Demining of Underground Adits in Ukraine

Yurii Kolisnyk
Ukroboronservice State Company

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Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia presented the landmine and UXO problem of the South Caucasus. Many workshops such as this one are full of some successes and many failures. The key is to keep pushing the workshops because success is being achieved, even if change is gradual. Some consensus was observed on the desirability for all countries in the region to work toward becoming States Parties to the Ottawa Convention once peace agreements to regional conflicts are reached. Georgia and Azerbaijan have already made positive steps by announcing a moratorium on the use, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. The main obstacle for accession to the Convention is dealing with territory not controlled by national authorities. In the South Caucasus there are unresolved conflicts in the OSCE areas, including conflicts in Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh).

A suggestion to include mine-action activities on the agenda of peace negotiations within the OSCE Minot Group was widely supported, as well as the option to meet jointly in Georgia’s offices with Georgia acting as a mediator between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

In the second part of the workshop, the representatives from three central Asian countries (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) presented the mine problems in their countries. Common problems are mines that lie on state borders, especially on the border with Uzbekistan. Only Tajikistan has joined the Ottawa Convention, possibly serving as a role model for other countries in the region. Largely because of its status as a State Party to the Ottawa Convention, Tajikistan’s mine-action program receives financial support from several donor countries. All three delegations from central Asia supported the idea of developing a follow-up regional workshop in the near future.

The Tbilisi workshop ended with a roundtable in which participants discussed possible next steps in mine action. The following cooperation was suggested:

- Continuation of joint training
- Cooperation in mine-victim assistance
- Encouragement to announce a moratorium on the use of anti-personnel mines and to voluntarily submit reports on each country’s respective landmine situation in accordance with Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention
- Marking of all known minefields
- Including the mine problem in national plans for NGO cooperation
- Involvement in the setting up of a regional mine victim assistance program

Conclusion

Cooperation in mine action among countries is one of the first steps for confidence building in the region, as experience from southeastern Europe shows.

A simple conclusion can be drawn from the Tbilisi workshop: Demining is considered a complementary activity of the OSCE, not a central one. However, since demining makes way for the core activities of the OSCE—primarily disarmament, human rights and environmental issues—to be truly exercised, harnessing the potential of mine action activities is essential for OSCE. 

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Demining of Underground Adits in Ukraine

During World War II the Soviet Union established ammunition depots with over 10,000 metric tons (11,023 U.S. tons) of explosives around the Ukrainian towns of Sevastopol and Kerch. Stored in adits, these explosives threaten the peaceful lives of present-day Ukrainians. In 2002, teams began the task of removing unexploded ordnance, landmines and debris. They encountered many problems while pursuing their goal of eliminating these stockpiles by 2010. Their efforts are described in this article.
actions or chemical reactions that can occur in the dam-
aged ammunition during long-term storage. Several op-
tions for solving this problem include the following:
• Prohibiting access to the objects by guarding them
• Filling up the adits with bulk material or concrete
• Extracting and neutralizing unexploded objects
on specially designated ranges.
The first two options cannot completely solve the problem, and the expenses are approximately equal to
the third option. Thus, it was decided to clear the adits
of unexploded objects. At the same time, the question
of whether to use horizontal or vertical excavations to
access the underground was raised. Vertical access was
perceived as preferable to horizontal, as the vertical cost
is Ukroboronservice State Company. The specialists of
Ukroboronservice con-
ducted the clearance task proposed a problem-solving strategy comprising several stages:
1. Thorough investigation
2. Ensuring access to unexploded ordnance
3. Localization
4. Maximum clearance
Thorough investigation. The first stage took place from 2002 to 2004. During this time the working group hired a special group of guards to prevent unau-
thorized persons from accessing the adits. The works were divided in the adits and quantities of metal and explosives (TNT and powders) in order to
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