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New Partnership Brings Man's Best Friend to Armenia

As a result of the 1988–1994 war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Armenia suffers from landmine infestation in those areas where fighting took place. Generous donations from the Armenian Assembly of America and the U.S. government will allow the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) to send several mine detection dogs (MDDs) to help eliminate Armenia's landmine problem.



by Nicole Kreger, *MAIC*

Background

MLI is a non-profit humanitarian organization that was formed in 1997 "to extend the vision of General George C. Marshall to address 21st century problems."¹ In 1999, MLI initiated the K9 Demining Corps (K9DC) Campaign in order to provide highly trained MDDs to landmine-affected countries. The K9DC Campaign also attempts to raise awareness about the landmine problem; encourage the integration of people, machines and animals in humanitarian demining; develop mine action standards; and develop indigenous capacities to maintain and expand MDD programs.

Support from partner organizations such as the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), DC Comics, the Humpty Dumpty Institute (HDI), the United States Department of State (DOS) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) allows MLI to come closer to meeting its goals. Today, there are about 700 MDDs in 18 countries, to which the K9DC Campaign has made a significant contribution. MLI has deployed MDDs and dog teams to landmine-afflicted countries such as Afghanistan, Eritrea, Lebanon and Nicaragua. Their latest endeavor is sending a team of dogs to help demining efforts in Armenia.

Teaming up for an Armenian Dog Team

In February of 2002, in preparation for a partnership with the Armenian government, MLI President Perry Baltimore conducted an assessment of the country's landmine situation. Following that, His Excellency Vardan Oskanyan, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia, formally requested to participate in MLI's Partnership Program. This program is a public-private partnership that combines donor contributions with matching funds from the U.S. government and uses them to train in-country staff on establishing and maintaining demining programs.



The partnership was made official on September 12, 2002, in a ceremony at the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Washington, D.C. During the ceremony, the Armenian Assembly of America presented a \$100,000 (U.S.) donation to MLI. Together with a DOS contribution of \$300,000, this donation

will be used to acquire six MDDs to help clear the estimated 80,000–100,000 mines left along Armenia’s east and southeast border regions. Armenian Ambassador Arman Kirakossian noted that the ceremony was not only humanitarian in nature, but also symbolic because of “the partnership it represents between the peoples of the United States and Armenia.”²

Among the attendees of the ceremony were Donald “Pat” Patierno, Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs’ Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs and James Lawrence, Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs’ Office of Mine Action Initiatives and Partnerships. Mr. Patierno commented, “The Armenian Assembly of America’s generous gift will speed the pace at which mine-affected areas in Armenia can be safely restored to productive use.” Additional praise was offered by Mr. Lawrence, who remarked, “This contribution typifies the public-private partnerships that are successfully reinforcing the U.S. government’s Executive Order on Mine Action programs in many countries.”³



Armenian Assembly of America’s generous gift of \$100,000 to the Marshall Legacy Institute. Additional praise was offered by Mr. Jamilian, Armenian Assembly of America Board of Directors Public-Private Partnership Executive Director Perry E. Bolton presenting the \$100,000 check.

Endnotes

1. http://www.marshall-legacy.org/about_us/about_us.html
2. <http://www.armeniaemb.org/DiplomaticMission/texts/AAADonationtoMLI.htm>
3. <http://www.bonuslevel.de/mqm/archiv/2002/6453.html>

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