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UNMIK: Mine Action Coordination Center

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UNMIK Mine Action Coordination Center



Albania: Bread distribution for Kosovar refugees.

Photo c/o ICRC / Ursula Meissner

by Christine Brawdy

In October 1999 when Kosovo Forces (KFOR) entered the Province of Pristina, they were immediately confronted with the problems encountered by a population returning through areas contaminated by unexploded, NATO-dropped, cluster munitions (CBU). NATO advised that as many as 333 areas had been bombarded with such aerial delivered weapons. They found the problem extended to more than 600 mine fields left by the Serbian Army (VJ), Police (MUP), and other paramilitary forces. These were principally along the border with Albania and the Federal Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and scattered in other strategic areas on the interior.

The resulting damages in terms of property and human casualties alerted the international community to the potential for even more widespread devastation in the months to come, as Kosovo began restructuring. Acting quickly, the United Nations passed resolution #1244, which established the U.N. Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The first order of business by UNMIK included setting up the Mine Action Coordination Center (MACC). Such a rapid response, in attempt to coordinate the activities of international and local agencies, set the stage for establishing a best-case scenario for mine action worldwide.

UNMIK established an Outline Concept Plan, which defines a three-stage program for Mine Action. The Preliminary, Emergency, and Consolidation phases are designed as a systematic, comprehensive response to the problem. During the Preliminary Phase, the Mine Action Coordination Center, operating under UNMAS auspices, was asked to coordinate and control all operational assets mobilized through rapid donor intervention, and to address the immediate humanitarian crisis associated with the spontaneous return of thousands of refugees. As this initial phase drew to a close and the MACC moved into the current Emergency Phase, the scope of their mandate expanded to include the coordination of all mine action in Kosovo.

Following this mandate, MACC's team, headed by Program Manager Mr. John Flanagan, has worked in conjunction with organizations like UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and other NGOs, undertaking a multi-pronged and multi-disciplinary approach to mine action. This approach includes mine awareness, exten-

sive use of surveys, management of mine field data, clearance, local training to increase prospects for sustainability, and victim assistance.

The MACC is now effective in the operational coordination and tasking of 17 accredited mine clearance organizations, both NGO's and commercial companies, working on goals defined in the Operational Plan. Put simply, these are to get refugees back into their homes or onto their land, and to support the reconstruction of the necessary supporting infrastructure and rehabilitation of essential services. Priority clearance areas were identified using the following factors:

- proximity to (within 500 meters) villages or population centers.
- the number of mine incidents.
- accessibility.
- agricultural land and areas used for firewood collection.
- areas that impede the rehabilitation and reconstruction of essential services and utilities or other development projects.

As the coordinating body, MACC has no operational mine action assets. Instead, it draws on the assets and expertise of its partners who direct and implement local level activities on a daily basis, coordinating with KFOR personnel on operational matters. Through these "Senior Partners," the MACC has been able to extend their reach throughout the Province without needing to establish regional offices. Each Mine Clearance organization has been allocated particular municipalities in which to operate. Capabilities have been taken into consideration to ensure that there is an appropriate response available in each of the 29 municipalities.

At present, approximately 330 areas of Kosovo have been identified as being high priority. These priorities are regularly reviewed and amended as necessary, taking into consideration issues such as the seasonal use of land. Furthermore, the ongoing consultation and liaison with other agencies within Kosovo ensures that the requirements of all humanitarian and developmental organizations are taken into consideration. The MACC recognizes that coordination in these matters is especially critical to ensure rapid follow-on activities in cleared areas.

Due, in part, to its successful partnering with these organizations, MACC has realized a lengthy list of accomplishments. In just the four month period following its inception, the MACC has:

- created a framework for coordinating and planning mine action at the Provincial level.

- refined the planning process using the results of a province-wide survey of dangerous areas, conducted by HALO Trust.
- gathered survey information at the community level to assist in the identification of mine action priorities.
- established working relationships with mine clearance and mine awareness organizations which act as "Senior Partners" representing the MACC regionally.
- accredited mine action companies and NGOs in accordance with the U.N. International Standard for Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations and the International Guidelines for Landmine and Unexploded Ordnance Awareness Education.
- assigned geographic coverage to all mine clearance organizations based on their capabilities and capacities.
- recorded Mine Clearance Achievements within the Province.
- recorded Provincial Mine Incidence figures.

MACC will continue to fulfill its current mandate and achieve its goals in mine clearance. In tandem with this work, MACC has identified priorities in the areas of mine awareness and victim assistance. These include providing a stop-gap measure for mine awareness prior to the formal integration of such pro-

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Belgium: 264,434	Luxembourg: 126,186
Canada: 47,500	Norway: 199,980
Denmark: 211,996	Switzerland: 152,129
European Union: 2,525,520	United Kingdom: 300,000
France: 325,203	Miscellaneous: 339,000

PLEDGED

Australia: 250,000
Canada: 160,000
Spain: 105,000
European Union: 1,680,000

grams into the school curriculum in November 2000 and introducing a basic psycho-social and advocacy support network to support the reintegration of victims in the workforce or school system. MACC's work has been generously supported by donor countries.

In addition, the MACC has received in-kind (personnel and equipment) offers and assistance from the governments of Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, New Zealand, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. ■

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