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Explosive Remnants of War in the Republic of Croatia

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Explosive Remnants of War in the Republic of Croatia

Explosive remnants of war represent a constant threat to normal life and activities of the population living in mine-affected areas in the Republic of Croatia. The author considers the extent and impact of unexploded ordnance and other ERW contaminating the country as a consequence of military operations between 1991 and 1995.

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Ammunition Expenditure/Failure Rates

Small-arms ammunition (≤ 14.5 mm). Most of the ammunition was originally packaged and represented a small threat to locals. Little effort was needed to remove and destroy them. According to the official statistics from the CROMAC database, eight persons have been wounded by this type of ammunition since 1991.

Pyrotechnics (smoke, flares). Pyrotechnics represented a small quantity of the findings and a medium-level threat for locals, and little effort was needed for their removal and destruction. The most common pyrotechnics found were the smoke- and flame-based simulators. In 6 out of 11 cases these persons have been wounded since 1991 by these munitions.

Cannon shells and artillery projectiles (≥ 14.5 mm). A medium quantity of almost all types of artillery carriages and projectiles (shells and shrapnel) was located within the MSA. Surfaces where ERW has been detected are smaller, at present totaling approximately 500,000 square meters or 124 acres. In the area of approximately 30,000 people live near locations still contaminated with ERW.

Progress of Clearance Operations

One of the issues on the third international symposium, organized by the Croatian Mine Action Centre and Centre for Testing, Development and Training Ltd., held from April 24–26, 2006, in Šibenik, Croatia, was UXO detection at depths over 20 centimeters (8 inches). This is an important concern for safely carrying out construction activities in certain areas where it is necessary to avoid work.
to first survey the ground to large depths (usually up to 4 metres [13 feet]). In some of these areas, certain walls may have been damaged, which represents a threat to the local population.

Also discussed were specific problems related to UXO and ERW laid within mine-suspected areas in the Republic of Croatia. During the symposium, the following guidelines were agreed upon to improve detection and removal of UXO:

- Improvement of legislation concerning UXO
- Definition of space and location for which some indications an UXO at depths of over 20 centimetres (8 inch) exist
- Application of new methods, operating procedures and devices
- Improvement of safety measures

A database that includes information on types of UXO found, the amount collected, location of the UXO, methods used to retrieve them and methods of their destruction.

From 2004 to 2005, CROMAC surveyed the land and concluded that 1,674 square kilometres (643 square miles) of land contained with mines and UXO. Included in this area, CROMAC classified 121 towns and areas within 12 counties as suspected of being within the vicinity of mined areas. As of January 2006, Croatia recorded that number to 1,647 square kilometre (645 square miles) of land contaminated with mines. There are still an estimated 168,178 anti-personnel mines and 48,908 ant-vehicle mines that need to be demined. Fortunately, pieces of UXO are not too threatening to the community as they have been well-marked and made recognisable to the public. Croatia is now working towards a goal of clearing 360 square kilometres (134 square miles) of mine-contaminated land by the end of 2009. This goal is subject to change due to the speed of clearing activities, which varies depending on the availability of funds, the cost of clearing, and capacity.

Conclusion

The ERW problem has not yet been successfully solved in the Republic of Croatia. It is important to point out that all projects for ERW removal in Croatia require considerable funds to fill capacity requirements, equipment procurement needs, work methodology and other expenditures. From the knowledge and experience gained so far, Croatian authorities are aware of their needs and are trying to apply their expertise to other ERW-related projects. Professional personnel dealing with ERW are CROMAC employees as well as employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Defence. The Government of Croatia, and CROMAC specifically, will be working to solve the ERW problem as a part of the broader humanitarian demining issue.

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News Brief

"Devil’s Garden" Cleared of Explosive Debris

The thousands of landmines, unexploded and abandoned ordnance, and booby traps located in minefields around Baghlan, Afghanistan, have been successfully cleared. During the effort, two deminers were accidentally killed by mines booby-trapped to hinder clearance.

Toward the "Devil’s Garden" because the area was considered to have the most dangerous minefields in the world, the land is now being used by 72,000 refugees and thousands of internally displaced persons for agriculture, habitation and commerce.

The HALO Trust conducted clearance of the minefields with financial support from the U.S. Department of State. Clearance operations began in December 2001 and cost nearly $10 million. Additional funding was provided by Roots of Peace and the governments of Germany, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom.