

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction

Volume 17
Issue 3 *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*

Article 20

October 2013

Faces of Mine Action: OSCE's Azamjon Salokhov

CISR JOURNAL

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 [Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#), and the [Peace and Conflict Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

JOURNAL, CISR (2013) "Faces of Mine Action: OSCE's Azamjon Salokhov," *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* : Vol. 17 : Iss. 3 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol17/iss3/20>

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.



Faces of Mine Action: OSCE's Azamjon Salokhov

With almost 10 years of mine action experience, Azamjon Salokhov has an impressive resume in mine risk education and developing mine action programs in his home country of Tajikistan. Mine contamination in Tajikistan stems from a civil war in 1992 and border-defense operations conducted by the Russian and Uzbekistani militaries in the early 2000s.¹ The three largest contaminated areas in Tajikistan are the Direct Rule districts, Sughd region and the Tajik-Afghan border.² Tajikistan is focused on clearing the remaining 9.3 million sq m (3.59 sq mi) of land contaminated with mines by 2020 to meet its extended land clearance deadline for the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBBC).

Work in Mine Action

Salokhov has always been interested in mine action. He began his work in 2003 as a mine education coordinator for the Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan. He says those most vulnerable to landmines are shepherds, guards that monitor the national border, and those engaged in agricultural work or other rural activities. Salokhov worked with community members in Tajikistan to provide education about landmines using puppet shows, storytelling, sports and school programs. In 2006, he started his work in the Tajikistan Mine Action Center (TMAC) under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme where he was in charge of mine risk education. As part of the TMAC team, he was actively involved in development of the first National Tajikistan Mine Action Strategy 2006–2010.

Since 2009, Salokhov has worked for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as a mine action specialist. Established in the 1970s, OSCE is a regional security organization comprised of 57 countries that work together to solve political, economic, environmental and human rights issues. OSCE projects include arms control, democratization and policing strategies.³ Working to support a national demining program in Tajikistan, OSCE is not a typical mine action organization. It closely coordinates with Tajikistan's government, including the Ministry of Defense (MoD), and other donors to support national capacity development and facilitation of Central Asia dialogue in mine action. The OSCE's goal in Tajikistan is to work with the government to create a self-sustainable, national demining program as well as to establish effective cooperation between Tajikistan and its neighboring countries in the field of mine action.

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Defense initially leased and then in 2012 donated a Mini MineWolf demining machine to Tajikistan's MoD to help the humanitarian demining program remove landmines located along the Tajik-Afghan border. Salokhov explains that clearing the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan will not only make the region safer but will also protect Tajikistan's border guards patrolling the area. OSCE, as the third partner in this arrangement, provides project oversight and supports the MOD's manual and mechanical demining teams. The MoD plans to use the MineWolf in landmine-contaminated areas within Tajikistan as well as abroad in peacekeeping operations.⁴

Salokhov's role at the OSCE's office in Tajikistan is to ensure that Tajikistan's humanitarian demining activities are executed effectively and efficiently. As a mine action specialist, Salokhov works with OSCE's partners to coordinate mine action programs, which includes developing mine action activities at national and regional levels and supervising the work done by OSCE's partners.⁵

Ongoing Efforts

Although Tajikistan has made progress clearing contaminated areas, deminers find the terrain challenging. "Tajikistan's land is 93 percent mountains," says Salokhov. Mechanical demining equipment is ineffective in certain areas due to the landscape. Tajikistan uses manual and canine demining teams in mountainous areas where machines cannot operate effectively. There are currently 31 deminers in Tajikistan's MoD national program; however, the MoD humanitarian demining strategy anticipates increasing the deminers' capacities trifold. Since 2009, the MOD's humanitarian demining group has destroyed 5,552 anti-personnel mines and 114 items of unexploded ordnance, cleared more than 1,310.6 sq m (324 acres) of contaminated land and mapped 12 minefields for clearance.²

Salokhov feels hopeful about the future of the land clearance program and believes that, with OSCE's support, a self-sustainable mine action program will be developed to free Tajikistan of mines.⁶



Azamjon Salokhov.
Photo courtesy of CISR.

~ Brenna Feigleson, an editorial assistant at the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery (CISR), interviewed Azamjon Salokhov when he attended the 2013 Senior Managers' Course (SMC) on ERW and Mine Action at James Madison University (JMU). The SMC was organized by CISR and funded by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA).

Endnotes

1. "Tajikistan." *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*. http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/590. Accessed 24 June 2013.
2. Salokhov, Azamjon. "Promoting Sustainability of Mine Clearance Operations in Tajikistan." Presentation at the 2013 Senior Managers' Course at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Va., U.S. May 29, 2013.
3. "Who We Are." *Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. <http://www.osce.org/who>. Accessed 24 June 2013.
4. Azamjon Salokhov, email correspondence with author. 6 June 2013.
5. Azamjon Salokhov, email correspondence with author. 19 June 2013.

[TOP OF PAGE](#)

The Journal of ERW & Mine Action is produced and sponsored by:



© 2013 All rights reserved. *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*, Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at James Madison University.

MSC 4902 Harrisonburg, VA / USA 22807 | Email: cisr@jmu.edu

If cited properly, short sections (a sentence or two) can be used without permission. Written *Journal of ERW and Mine Action* approval is required, however, before longer sections of content published in *The Journal* may be used by another source or publication.
ISSN 2154-1485

[Past Issues](#) * [CISR Home](#) * [Subscribe](#)