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KOSOVO

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Profile: Kosovo

KOSOVO

HISTORY: Serbia and Montenegro are the only two remaining Yugoslavian republics. The federation began to dissolve in June 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia declared independence. The Republic of Serbia has two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, which are administratively a part of Serbia. Most of the population in Kosovo is Albanian.

LANDMINE AND UXO

OVERVIEW: Information on the problem in Kosovo remains inconclusive. Yugoslav forces, paramilitary troops and KLA fighters have laid mines and booby traps. UXO litters the area. The border areas are the most affected. There are more than 10,000 known defensive mines on the borders, but only the Yugoslav army has information about the miles of land affected. A Senior Survey Officer for HALO Trust estimated that there are at least 500,000 mines in the ground and there may be 3,000 UXO. Ordnance can also be found in the surrounding waters. Under the terms of the Military Technical Agreement, NATO land forces are responsible for clearing roads and military locations. Serbian forces are responsible for supplying NATO with detailed records of all mines and UXO with the hope that Serbian forces will clear the Kosovo/Macedonia border areas. Serbian officers have been arriving in Pristina to implement these roles. The KLA does not have records of mine field planting. Many international mine clearance agencies believe that mine fields will be easier to locate than they were in Bosnia. The war in Kosovo was shorter than the four-year war in Bosnia, the geographic area is smaller and there may be more information available regarding mine field location. In Kosovo, the most affected areas are roads, houses and schools, and forests. An estimated 50 percent of Kosovo's livestock is dead or missing from the crisis.



VICTIMS AND CASUALTIES:

AP and AT mines are the most immediate obstacles for refugees returning home. In the first week ethnic Albanians began returning to Kosovo there were over 30 mines and UXO accidents. Some reports have stated that at least 27 people have been killed in 61 reported mine incidents just for the month of June 1999, according to NATO figures. This would put mine casualties as high as 11 per 100,000 people. About 20 percent of casualties have been KLA deminers. The World Health Organization in Pristina reported that between June 13, 1998 and July 12, 1999 there were as many as 170 deaths in Kosovo caused by mines and UXO. Despite the economic and social problems in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, they have a developed surgical and rehabilitation services for landmine victims. The Institute of Prosthetics in Belgrade is the only institution in FRY that can provide full treatment for landmine victims to include orthotics, rehabilitation, reintegration and prosthetic production. Landmine survivors during their rehabilitation process are provided skills training compatible with their disability.

DEMINING: Approximately 12 mine action organizations are now operating in Kosovo. These include CARE, NPA and

MINETECH. Thirteen dog teams with 26 dogs have been deployed. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has intensified demining work with priority areas including Prishtina, Urosevac, Prizren, Suva Reka, Djakovica, Pec, Podujevo, Gnjilane and Glogovac. The VJ has reported 425 Protective mine fields to NATO. Where VJ forces established headquarters often in houses and villages, nuisance mines and booby traps were placed for denying movement to KLA forces and terrorizing local populations. Many of these mines are trip-wired fragmentation mines. As part of the peace settlement the KLA were required to clear these mines and have reported completion of this activity. UXO dropped by NATO aircraft on VJ positions with Cluster Bomb Units are the major source of contamination. NATO dropped over 1,000 cluster bombs over Serbia, including Kosovo. Recent reports have indicated that the demining process is not continuing at the required rate and many claim this is because of the lack of technical means. The UNMAC estimates that it takes from 5 to 21 days to clear a cluster bomb strike after it has been located. Kosovo civilians are also being trained in demining by international aid organizations and have cleared 400 mines.

WAR REALITY CHECK: The ICRC concluded from its Psycho-Social Needs Assessment that ethnic reconciliation is a goal, but currently unfeasible. "Kosovo is seeped in pain, hatred and desire for revenge against the Serbs. Kosovars do not speak of reconciliation. Hatred is the accepted norm transferred from adults to youth."

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