February 2000

The U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program in the Balkans

Matt Murphy
U.S. Department of State (PM/HOP) Office of Humanitarian Demining

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

🔗 Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol4/iss1/2
The U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program in the Balkans

by Matt Murphy

As a result of years of conflict in the Balkans, countless landmines have been laid in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s landmine problem is severe, with an estimated 750,000 landmines and an undetermined quantity of unexploded ordnance infesting some 186 square miles of land. These hidden killers have killed and maimed hundreds, vastly impeded the return of refugees to their homes, and hindered international efforts to help people in the region.

Since 1996, the U.S. government has provided over $40 million to remedy the problem and has joined with the government of Slovenia to support demining and mine action assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United States has also partnered with the Slovenian International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victim Assistance in the Balkans, which has proven to be one of the outstanding success stories in humanitarian demining assistance.

Although the U.S. humanitarian demining program in Bosnia-Herzegovina has reached the sustainment phase through the International Trust Fund (ITF), the United States will continue to support demining efforts here, as well as in other countries.

U.S.-Bosnia-Herzegovina bilateral accomplishments include: setting up of a U.N. Mine Action Center; the establishment of three regional demining centers; training and equipping three civilian demining forces, a total of 180 men and 27 mine-detection dogs; and setting up three military centers that have trained and equipped 1000 deminers and 70 instructors.

U.S. support of the ITF is an excellent example of regional and international cooperation and an effective mechanism for addressing the landmine problem throughout the Balkans. In Croatia, for example, the United States funded, through the ITF, six demining projects in communities that welcome the return of ethnic minority residents. These projects support U.S. and Croatian policies to re-establish a multi-ethnic society in Croatia.

The United States is also supporting the cleanup effort in Kosovo. Once that conflict ended, the United States worked with the United Nations and other countries and international donors, to implement an operation that provided mine-awareness education, mine-survey operations and mine-clearance support. Altogether, U.S. fiscal 1999 assistance for demining in Kosovo amounted to almost $5 million.

Assuming other donor nations deposit funds into the ITF and the United States matches the funds, the United States plans to deploy similar demining teams in Albania and Macedonia to resolve landmine problems in those two countries.

Thanks to the initial U.S. funding assistance for humanitarian demining, the subsequent infusion of Slovenian International Trust Fund monies and the support of other international donors, mine-affected Balkan nations are making great progress toward the eventual elimination of their landmine challenges.

Contact Information

U.S. Department of State (PM/HD)
Office of Humanitarian Demining
2201 C Street, NW, Rm 3328-NS
Washington, DC 20250-3817
Ms. Matt Murphy PM/MDP
Tel: (202) 647-4550
Fax: (202) 647-4537
E-mail: murphy@hdp.org