August 2003

Mine Action in Bosnia’s Special District: A Case Study

Matthew Bolton

Counterpart International

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/iss2/7

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.
ANAMA has been chosen as a focal point to endments to the survey questionaire. The representatives of WHO and Association for Mine Action, based on wide and detailed information and on an integrated data-activitie s to the public and attract donors. The project proposal "Azerbaijan for disabled people in different districts fund to raise money for financing MVA for disabled people in Azerbaijan, including individuals and associations. It identifies possible vocational areas for disabled people in different districts in order to create occupational (professional) rehabilitation centers for mine victims and to coordinate their activities. Spread information on MVA activities to the public and attract donors. The last meeting of the Working Group held in ANAMA’s office on May 7, 2003. Participants were informed that the project proposal "Azerbaijan Campaign on Mine Victim Data Collection" had been finalized and presented to donors. The representatives of WHO and Association for Mine Action, based on wide and detailed information and on an integrated database, might ensure more efficient results. He mentioned the high professional level of the ANAMA Information Department and recommended use of its capabilities for the purposes of the Working Group. ANAMA has been chosen as a focal point for distributing printed materials and information dedicated to assisting disabled people in Azerbaijan. All information will be forwarded to members of the Working Group through the Agency. The ANAMA website (www.anama.baku.az) is considered an effective means of information exchange. Along with the electronic means of information exchange, it also proposed distributing a bi-monthly bulletin on the Working Group. The study of international experience is also considered important. Therefore, ANAMA has started making contact with organizations listed in the Global Mine Action Register on James Madison University’s Mine Action Information Center (MACI) website (http://maci.jmu.edu/gmai).

The Democratic Journalists’ League, which presented at the meeting for the first time, proposed establishing a “hotline” for preliminary mine victim data collection. ADIDAR announced that their Information and Consultancy Center, operational for years, could also be used for this purpose. The use of this “hotline,” along with official sources of information, could serve in developing contacts or networking mine victims. It was also mentioned that regular publication of articles on mine action, MRE and MVA will canalize the public opinion and the capabilities of society in resolving the problems of different areas. The initiative group, consisting of ADIDAR, Dichtet (Revival), the Democratic Journalists’ League, WHO and ANAMA, was established for detailed study of particular problems.

The participants decided to continue discussions on establishing and maintaining special public funds on victim assistance, after detailed study of relevant regulations and development of the charter. Everybody agreed that the participation of outstanding people and leading businessmen of Azerbaijan could ensure community respect for the fund. It was decided to compile the Group Work Plan taking into account organizations’ propositions and capacities in preferable activities.

The Azerbaijani Campaign to Ban Landmines (ACBL) informed the meeting of its project on mine victim data collection in over 10 districts of Azerbaijan, approved by the Sloveniabased International Trust Fund for Demining and MVA. The implementation of the project will start soon. The activity of the NGO "Helping Hands" (Helping Hands) from Ganja city, involving MVA, created deep interest among participants. The organization is assisting 56 mine survivors from Fuzuli and Beylagan districts. There was also discussion on the possibility of gathering data on mine victim needs during the implementation of the ADIDAR organization’s program for Fuzuli and Gaboramy districts from May to July.

All graphics courtesy of author.

Contact Information
Rauf Mamedov
Mine Victim Assistance Officer
Tel: (99412) 9579 24
E-mail: rauf@anama.baku.az
Website: www.anama.baku.az
Axe M. Aliyev
Information Manager, ANAMA
Tel: (99412) 95 79 34
E-mail: axley@anama.baku.az
Website: www.anama.baku.az

Landmine/UFO Situation in the Brcko District
The Brcko District, located in northeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, was a fierce battleground during the war from 1992 to 1995. Because of the Brcko District’s unique, strategic and symbolic significance to all sides of the conflict, it was the only issue left unresolved by the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in December 1995, which had divided the country into two decentralized semi-autonomous entities, the Republica Srpska (populated mostly by Serbs) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (populated mostly by Bosans and Croats).

Instead, the issue of the Brcko area was referred to an arbitration tribunal, which after three years of deliberations and hearings, determined in 1999 that the territory of the pre-war Brcko municipality would be awarded to neither entity. Instead it would be a “special district” held "in condominium" by both entities, which would delegate "all of its powers of governance" to a new "single, unitary, multi-ethnic, democratic government," called the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Brcko District Government, established on March 8, 2000, is directly accountable to a continuing international supervisory regime, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and the common institutions, laws and constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but all powers delegated to the entity are "executed ex-officio" by the District government...

The Landmine/UFO Situation in the Brcko District
No, no, don’t look at the sky. They cannot do you any harm from above anymore, lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth. Lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth. Lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth.

by Matthew Bolton, Counterpart International

The Brcko District
The Brcko Municipalitity, located in northeastern Bosnia and Herzegovina, was a fierce battleground during the war from 1992 to 1995. Because of the Brcko District’s unique, strategic and symbolic significance to all sides of the conflict, it was the only issue left unresolved by the Dayton Peace Accords that ended the war in December 1995, which had divided the country into two decentralized semi-autonomous entities, the Republica Srpska (populated mostly by Serbs) and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (populated mostly by Bosans and Croats).

Instead, the issue of the Brcko area was referred to an arbitration tribunal, which after three years of deliberations and hearings, determined in 1999 that the territory of the pre-war Brcko municipality would be awarded to neither entity. Instead it would be a “special district” held "in condominium" by both entities, which would delegate "all of its powers of governance" to a new "single, unitary, multi-ethnic, democratic government," called the Brcko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Brcko District Government, established on March 8, 2000, is directly accountable to a continuing international supervisory regime, the Office of the High Representative (OHR), and the common institutions, laws and constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but all powers delegated to the entity are "executed ex-officio" by the District government...

The Landmine/UFO Situation in the Brcko District
No, no, don’t look at the sky. They cannot do you any harm from above anymore, lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth. Lower your head because the danger is in your mother earth...
These casualties have led the OHCHR to call for the establishment of a National Mine Action Center (NMAC) to coordinate activities of the international community's body that oversees the implementation of the Geneva Protocol to de-mining. According to the ICRC, as quoted by the National Mine Action Center, in no region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it notes that: "There is 0.36 ha of agricultural land per person in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According to international estimates, this is the critical minimum necessary for ensuring food for the population. A significant part of such agricultural land is contaminated with mines and UXO." 1

In the Brcko District specifically, "Some 500 ha of usable land and 550 ha of forest require immediate demining." 2 According to the FAO, "The main reason for agricultural land abandonment (in the Brcko District) is the presence of mines (as stated by experts and the local population)." 3

This means that the Brcko District's agricultural development, stunted by the landmine crisis, is having a hugely detrimental effect on the food security situation throughout the country. Through demining, Brcko's rural economy can be restored, reviving the District to its position of a food producer for the rest of the country.

**Threat to the Return Process**

The Brcko District has one of the highest rates of return of refugees and IDPs. While there are many reasons for this high return rate, it is primarily caused by the District's unique legal position as an autonomous region with a multinational government and progressive laws, retired U.S. Ambassador Robert W. Farrand, former OHCHR Supervisor, described this cycle as a "microcosm of the peace process." 4

The 'right of return' to one's pre-war home was one of the most important stipulations of both the Dayton Peace Accords and the Brcko Final Arbitral Award. However, landmines pose a continued threat to this process. The ICRC points out, "Pressure on land will grow...as refugees and displaced persons return to their pre-war communities, many of which are situated in the ZOS—the most heavily mined area of the country." 5

"In many situations, mine clearance is a precondition for the safe return of refugees and people displaced by war from their homes..." 6

The ICRC points out that mines are "making the return of refugees and displaced persons to...[the north] hazardous, especially since many of these people will inevitably take to farming to meet their dietary needs." 7 Moreover, since they have been out of the region, many refugees and IDPs are often unaware of the precise locations of former front-line positions and the local markings used to identify dangerous areas. 8

"This has led to refugees and internally displaced people making up 'approximately 1/3 of total mine-related casualties since the war.'" 9 Therefore, the UN states that "The demining programme must develop links with long-term development programmes to stimulate investment and returns to farms and find constructive solutions to long-term funding issues." 10

Brcko District's Current Mine Action

By saying, "It is not too much about mines as it is about people," the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a leader in mine action in a holistic sense that refers to all these activities geared towards addressing the problems faced by populations as a result of landmine contamination. Therefore, "Its aim is not technical—to survey, mark and eradicate landmines—but humanitarian and developmental." 11

Taking this into account, when looking at the Brcko District's current mine action activities it is necessary to examine not only mine clearance, but also mine awareness and victims assistance.

In addition to cleared areas, the survey with 75,000 sq km through improved MPHAC surveying methods employed in 2002. These general and technical surveys also clarified and marginally defined the mine risk area. Though the demining practice in Bosnia has been overwhelmingly oriented to military and commercial interests, the Brcko District shows that there is the alternative of working with humanitarian demining NGOs. International humanitarian deminers often follow higher standards (the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and are motivated by humanitarian concern rather than by profit. For this reason, it can often be cheaper to use NGOs as an implementing partner, as a donor could just offset the cost of the NGO's salaries for a period of time in return for collaboration on their projects. The biggest and most visible humanitarian deminers in Bosnia and Herzegovina are the NGO Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), followed by HELP, which operates through the structures of the local Civil Protection team.

The practice of framing mine action in commercial tenders and government principles of open competition for contracts sometimes makes it difficult for governments to contract humanitarian deminers, but private donors can sometimes work around this problem. Approximately 80 percent of the funding for demining in the Brcko District comes from the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Action.

**TABLE 1: Demining in the Brcko District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Type of Org.</th>
<th>No. of Tenderers</th>
<th>Tender Area (Sq Km)</th>
<th>Total Area (Sq Km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BH Demining</td>
<td>LNOO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>154,169</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOMAC</td>
<td>LNOO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,996</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Mines</td>
<td>LNOO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,968</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI</td>
<td>IN GO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>124,914</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UL Pan</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>888,684</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPA</td>
<td>IN GO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51,261</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FHDP</td>
<td>Civil Protection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>59,011</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOZIM</td>
<td>LNOO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,983</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOSLA</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>888,684</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELPAK</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4,259</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UXB International</td>
<td>Civil Protection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2,176</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 1: Demining in the Brcko District**

---

Focus: Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

In the Brcko District, the most heavily mined area in the country:

**Mine Clearance**

At the center of the Dayton Peace Accords, Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into two decentralized entities, the Federation and the Republica Srpska. Up until this point in the country's history, only EMACs have been integrated into the BHMAC structure. This is then responsible to the central government's Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Coordinator (BHMAC), which coordinated its activities with the Bosnia and Herzegovina Mine Action Center (EMAC), which was a multi-agency effort that has led to refugees and internally displaced persons being hit by mines.

"In conformity with the Federation and Republica Srpska, most 45 percent and 21 percent of their 2002 target remained active facilities. The Brcko District cleared 76 percent of its targeted areas for 2002." 12

This progress has also been encouraged by the falling costs of demining due to a proliferation of private commercial demining companies. The average price for demining a simple, non-forest, flat farm field is now approximately 111-$1.50. 13 For safe budgeting purposes, according to the United Nations, one dollar should budget $2 for a square meter when estimating costs. 14

In 2002, before the establishment of the Brcko Process, the vast majority of the demining in the Brcko District was done by NGOs, especially local NGOs—due to specific restrictions last year's donor placed on their funds. Table 1 shows the different organizations that were involved in demining in the Brcko District in 2002 and the area targeted by them and certified by BHMAC.

Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction, Vol. 7, Iss. 2 [2003], Art. 7

http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol7/iss2/7

---

26

27
Victim Assistance (ITF), an organization set up by the government which is "a favored funding vehicle for international donors" as all funds ITF raises are matched by the U.S. Department of State. ITF operates by matching the funds of other donors who fund demining in the region. Latin, ITF funded the clearance of 700,000 square meters of agricultural land in the Brcko District, costing $1.2 million. Unfortunately, ITF funding to Bosnia and Herzegovina is slowly declining. In 2000, ITF allocated 52 percent of its total funds to the country whereas in 2002, it allocated only 28.6 percent. Another possible issue with ITF is that some people believe its mode of operation tends to favor the commercial method of contracting tenders for mine clearance. They argue the organization is not really set up to encourage humanitarian NGO's in demining. However, it may be possible for private donors to specify the exact locations in which they want their ITF's matching funds to be used in a project.

Additional funding for Brcko demining comes from the Czech Republic, the Government of Japan (through the German NGO Help which withdraws from the country this February), BHMAC and the Brcko District Government, which covers salaries, insurance, office space and some small amounts of equipment. While the Government of Japan has funded a great deal of mine action in the Brcko District and it is well noted for its flexible funding conditions, it unfortunately froze all funding to the Brcko District in 2002. This is apparently due to alleged financial irregularities and misuse in a local demining project.

In its planning for 2003, CivPro has prioritized 39 minefields totaling 2.19 million square meters, most of which is agricultural land, rural returnee housing or river banks (see matrix at end of document). The prioritization process is less a political decision than a bureaucratic one. Priority areas are selected by a team of representatives from OHR, CivPro, the Brcko District Department of Agriculture and BHMAC, based on the following criteria:

- Priority 1: Locations in regular civilian use, repatriation of refugees and displaced persons; renewal and reconstruction of infrastructure.
- Priority 2: Areas in the immediate vicinity of Priority 1 areas, and areas which enable people to make a living such as agricultural land and forestry.
- Priority 3: All remaining areas.

BHAMC records estimate that 17.7 square kilometers, or 30 percent of the mine areas in the Brcko District, are Priority 1, 17.7 square kilometers or 30 percent are Priority 2 and 25.5 square kilometers or 41 percent is Priority 3.

One should be aware that BHMAC has its own priority list for the Brcko District, which differs somewhat from those of CivPro because BHMAC covers the whole country rather than just the District. Thus, some minefields may be high priority compared to others in the District but low when compared to the whole country. When designing a mine action project, both priority lists should be taken into account, although NPA believes that when designing demining de la in a local community, local priorities should trump national concerns.

The program is also facing problems raising funds for this next demining season. According to William Thomas of OHR-Bosnia in May 2003, CivPro had still not raised any money for this coming season. They have about $20,000 left over from the Czech government, but are struggling to find additional funds.

One of the highlights of this year's demining was the establishment of the Mine Action Center. This Center has completed several successful minefield surveys and has been used in the area of mine awareness, which is crucial for the continued success of the demining.
Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

Victim Assistance

Concerned efforts as victim assistance in the Bečići District, like in many parts of the country, are not conducted on a large scale. A米尔 Tatarzevi, Coordinator for Demining in the Bečići District says this is because the political will to conduct such work is nonexistent. Survivors Network (LSN), the leading NGO involved in mine victim assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, has an outreach worker (a mine survivor) based in Bihejina (a town about 40 km east of the Bečići District) whose area includes the Bečići District. This LSN outreach worker visits mine victims in their homes, offering peer support and assists them in dealing with the deep trauma that often afflicts mine victims. When miners are survivors they help them deal with practical issues (such as health, housing, food or income issues) by referring them to relevant agencies. If a victim is not a miner, providing these services, LSN will provide direct assistance in the form of grants for housing, small business start up, prosthesis, medical assistance and others. In 2002, LSN provided immediate assistance to nine victims in the Bečići District. However, this work is only the first step in victim assistance in the Bečići District. While valuable, it is part of a wider program that is not really focused on the Bečići District. Landmine survivor’s problems are exacerbated by the fact that it is particularly difficult for mine victims in Bosnia and Herzegovina to find work, and many mine victims are poor and without health insurance. 

Bečići District CivPro have been having discussions with Handicap International, a leading French/Belgian NGO involved in victim assistance. The PRONI Mine Awareness Team has also considered getting involved in a project dealing with victim assistance. However, neither of these possibilities was concretely arranged at the time of writing this article.

In addition, Handicap International asserts that mine victims should not be isolated from the larger context of the social support system and rights of all persons with disabilities. As UNICEF Mine Risk Education Advisor Nathalie Pevrous said, "Why should mine victims be treated as more special than, for instance, someone who becomes disabled by a car accident?"

In this light, one can take encouragement from the grassroots organizational and public consciousness-raising efforts of the Bečići District Paraplegics Association. A branch association was established in 1997, the association has 150 members (many of which are mine victims) and is self-supporting through a printing cooperative. They are engaged in social support, medical support, political advocacy and public consciousness-raising activities. Last year, with 6000 euros of funding from the European Union, the Bečići District Paraplegics’ Association hosted a sports gathering of such Bečići District Paraplegics’ Association.

Finally, mine action in the Bečići District is dependent on the progress of mine action and advocacy work at the national level. Until such time as national-level advocacy work is completed, the Bečići District Paraplegics’ Association will continue to battle mine victims’ disabilities and present them to local and international media and non-governmental organizations for assistance. It is only through the advocacy work at the national level that the Bečići District Paraplegics’ Association will be able to get the necessary support to help mine victims.

Conclusion

As one of Bosnia and Herzegovina’s most heavily mined areas, Bečići mine action is somewhat held back due to the unique geo-political circumstances that place it outside the jurisdiction of military deminers and beyond the close attention from the EMACs up until this year. On the other hand, this geopolitical significance has also piqued the interest of international donors and NGOs, which means that despite the Bečići District Paraplegics’ Association’s efforts, they have managed to create a relatively well developed mine action sector.

However, there is still room for improvement. Firstly, Bečići District CivPro should take a stronger role in coordinating efforts, as well as a more proactive role in making the Bečići District Government appropriate more funds for integrated mine action and developing foreign donors, which should occur naturally as CivPro finds its feet and becomes more established. Making the Bečići mine risk free is not a task that can be accomplished individually, but with possible total funding of about 5 million euros were mobilized for mine action per year for the next five years. All that is required is for the Bečići District Government (which has had large budget surpluses for the last two years) to make demining a priority and for the Bečići District Government to support this work. The examples of highly successful mine action programs in Kuwait and Kosovo should also be noted. In these areas where demining can be done when the political will and resources are there.