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[Back](#)

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency and Mine Action

The Swedish Rescue Services Agency (SRSA) is a Swedish governmental organization that has been involved in Mine Action since 1999. Currently, the SRSA is involved in mine action in Eritrea, Kosovo, Jenin, Lebanon and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The SRSA conducts a number of mine-related research and development (R&D) projects and hopes to become an operational mine clearance operator in the future.

by Pehr Lodhammar, SRSA

SRSA Background

The SRSA is a Swedish governmental organization with headquarters located in Karlstad, three hours away from Stockholm. The organization maintains a high level of emergency preparedness so that, with short notice, the agency can assist during international relief operations with specialist personnel and equipment.

The SRSA international involvement started in December 1988 when a violent earthquake occurred in the former Soviet Republic of Armenia. The authorities requested international assistance. Sweden was willing to help, and the government assigned the task to the SRSA, which carried out its first, albeit improvised, international operation. Experience from the disaster in Armenia as well as from other disasters worldwide has contributed to the SRSA's significant involvement in international operations. Hitherto, the SRSA has expertise and resources that can quickly be made available when another country, UN agency or the European Union (EU) requests assistance.

The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) largely finances SRSA international relief operations. During 2002, SIDA paid a total of approximately 1 billion Swedish Kroner (SEK) towards disaster relief, of which SEK 106 million went towards operations carried out by the SRSA. In a number of cases, the organizations that requested assistance—one of the various UN agencies or the EU—paid for the operation. The SRSA carried out assignments for a total of SEK 117 million during 2002. However, the extent of the relief operations and the representation of those requesting assistance vary enormously each year. The cost of the SRSA's preparedness is met by the Swedish State and, at present, is in the order of SEK 20 million per year. This money is used for storage costs, maintenance of relief equipment and materials, training courses and exercises, information and the SRSA's participation in international cooperation with other organizations.

SRSA Policy

SRSA involvement in mine action started at the Mine Action Coordination Center (MACC) in Kosovo. The agency is now responsible for humanitarian mine action in Sweden. The SRSA policy document for mine action states the Agency plans to:

- Support mine action centers (MACs) in mine action programmes.
- Become operational and conduct training for mine clearance operations and then lead mine clearance operations.

- Purchase equipment for the above.

Concerning R&D, the policy document states that the SRSA plans to:

- Focus on the need to locate areas containing mines and areas free from mines.
- Support research on how molecules from explosives are spread in the air and in the ground.
- Develop methods for the use of sensors for area reduction.
- Test and evaluate the artificial biosensor system.
- Support the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) mine detection dog (MDD) R&D.
- Evaluate and develop filters for air sampling.
- Follow and evaluate multi-sensors for mine detection.
- Support studies on new antenna concepts for ground penetrating radars.
- Develop the competence within the SRSA on methods for mechanical clearance.

Concerning training, the policy document says the SRSA plans to:

- Develop training courses that will enable the SRSA to become a competent and effective mine clearance operator.
- Have a basic training that focuses on leadership and pedagogical competence.
- Conduct tailored specialist courses for mine action work in cooperation with others.

The SRSA will also develop cooperation with the GICHD, and participate with and support the International Test and Evaluation Programme for humanitarian demining (ITEP) concerning gas detectors.

SRSA International Involvement in Mine Action

So far the SRSA involvement in international mine action has mainly been support to MACCs through United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS) where the SRSA personnel are filling positions within the MACC. One of the SRSA team members is also responsible for all contacts with the SRSA headquarters in Sweden and weekly reporting of the activities in the country. The teams are normally equipped with necessary equipment and vehicles by the SRSA.

Eritrea

The SRSA is currently supporting UNOPS and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) in the Eritrean capital of Asmara. This is done through placing the SRSA expert personnel at the disposal of the UNMEE MACC under the control of the MACC Programme Manager. With their expertise, the Swedish personnel have created a better foundation for the UNMEE MACC to carry out its mine action undertakings in an efficient manner. The Swedish government made the decision to fund the project in Eritrea on the 15th of November 2001. The SRSA has had personnel present at the UNMEE MACC in Asmara since November 2001 when the SRSA team leader first arrived. The project is estimated to continue at least until April 2003.

The SRSA is providing three expert staff to the UNMEE MACC in Eritrea with the following duties:

1. **Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Officer.** This person must build up a functioning IMSMA database for processing mine information and conduct training of local UNMEE MACC IMSMA personnel.
2. **Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team Leader.** The EOD Team Leader is in charge of the UNMEE MACC EOD team, which carries out high-priority EOD tasks.

The Team Leader carries out training of the EOD team and operational EOD activities in the field.

- 3. Medical Coordinator.** The Medical Coordinator reports to the UNMEE MACC Programme Manager and is responsible for medical standards and the planning, development, implementation and maintenance of casualty evacuation and a medical programme for humanitarian mine clearance.

Furthermore, the SRSA has provided the UNMEE MACC with medical equipment, tents, training equipment and other equipment.

Kosovo

The SRSA had in-kind contribution staff seconded to UNOPS and the UN MACC in Pristina. The United Nations requested assistance from the SRSA and a decision was made by the Swedish government on the 9th of July 1999 to support the MACC in Kosovo with staff for Quality Assurance (QA), accreditation of MDDs (an MDD QA Officer), Information Technique (an IMSMA Officer) and medical staff (a Medical QA Officer). The SRSA staff built the MDD accreditation area outside Pristina. An SRSA MDD accreditation team, consisting of two SRSA MDD experts initially and one SRSA MDD expert seconded to the MACC later on, then carried out accreditations of all MDDs in the mine action programme in Kosovo. The project was funded by SIDA and ended in December 2001.

During the period in Kosovo, the SRSA staff learned many valuable lessons concerning mine action and especially about MDDs. One of the achievements and major outputs through the MDD accreditations and the work with MDDs in Kosovo was the increased cooperation among the different demining organizations that were present in Kosovo, MDD specialists from commercial companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) helping each other with training areas and equipment for training. Kosovo was also a valuable lesson on how to task MDDs to suitable clearance sites and how to best use the different demining tools (i.e., manual clearance, MDDs and mechanical clearance) together in the most productive, logical and safe manner.

For the SRSA, this was also the first time IMSMA was operationally used and the SRSA staff had to work with the system. Experience gained from Kosovo has developed knowledge about IMSMA within the SRSA.

Lebanon

The SRSA is currently involved in the mine action programme in Lebanon with one MDD specialist working with UNOPS. Accreditation areas have been built for MDD by the SRSA staff that is now running the MDD accreditations in Lebanon. The project started in April 2002 and will continue at least until June 2003.

Jenin

In Jenin on the West Bank, the SRSA has undertaken EOD activities. The SRSA provided a number of contracted EOD specialists, a medic and an EOD coordinator. At the request of the UN, the SRSA cleared 800 pieces of UXO, which allowed 80 families to return to their homes. SIDA financed the project.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the SRSA, contracted by UNOPS, will carry out QA of demining operations during February and March 2003.

Research and Development

The SRSA involvement in R&D of mine clearance equipment includes mechanical mine clearance equipment, metal detectors and artificial dog noses. The project with artificial dog noses is within the framework of the BIOSENS project and is funded by the EU. Extensive trials are currently carried out in test fields that have been purposely built by the SRSA in Croatia. The test fields are being used by the Swedish Defense Research Agency (FOI) and the Swedish EOD and Demining Center (SWEDEC) for trial activities. Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) also uses the test fields for MDD training. The SRSA will also develop standards for the operational use of artificial dog noses.

Within the framework of the EU project DEMAND, the SRSA will conduct an end-user test

with a multi-sensor consisting of a metal detector, ground penetrating radar and a biosensor system—the artificial dog nose.

The SRSA has partly financed and conducted initial tests of the Mine Guzzler, Oracle and Scan Jack machines in Croatia during 1999 and 2000 and is also currently participating in ITEP.

Mine Detection Dog Study

The SRSA has partly financed an extensive MDD study being carried out by the GICHD at the request of the United Nations. As a part of the MDD study, the SRSA and the Swedish Ministry of Defense are co-financing research at the Swedish Defense Research Agency. One of the aims is to conduct research on how molecules from explosives migrate in soil and air and how external factors such as weather conditions affect this process. The study is mainly carried out in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Metal Detectors

The SRSA has, in cooperation with the Swedish Armed Forces and the Finnish Defense Material Administration, tested and evaluated seven different metal detectors. The SRSA has seconded staff to the GICHD, specifically an MDD specialist who is working with studies, development, evaluation and operational support concerning MDDs and other detection techniques.

Standard Operating Procedures and Training

The SRSA has developed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for mine action, including the following areas: manual clearance, survey, mechanical clearance/ground preparations (with mini, medium and heavy flails), MDDs, battle area clearance (BAC), EOD, QA, sampling and medical treatment.

In Sweden, the SRSA is carrying out training courses for personnel that will deploy for mine action work with the SRSA in the future. A course package has been developed for personnel that will be involved in mine action. All mine action courses are conducted in English, and students, both from Sweden and from other countries, are welcome to participate. During training courses, mine action specialist instructors are hired from Sweden and other countries. The aim is to have a small pool of competent personnel covering all aspects of mine action that can be deployed to carry out mine action operations with short notice when needed. The SRSA is also cooperating with SWEDEC concerning training of mine action personnel. As a part of the training, mine action workshops will be held every six months for all the SRSA staff involved in mine action. This will update all staff on current and future missions and recent developments in mine action.

An IMSMA course for the SRSA staff was carried out at the SRSA headquarters during autumn 2002 to ensure that the SRSA will be able to provide competent IMSMA personnel for future mine action programmes and projects. Seven new IMSMA Officers were trained for the SRSA during the course.

SRSA Mine Action and the Future

The SRSA wants to continue its involvement in mine action and is planning for future operations in other mine action programmes worldwide. Furthermore, the SRSA wants to expand its involvement in mine action to support MACCs with more operational activities including MDD, mechanical and manual clearance projects. Cooperation with mine action NGOs is also an option that the SRSA is looking at for future projects, where the SRSA could provide specific positions or services.

In the near future, training of the SRSA staff for deployment to mine action programmes will continue and increase to make sure that the SRSA can respond to any requests for support with mine action personnel.

Due to its involvement in many international relief efforts, the SRSA has the experience and the equipment to rapidly deploy to theatres worldwide. During the last four years, the SRSA has also gained mine action experience that can be utilized in any mine action

programme worldwide.

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