SA/LW and the OSCE Response

Jernej Cimperšek
Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the OSCE

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approach to development planning and ownership would seem to provide a very strong foundation for future development in complementary and mutually supportive approaches.

Mine Action, SA/LW and DDR

Demobilization, disarmament and reintegration refers to procedures designed to smooth the process of transitioning combatants back into productive civilian life. Analysis has shown that much of the informal demining taking place is conducted by ex-militia and ex-military. These former combatants represent both a problem and an asset for post-war countries. The combatants are trained and armed, and could be employed in projects including engineering, transportation and demining. They could also become restless and have a negative impact on the community. Unfortunately, the mine-action and SA/LW communities have yet to integrate this issue systematically to any real extent. This area is one in which the mine-action and SA/LW communities might be more successful if they jointly undertake analysis and strategic planning.

Conclusion

Though previous research has shown the management of SA/LW and mine-action programs requires quite different skills, supporting analysis from other contexts and widespread expert opinion gathered from within the mine-action and SA/LW sectors show a number of areas at the project level that could offer opportunities for synergy. Accordingly, the integration of mine action and the management of SA/LW has been significant in some countries (Bosnia, Cambodia and Tajikistan). The OSCE has undertaken analysis and strategic planning.

SA/LW and the OSCE Response

The illegal dissemination of small arms/light weapons has recently come to the forefront of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe’s agenda. Through security forums and the provision of literature and physical assistance to affected countries, the OSCE is working to rid Europe of SA/LW that may potentially spread to more militant nations. Working with other international organizations such as the United Nations, the OSCE aims to encourage implementation of its Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons, drafted to address the spread of SA/LW and related issues, and to completely rid the area of dangerous arms.

by Jernej Cimperšek | Permanent Mission of Slovenia to the OSCE

Why are small arms/light weapons an issue for the OSCE?

The problem began when huge amounts of military hardware, such as tanks, combat planes, armed personal vehicles, etc., were scavenged and dismantled in Europe during the 1990s; SA/LW and ammunition, however, were not significantly reduced or disabled. They were instead placed in huge depots in much of the former Soviet Union borderlands. Many of these depots are reportedly vulnerable to the elements and inadequately secured or guarded by security agencies with histories of corruption, including instances of suspicious arms sales. Some depots are not secured or watched at all. NATO and the Ukrainian Military estimate that Soviet soldiers left more than seven million rifles, pistols, mortars and machine guns in Ukraine, along with 2.5 million metric tons (2.76 US tons) of conventional ammunition. Wars in the former Yugoslavia also saw the collection of huge numbers of SA/LW and ammunition. Typically, a lot of this now-unnecessary military equipment finds its way to the illegal market.

Illicit trade of SA/LW from areas of the former Soviet Union and the Western Balkans poses a security threat for all states of the OSCE. SA/LW from these areas can be found in Africa, Iraq and the South Caucasus. SA/LW are the weapons of choice in contemporary regional conflicts. There is a higher probability that a peacekeeper in Africa or in Afghanistan will be killed by illicitly traded SA/LW from the Western Balkans or the former Soviet Union than by any other weapon.

The situation is unacceptable to all countries participating in peace operations all over the world, and to the states of the OSCE in particular.

OSCE Reply

To address the threat posed to the international community by the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of uncontrolled SA/LW, the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation adapted the Document on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2000. This document is a cornerstone of the OSCE response to the extreme growth and spread of SA/LW to the global community. It is also an important tool in combating threats caused by terrorism and organised crime, while underlining the importance of further strengthening its implementation. With this document, the OSCE sets norms, principles and measures, while simultaneously mandating participating states to keep the implementation of these norms, principles and measures under regular review. The need for the document was acknowledged by the OSCE Strategy to Address Threats to Security and Stability in the Twenty-First Century.

In addition, while adopting the Document on SA/LW, the OSCE also saw an opportunity to provide a substantial contribution to the process underway in the United Nations.
In particular, it could implement the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SA/LW, which was adopted in 2006, the Dual Use SA/LW activity during every stage of transit, including production, trade and transportation.

Information Exchange

Under the OSCE Document on SA/LW, participating states agreed to submit updated national information on marking systems, procedures for the control of manufacturing, legislation and current practice in export policy. The document also许 a Joint OSCE Secretariat/OSCE documentation, control over brokering, small-arms destruction techniques, stockpile security and management programs. In addition, the states pledged to exchanging annual data on national exports and imports of SA/LW from other OSCE-participating states. Last but not least, these states made a commitment to identifying surplus sites and destroying excess small arms within their territories.

According to the data exchanged between 2001 and 2006, participating states destroyed 6,388,216 pieces of SA/LW, of which 5,212,134 were denied surplus and 1,175,082 were reused from illegal possession and trafficking.

OSCE Handbook of Best Practices

Standards set in the Document on SA/LW are high, and for some OSCE-participating states, implementation of the commitments represents a heavy burden. To assist them, the OSCE launched the Handbook of Best Practices on Small Arms and Light Weapons in 2003. In 2006, the OSCE: Forum for Security Co-operation, adopted an annex to the handbook concerning national procedures for stockpile management and security, as well as procedures for the control of arms sales, brokering, small-arms destruction techniques, stockpile security and management programs. In the handbook, standards set in the Document on SA/LW are available. It is a tool that can use to assist in applying the norms and standards indicated in the Document on SA/LW. The Best Practice Guide on National Procedures for Stockpile Management and Security deals with SA/LW only, following the categorization of the OSCE Document on SA/LW with regard to priorities.

- National control over the manufacture of SA/LW
- Marking, record-keeping and traceability of SA/LW
- National procedures of stockpile management and security
- Export control of SA/LW
- Development and indicators of SA/LW surplus
- National procedures for the destruction of SA/LW
- Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration procedures
- National procedures for stockpile management and security

The handbook is available in all OSCE languages and Arabic.

Practical Assistance on SA/LW

Since 2003, the OSCE has received 28 requests for assistance from 15 states for the enhancement of stockpile management and security of SA/LW and stockpiles of conventional ammunition, and assistance with surplus de

In the summer of 2009, the mobile OSCE team was deployed to Tajikistan to implement a project as part of the OSCE’s efforts to destroy surplus SA/LW. The project was initiated in 2004 by the OSCE mission to Tajikistan, which was established in 2002 to support the country in its efforts to demobilize and disarm its armed forces in accordance with the Dushanbe Agreement.

The project aimed to destroy surplus SA/LW in Tajikistan, with a view to reducing the risk of destabilizing the country’s security. The project was co-financed by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the European Union (EU) and the World Bank. The project was implemented by the Tajik government, with technical assistance from the OSCE mission.

The project was supported by international experts and experts from Tajikistan, who were trained in the use of internationally accepted best practices for the safe and secure disposal of surplus SA/LW.

The project was completed in 2009, and the destroyed SA/LW was transported to a secure location in the country. The project was a successful example of international cooperation in the field of security, and it demonstrated that the OSCE can play a significant role in supporting countries in their efforts to address security challenges.

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Addressing requests for assistance from the participating states in the fields of destruction, stockpile management and security continues to be one of the most dynamic areas for the OSCE. The practice of regular reporting to the Forum for Security Co-operation on the status of relevant projects is important for facilitating the implementation of relevant projects in a more efficient manner.

The OSCE created one of the first international fora for the discussion of issues related to stockpiles of conventional ammunition. The forum, the OSCE’s Joint Coordination Cell, has been instrumental in facilitating the exchange of information and best practices among participating states. The forum has also helped to identify and address challenges related to the management and security of stockpiles of conventional ammunition.

The OSCE has also taken steps to strengthen the international legal framework on stockpiles of conventional ammunition. In 2001, the OSCE adopted the OSCE Draft Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illegal Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The programme was designed to address the problem of illegal trade in small arms and light weapons, which is a significant threat to regional and international security.

The programme includes a number of practical measures, including the establishment of national and international mechanisms for the control of small arms and light weapons. The programme also emphasizes the need for international cooperation and information sharing among states in order to combat the illegal trade in small arms and light weapons.

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