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Kosovo, After the UNMACC and Beyond

Over the past few years, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre (UNMACC) has transferred mine action responsibilities to national organizations in Kosovo. The following article discusses how a number of different agencies within Kosovo are working together in various capacities to address mine action issues.

by Steve Saunders, Chief of EOD Management Section, UNMIK

Background

After the end of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign and the cessation of hostilities in the province of Kosovo, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) mandated the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) implement a mine action program in Kosovo. On June 17, 1999, the responsibility for mine action in Kosovo was handed to UNMACC under UN resolution 1244.

UNMACC

From June 17, 1999, to December 15, 2001, UNMACC took on the responsibility of managing and coordinating humanitarian mine clearance operations in Kosovo. During the emergency and consolidation phases of the mine action program, up to 17 accredited NGOs and commercial companies worked in Kosovo with support from the Kosovo Forces (KFOR), the humanitarian community and international donors. In the two and a half years of existence in Kosovo, UNMACC mine action programs accomplished the following:

- Destroyed 24,972 AT and AP mines
- Destroyed 8,485 cluster munitions
- Destroyed 13,896 items of UXO
- Cleared 32,224,187 square metres of land

However, since the start of the mine action program in Kosovo, there were also 459 reported incidents involving mines and items of UXO, which resulted in 95 deaths and 364 people sustaining serious injuries.

Timeline for Transfer of Responsibility

June 2001

In June 2001, an assessment of the situation concluded that the mine action program was at the point where the national capacity could take on the continued clearance of UXO and mines and eventually the role of explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) response. The decision was made to transfer responsibility for UXO and mine clearance to the national capacity, the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC). As soon as this decision was agreed upon, an exit strategy was drawn up between UNMACC and the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

December 2001

On December 15, 2001, the transfer of responsibility moved from UNMACC to UNMIK. At the time of the transfer, the Kosovo mine action program had cleared 619 of the 620 known Serbian Army (VJ) minefield records and as a minimum conducted clearance to some degree on the 224 reported NATO cluster strike. The exit strategy also transferred various responsibilities that UNMACC was conducting to local government departments in-line with the UNMIK mandate to develop the national capacity. The transfer of responsibilities gave the following organizations various roles for mine action within Kosovo:

Organizations and Their Responsibilities after the Transfer

- Office of Kosovo Protection Corps Coordinator (OKPCC): The overall focal point for mine action in Kosovo with management and oversight role of the KPC EOD teams.
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST): Implements mine risk education (MRE) relating to the residual UXO threat and the appropriate action to be taken by the public.
- Victim assistance in conjunction with the IPH.

Maintenance of the technical guidelines and International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) for UXO clearance operations in Kosovo.


OKPCC EOD Management Section

Under existing arrangements, the EOD management section consists of two international personnel and five local staff. The two international employees fill the roles of Operations Officer and QA Officer and the five national staff posts are:

- Two QA assistants
- One MRE assistant
- One Mine Public Information assistant
- One Data Entry clerk/radio operator

Mine Risk Education (MRE)

The long-term strategy to keep the population safe is effective MRE and public information on the residual threat, and the appropriate action to be taken by the public upon finding a suspicious object or finding themselves in a dangerous area. The MRE assistant coordinates MRE in schools in conjunction with MEST. The MRE assistant also monitors and reports on the KPC community liaison teams and delivers MRE messages to any community or government institute that requests it.

Public Information

The public information assistant delivers public information through the media in conjunction with the UNMIK public information department, KFOR and the KPC. The public information assistant is also responsible for the collection, investigation and validation of all information pertaining to UXO and mines found by the public in Kosovo.

Other Areas of Achievement

In March 2003, the MRE and public information assistants conducted a Kosovo-wide "Needs Assessment" with a local NGO, ARKA. This "Needs Assessment" has highlighted the best type of media to reach the majority of the population and areas where MRE and public information have not been previously provided. The MRE and public information assistants also completed the "Safe Village Plan" and the "Normal Life" projects that were started by the UNMACC in 2001.

Information Management and IMSSMA

Kosovo was the first mine action programme to have an IMSSMA system, which was developed by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The IMSSMA system (IMSSMA) provides a means of transmitting any UXO or mine clearance that has been conducted in Kosovo to its database.
The KPC is a civil protection organisation that has been working in Kosovo since February 2000. They are split into various subdivisions such as Communications, Emergency Preparedness, Training and Doctrine, and Engineering. The KPC EOD teams are all members of the engineering unit, known as the Kosovo Protection Zone. There are currently six Protection Zones within the Province of Kosovo, and each one is led by an EOD team and the headquarters of the engineers also have an EOD team making seven teams in total.

**Current KPC EOD Team Capabilities**

- Each KPC EOD team consists of 15 members per team, which includes the following roles:
  - One team leader
  - Two deputy team leaders
  - Eight EOD personnel
  - Two paramedics
  - One dedicated ambulance driver
  - One Community Liaison Officer (CLO)

**KPC CLO**

In order to have the local communities are both aware and satisfied with the clearance work that is being conducted by the KPC EOD teams, 15 members of the KPC have been trained by ARKA in Community Liaison. Each CLO informs the community about the work conducted by the KPC in their area. The CLO will inform the head of the village or landowner whenever possible, organise a community meeting in the area, so that as many people as possible are informed about what areas are clear.

**KPC Training and Supervision**

The KPC teams are organised and developed by the OKPC. EOD management section and currently delivered by Handicap International (HI). HI was chosen to train the KPC as they have a proven record in national capacity building. In early 2001 and early 2002, the KPC was trained in demining, basic area clearance (BAC) and limited EOD response. In early 2003, HI conducted a number of refresher courses in BAC, and basic demolitions prior to any clearance operations taking place. HI plans to continue the training and development of the KPC for the foreseeable future. HI also provides international supervisors and national monitors to the sites on a daily basis as well as acting as a liaison between the KPC, KFOR and the OKPC. In addition to this supervision and monitoring role, Hi also provides a 16-person BAC team, which is currently funded by UNMAS. The HI team works independently of the KPC's own BAC sites in conjunction with the Kosovo clearance plan.

**Future Capability of the KPC EOD Teams**

KFOR is downsizing their troop strength in Kosovo and the KPC will continue to take over the role of EOD response from KFOR in the future. By the end of 2004, the KPC should have a fully functional operations cell that mirrors the EOD management sections in Pristina. The EOD teams should be capable of operating quick reaction EOD response teams that can operate Kosovo-wide and are able to deploy to areas of danger in Kosovo. The KPC has a focus on developing a Mine Action and Ammunition and issues of UXO that are reported by the Kosovo Police Service, KFOR and members of the public. Additionally, the KPC teams should also be capable of conducting BAC operations throughout Kosovo when not employed on EOD response tasks and be capable of conducting technical surveys to verify or discredit the presence of any items of UXO or mines reported by members of the public on land that is having a socioeconomic impact on the population in the Province of Kosovo.

**Current Situation (Mid-June 2003)**

Currently in Kosovo, there are 129 dangerous areas that require a minimum of either a technical survey or some form of mine or BAC. However, these dangers are not new. In 2001, 120 of these were handed over to UNMUK when the UNMACC transferred responsibility to KFOR in 2001. The majority of these dangerous areas are contaminated with subsurface cluster munitions dropped by NATO in 1999. The remaining dangerous areas contain mines and items of UXO. Additionally, there are over 50 suspicion areas that require a technical survey to discern or verify the presence of any mines or UXO. These areas are set mines along both the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan border and as well as the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan border. Russia has acknowledged placing landmines in these dangerous areas in Tajikistan. The most serious threat to Tajikistan's society and landmines is reported by the government of Tajikistan as well as the NGO Handicap International (GICHD). For their assistance in providing the Information Management System for Mine Action (BMSMA) database system to the Government of the Tajik Republic.

**Background to Landmine Problems in Tajikistan**

In 1997, Tajikistan was classified as a mine-affected country after a civil war. The presence of mines was due to the conflict between the government and the Tajikistan. In 2003, the NGO Handicap International (GICHD) for their assistance in providing the Information Management System for Mine Action (BMSMA) database system to the Government of the Tajik Republic.

The International Committee of the Red Cross invited the FSD to Tajikistan in July 2002 to carry out an assessment mission to look at ways that the FSD could assist the government of the Tajikistan. The FSD Director held meetings with international organisations and government representatives including Deputy Prime Minister Zhdanov. During these meetings it was requested that the FSD assist the government in the following ways:

- Request to the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) for their assistance in providing the Information Management System for Mine Action (BMSMA) database system to the Government of the Tajik Republic.
- Assistance with the establishment of a National Mine Action Coordination Structure.
- Training on demining.
- Recruitment, training and equipment for two survey teams and two clearance teams.
- Capacity building for national staff to level.

For the latter part of 2002, the FSD sent a number of missions to Tajikistan to continue liaison with the donor communities and update government representatives on the progress of such missions. The FSD requested that the Tajik government to continue providing funding for the survey teams being the second week in August. A major inhibitor to demining operations in Tajikistan is the terrain and harsh weather conditions during the winter months. Realistically, demining activities can only take place between March and November at best. It will be possible to continue demining operations in Tajikistan during February and March, which allows a demining season of eight to nine months.

**Activities for 2004**

The FSD is planning to start the 2004 season with two survey and two clearance teams.
Alabama's territory. Armenia occupied nearly 20 percent of Baku.

The United States has supported the training and equipping of Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA) since 2000, providing approximately $2.28 million. The Armenian deminers surveyed and marked over 700,000 square meters of land, and cleared approximately 5,500 square meters of land in a village that was heavily shelled during the country's internal conflict.

In 2003, the United States will provide $2.5 million to continue the provision of training and resources to Armenia. U.S. support has been on a bi-lateral basis thus far, except for U.S. funds channeled through the ITF for management training conducted by Cranfield University. In February 2003, the United States, assisted by the Armenian Demining Cadre, began training a second demining company, another MOD section and four additional medics in the Tuzla and Garevanoy regions. Azerbaijan's landmine problem is still large and a significant amount of U.S. support throughout the next two years will be required. It is expected, however, that by 2005, Azerbaijan's mine action program will generate enough international donor support to allow the United States to reduce involvement in the country.

Armenia

Approximately 90,000 landmines contain 1,800-2,500 square kilometers of land in Armenia. The country requested U.S. humanitarian demining assistance at the end of 1999 and in March 2002, the Armenian Humanitarian Demining Center opened and began the first of the fastest inscription-to-operations indigenous capacity demining programs. A MOD section and four additional medics were trained in the Tuzla and Garevanoy regions. Azerbaijan's landmine problem is still large and a significant amount of U.S. support throughout the next two years will be required. It is expected, however, that by 2005, Azerbaijan's mine action program will generate enough international donor support to allow the United States to reduce involvement in the country.

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