the self-sustaining phase by the end of 2004.

Georgia

During the 1992-93 conflict between the Georgians and Abkhaz forces, an unknown number of AT mines and AP mines, all of Soviet origin, were laid across four regions of Abkhazia. Unfortunately, there is not the kind of sufficient record keeping by the country's concerns that are required by the Centre for Landmine Awareness and Information Management sections, a survey team, an MDD section and a demining company. The Center began its first mine clearance operation in the city of Halabja in 2002.

The Georgian deminers surveyed and marked over 700,000 square meters of land, and cleared approximately 5,500 square meters of land in a village that was heavily shelled during the country's internal conflict. In FY 2003, the United States will provide nearly $7.5 million to continue the provision of training and resources to Armenia. U.S. support has been on a train, assess, train (TAT) model for the past three years. In FY 2004 U.S. funds channeled through the ITF for management training conducted by Cranfield University. In February 2003, the United States, assisted by the Armenian Demining Cadre, began training a second demining company, another MDD section and four additional medical teams in Basic and Advance Trauma Life Support. The Center also received an Armed Personnel Carrier (BTR-60) mounted flat for medical demining and will soon begin training operators and medics. Armenia also recently completed five months of MRE training in the areas of sampling, effects and analysis.

The Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center has progressed quickly and as a result, the U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Program aims to eventually reduce funding levels and place the country in the self-sustaining phase by the end of 2004.

Kosovo, After the UNMACC and Beyond, continued from page 3

Future Vision for Kosovo

In the future, the responsibility for UXO and mine clearance in Kosovo will be transferred from UNMIK to the national authority with the KPC EOD teams taking on the responsibility for EOD response when KFOR has concluded. The KPC EOD teams training and development is progressing to a point where it is hoped that by the end of 2004 the EOD management section will be able to hand over operational control of the day to day running of the EOD teams to the KPC Chief Engineer. It is hoped that by the end of 2004 the day to day running of the EOD teams will have been reduced and other disciplined or reduced to EOD response tasks, such as MRE and public information messages.

Clearance Since Transfer of Responsibilities

Since the transfer of responsibilities in 2001, the KPC EOD teams and HI have cleared the following numbers of ordnance:

- 11 AT and AP mines
- 257 cluster munitions
- 33 items of UXO

- 344,192 square metres of land cleared
- KFOR has continued to conduct EOD response tasks reported by mem-

ber's of the public and the police and have

- 267 AT and AP mines
- 340 cluster munitions
- 5,861 items of UXO

Contact Information

Steve Saunders
Chief of EOD Management Section
Office of the KPC Coordinator,
UNMIK
Tel: 387 34 50404 (ext. 5358)
Fax: 387 34 50404 (ext 5359)
E-mail: saunders@un.org

Conclusion

Since the ITF establishment in 1998, the ITF, the United States, other donors, and the regions mine-affected countries have worked hard together to reduce and eliminate the horrible impact of landmines and UXO. The U.S.-led partnership with the ITF and the donor community will continue to demonstrate support for regional cooperation and will encourage similar partnerships in the future.