MASG in the Balkans

Klaus-Peter Koschny
United Nations

Follow this and additional works at: http://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: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol7/iss2/5

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Demining in the Fields of Bosnia

The demining is very slow work; on average, the team only clears about 100 meters a day. This is the safest obtainable speed in Ceklists due to the rugged terrain and obstacles, without the use mine fails to help ease the process. The years of fighting show in the reclaimation of the battle-gouged by the forest and vegetation, which sensitize the mines—for example, putting extra weight on a tire-wipe or conveying a mine state of mined grass and roots. The tough terrain translate into very slow work for the deminers, who must sometimes burn the grass to prepare this ground before work can start. Every now and then a mine or item of UXO is discovered, and then is cautiously destroyed without touching it. With a steady hand, its evil black heart is removed, no longer able to cause sorrow to a child or farmer. Generations will live because of this minute.

After 20-minute shifts, the deminers switch around in two and return to an area so slow, ex, drink and converse until their time is upon them to once again court death for all of us and ensure a safer world uncoated and unappreciated by the many who simply know nothing of their hardships amidst the high-rise structures and training. Further, a margin of safety or security is being extended. Children are more aware and as long as the news is spread about the dangers of mines, I am confident generations will live now. Take a minute and think for a minute of the people who are waiting, who survived to see this day. Bur not before the deminers prove the ground and forests safe one-again-tied—meter by meter, year by year, mine by mine.

Contact Information

Peter Hindi
Former Canadian Soldier
5 Korpusa
ARRH
BS551-2
Ceklikhe, Priotka Minefields
Bihać, Bosnia

*All pictures courtesy of Peter Hindi.

Note: Peter Hindi is currently an unemployed survival advisor and can be contacted at his e-mail address (see below).

MASC in the Balkans

In order for members of the Mine Action Support Group (MASC) to fully understand mine action programs and to study the implementation of mine action at the national level, several MASC representatives visited and met with government and UN representatives in Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. This article describes the discoveries and conclusions they made on their trip.

By LT Col Klaus-Peter Koschny, German Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Introduction

To allow representatives of MASC to see mine action programs in the respective countries and to study the implementation of mine action at the national level, the representatives visited Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina from May 22 to May 22, 2003. Meetings were held with relevant government representatives of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, and Albania with UN representatives accredited in these states.

The field mission started in Slovenia, with a reception hosted by State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Samuel Bogar. The delegation, consisting of a representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and a representative of United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) as well as representatives from several other states (Austria, Canada, Germany, Finland, Japan, Slovenia and Switzerland), was led by Ambassador Harald Braun, chairman of MASC.

The participants were interested in learning about problems of implementation, so that they can offer solutions supported by the international community. The international Trust Fund (ITF) in Ljubljana, was the first host. On May 19, the group was briefed on the mine situation in Slovenia and later on the work of the ITF.

The Albanian Mine Action Program

A survey carried out in 1999, illustrates the mine threat in Albania. In northeastern Albania, a 120-km border has 102 areas contaminated with anti-personnel mines and anti-tank mines from the former Republic of Yugoslavia, as well as unexploded North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ordnance, covering an area totaling some 15.25 km, with no available records. The defining efforts of the international community and those of the Albanian Mine Action Centre (AMAC) have not only reduced the contaminated areas by half, but has also led to substantial progress in the area of mine risk education, the victims assistance.

The strategic objective of AMAC from the effects of mines and UXO, over 2005, seems realistic, although not easy to achieve. Nevertheless, a shortfall of $5.5 million U.S. for the demining program in Albania for this year was noted. For the next two years, $3.9 million per year will be needed to reach the goal of a mine-free country.

The ITF

The ITF is headquartered in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the only mine-free country in the Balkans. ITF activities are focused on the other Balkan states and are also intended to be extended to mine-affected states such as Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Its activities comprise demining, mine victim assistance, support for demining structures and training. Further, a Geographical Information System for Demining in Southeast Europe has been developed under the ITF’s auspices. During the five years of its existence, the ITF has raised a total of $111.2 million. Eighty percent of these funds were used for demining, with roughly half of this funds being used for demining, with roughly half of this...
The problem of mine clearance in Croatia is assessed to have a moderate to high priority. As a result, the Croatian Parliament passed the National Mine Action Program in 2000, in which CROMAC was the key player. The strategic objective was to have the Croatian territory denominated by 2010. Since 1995, the Republic of Croatia has funded 80 percent of the total amount spent on mine action and has placed an emphasis on tackling the problem.

Mine Action in the Republic of Croatia

On the basis of the latest estimates, made in 2003, 1,630 km² are potentially mine-suspected with some 709,000 landmines and UXO in the Republic of Croatia. Of Croatia's 21 counties, 14 are mine-suspected. Mine-related areas spread from the far south up to the eastern part of the country, mostly along the former confrontation line. The landmine/UXO problem in Croatia is assessed to have a moderate to high impact and, therefore, remains a problem (among others) of moderate to high priority. As a result, the Croatian Parliament passed the National Mine Action Program in 2000, in which CROMAC was the key player. The strategic objective was to have the Croatian territory denominated by 2010. Since 1995, the Republic of Croatia has funded 80 percent of the total amount spent on mine action and has placed an emphasis on tackling the problem.
Regional cooperation in SE Europe has proven invaluable in many areas of mine action, ranging from a technical type of cooperation like identifying common demining projects on the borders of neighboring countries, to efforts of political significance in the process of post-conflict rehabilitation. The cooperation process was formalized in SEEMACC, in which ITF has become a focal point. It is ITF's first belief that regional cooperation has contributed, and will continue to contribute even more so in the future, to a more efficient use of resources for mine action in the region as well as for the sharing of knowledge between the countries in the area of mine action. A regional approach can also be seen as a vehicle for a better utilization of available resources. The work done in the scope of SEEMACC is presented in the next section and the lessons learned in this region could perhaps prove invaluable for the other mine-contaminated regions in the world.

SEEMACC

Several organizations and initiatives are active in SE Europe, which all intend to assist in solving the mine problem in the region. They are: the United Nations, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the Ottawa Convention, the Stability Pact for SE Europe, and the ITF. The SEEMACC was also created as a regional mine action experts' initiative. The directors of national MAGS in SE Europe have expressed their wish for cooperation in mine action in order to improve the mine action programs. Their intent was shown in the agreement on the establishment of SEEMACC, Directors of the Albanian, Croatian and BiH MAGs, as well as the ITF signed the agreement on November 11, 2000. Later, on November 30th, 2001, the agreement was signed by Montenegro and Yugoslavia MAGs. On February 14th, 2002, a process was continued when Azerbaijan became a full member of SEEMACC. The signatories emphasized the need for cooperation and support in the following fields:

- Exchange of experience, expertise and knowledge in the field of mine action in SE Europe and the field of training deminers and managing personnel.
- Promotion of the regional approach in the planning of demining programs and in the fundraising for mine actions.
- Exchange of information on testing of the new technologies in demining.
- Promotion of the achievement of common standards and accreditation procedures in the field of demining in SE Europe.

SEEMACC Vision

The SEEMACC vision is to make SE Europe mine-free by 2010, where the economic and social development will not be impeded by the threat of mines.

SEEMACC Mission

The mission is to develop sustainable regional programs that will contribute to the mine-contaminated countries developing the capacities to demine and return the land to the local populations where the land is available for economic, agricultural and tourism development. The programs are designed to prevent mine incidents, rehabilitate mine victims, help national programs to raise awareness of the mine problem, develop new technologies for mine detection, reduce mine-affected areas, train and educate experts in the region and raise necessary funds. Assistance to national programs in developing common standards, procedures and techniques of demining through the introduction of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards will be based on the experiences from the region. The added value of SEEMACC mission is the development of common resources for training of EOD and demining personnel including logistics, exchange of experience, expertise and knowledge in the field of mine threat reduction, types of demining technologies and the training of mine detection dogs (MDDs).

SEEMACC Basic Principles

The principles are setting the framework for the values and policies that the mine action activities will abide by in SE Europe. Mine action is presenting all the aspects of national strategy for solving the mine problems in each country. The main goal of mine action is to re-establish the safe environment that will enable the rehabilitation, reintegration and development of the communities. The basic humanitarian principles of neutrality and humanity have to be respected in solving the mine problem so that the most mine-affected communities are helped first. The principle of partnership includes cooperation with other international organizations, especially the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and UNDP, the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GCED) and donors in each phase of mine action activities in order to integrate expertise, experience and recommendations into mine action of the region.

SEEMACC Strategic Goals and Tasks

The strategy involves six strategic goals in 27 tasks reflecting the needs expressed in mine-affected communities. The six goals are listed below (to see the complete list of tasks, check out the SEEMACC website at http://www.seemacc.org/main.htm and click on the introduction heading and go to "strategy," where the complete SEEMACC strategy is listed):

1. Reutilize the land in SE Europe.
2. Develop prioritization methodology.
3. Develop and adopt regional operative standards.
4. Train personnel in the region.
5. Implement a unified mine information system.
6. Test new demining technologies and machines.

Conclusion

There is significant public and political awareness of the mine problem and the enormous impact that land mines have on safety, as well as on the humanitarian, economic and environmental development of SE Europe. The real victims are civilians—mines impede the return of the population to their homes and prevent the production of necessary resources, even in the pure areas. Populations living in mine-contaminated areas need to see the mine threat reduced. Then perhaps, the establishment and maintenance of peace, the reintegration of refugees and returnees, the revitalization and reconstruction of communities and even the economic development of SE Europe, will soon become a reality.

The regional approach of SEEMACC presents an important development in the cooperation of the region and it is also beneficial to solving the mine problem in the region at a faster pace through exchange of experience, expertise, lessons-learned and regional pooling of resources. It is also promoting post-conflict political rehabilitation in the region. SEEMACC's approach can be an example to be followed in other regions of the world.

References

1. CD ROM LAND MINE MONITOR REPORT 2000 - Towards a mine-free world.

*All graphics courtesy of author.

Contact Information

Damir Goraceta  
Southeastern Europe Mine Action Coordination Council  
1929. Ig, Slovenia  
E-mail: goraceta@sf-fund.si  
Website: www.se-demining.org

Eva Vele  
Head of Department for International Relations  
International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance  
DG 21  
SI-1929, Ig, Slovenia  
Tel: 386-1-4796-580  
Fax: 386-1-4796-590  
E-mail: veble@itf-fund.si

Sabina Beber  
International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance  
E-mail: beber@sf-fund.si

MAGS in the Balkans, continued from page 13  
MAGS in the Balkans, continued from page 13

*All graphics courtesy of author.

Contact Information

Lz. Col Klaus-Peter Koschyn  
German Permanent Mission to the United Nations  
E-mail: pdl@vuff.newaustria.org.at

Published by JMU Scholarly Commons, 2003