The Albanian Mine Action Programme

Jab Swart

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FOCUS

Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

The Albanian Mine Action Programme

The Albanian government, working in conjunction with various governments and organisations, is slowly working its way towards establishing a national mine action programme and, eventually, a mine-free Albania.

by Jab Swart, CTA, Albanian Mine Action Programme

The Mine Action Problem

The mine and UXO threat in northeastern Albania emanated from the Kosovo conflict. It extended across a 120-km border between Albania and Kosovo, from Shishtavec to the Montenegro border in the north, to up to 20 km inside Albania. After the Albanian Armed Forces' (AAFs) Level One Survey in 1999, 102 areas were identified, representing 15,250,000 m². The threat ranged from AP and AT mines to landmines, unexploded ordnance (UNXO), and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination. It is a weak point regarding integrated border management in southeast Europe. It is an economic threat to the infrastructure and development in Albania.

The Albanian forces and the Ministry of Interior are in charge of mine clearance. The Ministry of Interior, the police, and the Albanian Border and Criminal Police have been responsible for mine action since 1999. The Albanian Mine Action Programme (AMAP) is the most important mine action programme in the Balkans.

The Action Programme

The Albanian Mine Action Programme was established in October 1999. It includes the following:

1. A national mine action programme.
2. A national mine action strategy.
3. A national mine action plan.
4. A national mine action budget.
5. A national mine action training programme.
6. A national mine action awareness programme.
7. A national mine action monitoring programme.
8. A national mine action evaluation programme.
9. A national mine action research programme.
10. A national mine action communication programme.

The Action Programme has also had an impact on infrastructure development. In 2002, 88,379 m² had to be cleared by Danish Church Aid-Action by Churches Together (DCA-ACT) and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) for the construction of a natural road connection between Bajram Curri and Gjakova. The impact of mine contamination on the social environment should not be underestimated. Some water sources in northeast Albania are blocked by landmines.

Impact on Border Management

A grave consequence of mine contamination is the added difficulty of patrolling borders between Albania and Kosovo, where traffic and other crimes take place on a cross-border basis. Since the end of the Kosovo crisis, 13 police officers have already been wounded or killed by mines and UXOs while executing their duties.

At the same time, an operational body, the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE), was established to carry out a mine action programme under the direction of the AMAC. Its functions are:

1. Produce and maintain a mine action programme.
2. Coordinate, oversee and monitor all mine action activities that are in line with AMAC priorities.
3. Accredit and validate the quality of mine action management activities.
5. Monitor and report on the demining process.

Survey and mark mine-contaminated areas.

Policy, Strategy and Advocacy

A national workshop was held in June 2002, formulating a vision, mission, some priorities and a three-year plan. The conclusions are:

1. A visit for Albania free from mines and UXOs by 2010.
2. A mission to develop and implement a sustainable mine action programme in order to eliminate the threat of mines and UXOs in northeast Albania by 2005.
3. A visit for the Albanian Mine Action Programme to:
   • Create a legal framework and policy for mine action by 31 December 2003.
   • Implement mine action policy, the strategic plan and priorities for mine action by 31 December 2003.
   • Develop and implement a national mine action database by 31 August 2003.
   • Clear all of the high and medium-priority mine- and UXO-contaminated areas in southeastern Albania by the end of 2005.
Implement a strategy to raise awareness of the mine action issue in the northeastern border of Albania by 31 December 2003.

Establish the most serious mine victims (permanent disability) by 2005.

Establish a credible and sustainable national mine action capability by 2005.


In this policy, the priority levels will be based on the activities of AMAC formulation, to ratify a comprehensive mine action policy and to pass national legislation in terms of Article 9 of the Ottawa Treaty.

Capacity Building

A two-year UNDP capacity-building programme commenced in April 2002, funded for 18 months by UNDP, the International Training Fund (ITF) and the Department for International Development (DFID) to assist AMAC with the formulation of policy, strategy, a national mine action strategy. Assistance to AMAC entails the establishment of a sustainable framework capable of coordinating national mine action operations.

The UNDP employs two technical advisors, one chief technical advisor and an information advisor from the Swiss Federal Office for the Protection of the Environment and a National Mine Action advisor from UNMAS with experience and expertise in mine action. The advisor will provide advice on policy, strategy and legal frameworks. Priorities for mine action to achieve the mission were implemented. A fully functional AMAC was established with UNDP European Union (EU) and ITF assistance, including an intermediate Quality Management System (QMS) for each project.

The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMMSA) capacity building priorities for this year are to implement operations integration and conduct further in-service training of the QM Team on quality management system (QMS) and national quality training of the AMAC staff is also a high priority, including middle-management training of managers, exchange of managers with other MAGs and study tours to neighboring MAGs. It is expected to be affected to the effect of the impact and technical surveys of the eastern Albania, as well as with the monitoring of clearance and training standards.

Demining

DCA-ICT and the FSD have been deployed for demining since 2002, mostly with the U.S. State Department. They are used for mine clearance and technical surveys. With increased coordination and more efficient utilisation of demining assets, more than 7,000,000 m² of land was cleared through survey and clearance during 2002.

In 2003, the demining assets of FSD and DCA were expanded to three survey projects: high-maintenance demining teams, Boumaown mini-fallon and one mine detection dog team (MDT). With these resources, they are planning to complete more impact surveys (releasing a further 1,990,000 m²) and clear at least 350,000 additional m². The clearance of all contaminated areas in northeastern Albania will then be 61 percent complete (see Table 2).

Civilian casualties can avoid a more effective clearance of utility assets.

IMMSA

Table 2: Detailed Demining Planning 2003-2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clearable Area (m²)</td>
<td>12,920,000</td>
<td>15,210,000</td>
<td>16,252,000</td>
<td>44,384,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit Reduction (m²)</td>
<td>3,297,000</td>
<td>5,475,000</td>
<td>7,375,000</td>
<td>16,147,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Reductions (m²)</td>
<td>2,518,000</td>
<td>4,758,000</td>
<td>6,335,000</td>
<td>13,608,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Technical Survey

UNDP will implement a 21-month EU-funded technical survey project by August 2003. The aim of the Technical Survey Project is to accurately delineate all of the minefields and to develop a 1:5000 scale map of the minefield in northeastern Albania and thereby contribute to the overall mission of the Albanian Mine Action Programme of UNDP, UNMAS, and AMAC from mines and UXO by 2005.

A functional MSMA Cell was established in 2002 with ITF and Swiss support, and the database was populated with up-to-date mine action information. Albanian maps were geo-referenced in 2002 as part of the project. A new Information Management System (IMSMA) was implemented and MSMA was updated to Version three. The process was completed with the establishment of a national mine action organisation and the AMAC received a new agreement regarding information exchange. In the region ahead, efforts will be made to continue to improve the IMSMA and databases, management training and the formulation of internal standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Mine Risk Education (MRE)

Most of the communities directly affected by landmines and UXO were reached by the end of 2001, but people were still being killed and injured by mines and UXO during 2002.

The physical delineation of known mine- and UXO-contaminated territory along the Albania-Kosovo border was problematic due to:

- Constant threat of minefield marking posts.
- Difficulty to distinguish the minefield and mined areas.

A minefield marking project was carried out with the assistance of the Norwegian Mine Action Centre, the Norwegian Red Cross and the Swiss Foundation for Demining. MREs have participated in MRE activities, 82.0 percent can correctly describe a mine, as opposed to only 58.2 percent of those who had not participated in such activities.

- The existence of mines in and around these villages continues to have a significant impact, especially in terms of economic activity. A total of 69.9 percent of those surveyed stated a need to enter mine-affected areas. Of the reasons given, 44.2 percent wanted a safe way to go to work, 24.5 percent needed more land to graze animals, 11.7 percent needed more land to collect firewood, 4.2 percent wanted to collect animal feed, 3.3 percent wanted the ability to travel to a market to sell products, and lastly, 1.7 percent needed a way cleared so they could get to school.

- Sixty-two percent of those who reported that they entered mined areas had not received MRE.

- Taking into account the fact that only 58.2 percent of those who have not participated in MRE activities can carry out anti-mining awareness campaigns and work to ensure that 80.2 percent of those who have, there is still room for targeted MRE activities in villages, rural and urban areas.

- The MRE strategy was therefore revised in the fall of 2002. The framework of this strategy included:

1. A vision to prevent all mine and UXO incidents in northeastern Albania.
2. A mission for AMAC/AMAE to direct and coordinate the implementation of an MRE Strategy in northeastern Albania in such an integral part of the AMP in order to eventually reach all targeted groups by 2005.
3. A goal to:

   - AMAE/AMAC to direct and coordinate the implementation of the MRE Strategy by 31 October 2005.
   - Implementing Partners (IPs) to reach all targeted groups in northeastern Albania in collaboration with demining companies, communities and national/ local authorities by 2005.

   - All IPs to ensure a sustainable national MRE Programme through 2005.

Victim Assistance

The Tirana Orthopaedic Centre was upgraded and is operated by the Albanian government with support from the EU and Handicap International (HI). Fourteen prosthetists terrified from the centre trained with Italian and TFP support. With ICRC assistance, 147 victims were treated and prosthe-
In the Name of Humanity

A recent study of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) mine action programme demonstrated the effective use of donations from political, financial and productivity perspectives. The premise of the study was that similar tasks, undertaken by a similar work force, with similar training and equipment, in the same time period, should be achieved with comparable timeframes and costs. The study concluded that the BiH programme from the past seven years are discussed below.

by Eddie Banks, Project Director, E and I

Introduction

The continued suffering inflicted by landmines and UXO must be alleviated in the shortest possible time period; indeed, the international community acknowledges that obligation. The Ottawa Treaty, Dayton Peace Agreement and the London and Bonn Peace Implementation Conferences all affirmed the legal obligations addressing mine action that BiH has formally agreed to. BiH was the first Balkan country to destroy its entire stockpile of AP mines, with the exception of a few mines for training and research and development (R&D), allowed within the terms of the Ottawa Convention.

Underpinning the obligation to eliminate landmines is the financial support provided by the donor community to aid in the destruction and clearing of landmines and APC mines.

Rehabilitation Institute with IFT assistance. Those victims were assisted by the ICRC to set up small enterprises. Several laws now afford the disabled special privileges. The Albanian monthly disability pension was recently increased. A broad integrated victim assistance strategy was adopted in Albania. The goal of this strategy is to build a sustainable Albanian mine action capacity by 2005. In June 2002, the EU reached a consensus to fund mine action in Albania "as far as possible" through the CARDs programme (Integrated Border Management Project). Of the $5.08 million budget for 2003, $4.49 million has already been funded, leaving a shortfall of $0.58 million. The total budget for mine action in Albania until 2005 will be around $3.9 million per annum.

Conclusions

There is a significant mine and UXO threat in northwestern Albania, but there is also an increased awareness and commitment to solving the problem. The year 2002 was the turning point for the Albania mine action programme, and 2003 will be critical. Albania can now set the pace in the region on issues such as stockpile destruction. The focus this year will be on accurately determining the extent of the mine and UXO problem and initiating the transition strategy to realise the strategic objective of making Albania free from mines and UXO by 2005.

Activity

The Albanian Mine Action Programme (UNDP Albania)

The main goal of victim assistance planning from 2003 is to establish an Albanian capacity by 2005. (see table 3).

Transition Strategy

The Albanian government will assume full responsibility of its mine action programme by the end of 2005. After 2005, there will be a reduced mine action programme allowing for a leaner structure with only low-impact areas left to demine. An Albanian capacity for demining and victim assistance will be fully established by 2005; the MRT and other agencies will mostly have been reached, and a solid resource mobilisation base will have been established.

Funding

Previous and current donors include the UNDP, EU, DFID, EITF, ICRC, and the Canadian, Danish, German, Swiss, Turkish and U.S. governments. In June 2002, the EU reached a consensus to fund mine action in Albania "as far as possible" through the CARDs programme (Integrated Border Management Project). Of the $5.08 million budget for 2003, $4.49 million has already been funded, leaving a shortfall of $0.58 million. The total budget for mine action in Albania until 2005 will be around $3.9 million per annum.

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