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The Munitions Challenge in Albania

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the delay is related to the current situation in Chechnya. Mine action funding, mine clearance and mine awareness are completely non-existent in the current state of crisis in Chechnya. The few NGOs that have operated there can only spend limited time in the area. The ICRC withdrew after the assassination of six workers in 1996. MERLIN, (Medical Emergency Relief International) did distribute mine awareness posters from 1996-1998, but withdrew later that same year. HALO Trust withdrew in December 1999. HALO must have been one of the last NGOs operating in Chechnya. When the fighting got too severe for mine clearance work, HALO switched its efforts to moving medical supplies between hospitals and maintaining generators for the civilians. Recently, when the Russians bombarded a minefield that HALO had been clearing, three of HALO's staff were killed. There are no distinctions between civilian and military targets. If it moves they strike it with aircraft, and if it does not move they shell it," says Willoughby.

Landmine casualties and victim assistance data is not reliable. Estimates from the previous war site 800 casualties in 1996, half of which were children. 10 percent of children suffer from acute posttraumatic stress disorders as a result of landmine accidents. Victim assistance was nearly impossible prior to the current fighting. The health care system in Chechnya was inadequate before the war because of severe shortages of equipment, medicine and water. If medical care is available, the victim must pay for any prosthetics and crutches.

Social and economic problems were and will continue to be staggering. Lack of financial support from other countries, information blockades and the absence of humanitarian relief are all devastating to this tiny mountain country. Only a peace settlement and mutual cooperation will allow humanitarian organizations to safely begin the seemingly insurmountable task of rebuilding the lives of the Chechen people.

Currently, the situation for the Russian Rebels is dire. While multiple rocket launchers are still being fired at Grozny, the brunt of the fighting has now moved to the highlands, the last rebel stronghold. Russian forces have launched an intensive military attack in Alkhan-Kala village where they have been many rebel casualties to include prominent rebel commanders.

Western military forces have asserted that the attack on Alkhan-Kala was an ambush. The Chechens were lured there. The fighters were deliberately given a 'corridor' to escape Grozny. This 'corridor' was actually a mine field and several rebel fighters were killed when they crossed it. The few dare who successfully crossed and reached Alkhan-Kala found the Russians waiting for them.

At the beginning of the new millennium, Russia is once again faced with defining its future, as it did in the early 20th century. Former president Yeltsin, chagrined by the comments of leaders in the European Union and the United States over the aggressive assault on Chechnya, made the statement, "They must have forgotten for a moment what Russia is. It has a full arsenal of nuclear weapons." This may be so, but there is also a rampant black market operating, severe food shortages, and republics in their federation breaking away from the motherland. While one Canadian, former military Ammunition Technical Officer (ATO). The team was completed by serving military staff from Italy, the United States and Denmark. Initially envisaged as a three-month mission, its success and immediate impact persuaded the
progress smoothly. As of Dec. 15, 1999, many goals had been met such as, the establishment of the AAF EOD organization management team, the provision of sufficient EOD equipment donated by NATO member-countries to equip current EOD teams, the introduction of donated EOD equipment into service and training in use and deployment. All of these goals were achieved as well as several more that followed. More influential ones were the reconnaissance of all 16 Hot Spots as well as the operation orders and associated planning documentation was prepared for each individual Hot Spot. The Hot Spot at Pali kesh was totally cleared of UXO and clearance of a second Hot Spot at Mbrzentan was commenced. All the low-level individual and collective training was completed and the commencement of CMD instructors training began for all AAF personnel.

The program was disrupted by the Kosovo crisis as AAF EOD resources, supported by EODASTT technical input, were re-tasked to deal with the Serbian cross-border KB-1 sub-munitions, conventional artillery and mortar strikes in border areas. Other areas that needed attention were the stray NATO air-delivered weapons, the surveying and mapping of the area, and the clearing of supply routes and emergency mine clearance and casualty recovery tasks from mined areas.

Ammunition Management

This very complex area can only be successfully achieved by a long-term program of assistance designed to develop a full technical ammunition management system. There will be a need to develop an external quantity distance protection system in conjunction with national, regional and local authorities. This will help develop health and safety practices within ASA to NATO standards and norms. In addition, identification, establishment, validation of Logistic Disposal Operations (LDO), advice of demilitarization grounds for LDO, and providing technical support to a UK-funded demilitarization feasibility study was critical to success.

Explosive Ordnance Disposal

This element of the mission, which is considered to be the most important by the Albanians, posed a credible counter-JEDD capability. An extension to the capability of the AAF EOD organization would be considered a logical enhancement. The ammunition stockpile requires a 100 percent surveillance program to ascertain serviceability. The AAF will require further training in this function. A number of bad handling and storage practices which are intrinsically unsafe have been identified and an initial course held in December 1999 will be supplemented by a depot-by-depot program of active risk limitation measures.

Conclusions

Both the EODASSTT and UNDP Weapons Collections missions have proved extremely successful on a number of levels. In Albania they are seen as both a practical and symbolic indicator that the country is stabilizing and addressing fundamental security and safety issues. NATO has seen a vindication of its concept of the Individual Partnership Program within PIP believing success in such a technically complex area embodies much for addressing other specialist areas with confidence. NATO has also seen its first steps towards contracting military advisory tasks to prove successful with the hope that such future tasks will not be forced to rely on the allocation of scarce military personnel resources from member nations. The UNDP approach has vindicated the view that the collective responsibility and ownership engendered through this weapons collection program is the way forward, and hopes to replicate the approach in Bosnia and elsewhere.