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The Albanian Mine Action Programme

The Albanian government, working in conjunction with various governments and organisations, is slowly working its way towards establishing a national mine action programme and, eventually, a mine-free Albania.

by Jab Swart, CTA, Albanian Mine Action Programme

The Mine Action Problem

The mine and UXO threat in northeast Albania emanated from the Kosovo conflict; it extended across a 120 km border between Albania and Kosovo, from Shitetove to the Montenegro border in the north, to up to 20 km in the south. After the First ALF, AP and AT remained in former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) forces. UXO and sub-munitions from FYR rocket artillery and at least six North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) cluster strikes within Albanian territory. An added complication is that no records of mines and UXO are available for Albania. None of this has been caused by Albania.

As a matter of fact, NATO requested that the AAF not get involved in the conflict, and Albania had to look on helplessly while its territory was contaminated.

Socio-Economic Impact

The population of the Kukes prefecture (almost 120,000—of which 75 percent live in rural areas) is among the poorest in Albania, if not in all of Europe. Landmines and UXO directly affect 39 villages. The average size of a farm is 1.5 ha, and main activities consist of grazing, farming, gathering firewood and other subsistence livelihoods. Poverty and the pressure for land are further exacerbated by the fact that 75 percent of the terrain in the north is mountainous, not including land contaminated by mines and UXO. Although most people have been informed and educated about the threat of mines, some still risk getting killed and injured by working in mine-infested areas because of economic pressure. From 1999 to January of 2003, 202 mine/UXO accidents happened. Twenty-seven people were killed and 212 injured in northeast Albania. Approximately one-third of these victims were part of the economically active age group (15–30), and half of them were injured or killed while farming, grazing cattle or going to school.

The problem has also had an impact on infrastructure development. In 2002, 88,379 sq m had to be cleared by the FSD to carry out a mine action programme.

Impact on Border Management

A grave consequence of mine contamination is the added difficulty of patrolling borders between Albania and Kosovo, where trafficking and other crimes take place on a cross-border basis. Since the end of the Kosovo crisis, 13 police officers have already been wounded or killed by mines and UXO while executing their duties. Patrolling is almost impossible because it takes one to two hours to respond to a border incident due to mine/UXO contamination. This is a weak point regarding integrated border management in southeast Europe. It was reported from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) that criminals had identified and cleared lanes in minefields through which they pass unimpeded to and from Kosovo where police cannot reach them and respond effectively. In September 2002, two border control posts had to be opened in Shitetove and Orgjist. The proposed positions were found to be on land suspected to be mined. A total area of 6,162 sq m had to be verified by the FSD before it could be declared safe for use.

Albanian Response and Commitment

During the Albanian crisis in 1997, at least 15 government ordnance depots were destroyed and burnt, leaving tons of dangerous munitions scattered around and threatening the lives of civilians. Up to 2,000 persons were reported killed or seriously injured as a result of this emergency. The AAF started clearing up these 15 so-called "Hot Spots" in 1998 and is still in the process of mopping up the last remnants of that situation.

After the Kosovo crisis in 1999, the Albanian government responded swiftly in conducting rapid surface clearance, which drastically reduced civilian casualties. However, this was not done according to International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and all the areas had to be re-cleared. Shortly after the re-clearing, the AAF conducted a Level One Survey, which indicated that most of the border area is still contaminated.

Albania ratified both the Ottawa Treaty and Amended Protocol II (AP II) in accordance with the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons (CCW).

At the same time, an operational body, the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AMAE), was established to carry out a mine action programme under the direction of the AMAC. Its functions are to:

- Produce and maintain a mine action programme.
- Coordinate, oversee and monitor all mine action activities that are in line with AMAC priorities.
- Collect, collate, maintain and disseminate mine- and UXO-related data and statistics.
- Monitor and report on the demining progress.

Survey and mark mine-contaminated areas.

Produce and maintain mine action procedures based on UN Standards.

Investigate all mine-related incidents and accidents.

Liaise with external mine action bodies.

Material and in-kind support from the Albanian government from 1999 until 2003 for mine action and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) programmes will total $1,383,600 (U.S.) (see Table 1).

AMAP Stockpile Destruction Programme

Albania ratified the Ottawa Treaty on 29 February 2000, and the Stockpile Destruction Project commenced 15 January 2001 with Canadian assistance. Demilitarisation was based on reverse assembly, and recycling was a major aspect. The last of the 860 AP were demilitarised on 4 April 2002, two years ahead of the obligatory period in terms of the Ottawa Treaty. The benefits of this project to the region are:

- Albanian compliance with Article 4 of the Ottawa Treaty.
- Elevation of the status of Albania as a responsible party to the Ottawa Treaty.
- Increased national and regional security.
- Socio-economic benefits for the people of Albania.
- Enhancement of demilitarisation capabilities in the region.
- Setting the pace regarding AP stockpile destruction in southeastern Europe.

Policy, Strategy and Advocacy

A national workshop was held in June 2002, formulating a vision, mission, some priorities and a three-year plan. The decisions made at the workshop were:

1. A visit for an Albanian free from mines and UXO by 2010.
2. A mission to develop and implement a sustainable mine action programme in order to eliminate the effect of mines and UXO in northeast Albania before 2005.
3. Goals for the Albanian Mine Action Programme to:
   - Create a legal framework and policy for mine action by 31 December 2003.
   - Implement mine action policy, the strategic plan and priorities for mine action by 31 December 2003.
   - Develop and implement a national mine action database by 31 August 2003.
   - Clear all of the high and medium priority mine and UXO-contaminated areas in southeastern Albania by the end of 2005.

Towards the end of 1999, the Albanian government decided to adopt IMAS and established a structure to implement humanitarian mine action. In order to adequately coordinate mine action, an intergovernmental body, the Albanian Mine Action Committee (AMAC), was formed in October 1999. This body is the overall executive and policymaking body for mine action. The Albanian Mine Action Committee was formed in October 1999 under the direction of the AMAC.

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**Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus**

- Implement a strategy to raise awareness of the mine action situation in the northeast border of Albania by 31 December 2003.
- Establish the most serious mine victims (permanent disability) by 2005.
- Establish a credible and sustainable national mine action capability by 2005.
- Mobilize, advise and manage the activities of AMAC, to complete the mine action mission by December 2005.

In this policy, the priorities will be to:

1. Regulate the activities of AMAC formation, to ratify a comprehensive mine action policy and to pass national legislation in terms of Article 9 of the Ottawa Treaty.

**Capacity Building**

A two-year UNDP capacity-building programme commenced in April 2002, funded for 18 months by UNDP, the International Trust Fund (ITF), and the Department for International Development (DFID) to assist AMAC with the formulation of policy, strategy, a national mine action programme and technological assistance. Training of the QM Team on quality assurance and quality control. Management training of the QM Team on quality assurance and quality control.

- A technical survey organisation was established, consisting of six manual demining teams, one mechanised demining team, one survey team and one mechanical survey team.
- The technical survey organisation will be converted into a national technical survey organisation by the end of 2004. When funding is secured, technical training will be determined and demining tasks will be issued.

- By completing the technical survey project, minefields and battle areas will be accurately defined and technical surveys initiated in the first quarter of 2002 with internal resources.

- With increased coordination and more efficient utilisation of demining assets, more than 7,000,000 m$^2$ of formerly conscripted land were released through survey and clearance during 2002.มงคลที่มา

- In 2003, the demining assets of DCA and DCA were expanded to three survey teams, eight manual demining teams, one mechanised demining team, one survey team and one mechanical survey team.

- These resources, they are planning to complete more impact surveys (releasing a further 1,990,000 sq m) and cleared at least 350,000 additional sq m. The clearance of all contaminated areas in northwestern Albania will then be 61 percent completed (see Table 2).

**Minemine Education (MRE)**

- The aim of the Technical Survey Project is to accurately delineate all of the minefields and battle areas.

- Preliminary findings of the survey:

  - There was an average of 54.5 percent participation in MRE activities over the survey area, with 56.5 percent participation in mine clearance and 54.5 percent in village surveys in Kukes and 53.1 percent in Tropoje.

  - Of the participants, 54.9 percent were male, 52.5 percent were female, 69.2 percent were under 17 years of age, 36.8 percent were aged between 17 and 49 years and 32.8 percent were over 50 years old.

  - There have been consistent levels of MRE activities between 2000 and 2002. Of those surveyed, 55.1 percent participated in 2000, 54.3 percent in 2001, 54.2 percent in 2002, 53.1 percent in 2003, 52.9 percent in 2004.

- The Albanian ITF Chief was appointed as the Coordinating Director of the IMSMA and the QM system was implemented and IMSMA was updated to Version three. In the regional context the Albanian Red Cross and the Swiss Foundation for Demining have primarily carried out these activities.

- Implementation of demining assets of FSD and EU have been completed. In 2003, the physical delineation of known mine- and UXO-contaminated territory along the Albanian boundary had been problematic due to:

  - Constant theft of minefield marking posts. This is due to a shortage of fencing materials and fuel in the mine-affected area.

  - Lack of resources. The survey and clearance were far from being able to meet the need for safer ways to go to work, 24.5 percent wanted a safer way to go to work, 25.4 percent wanted a safer road so they can get to school.

  - Twenty-six per cent of those who reported that they entered mined areas did not receive MRE. Taking into account the fact that only 58.2 percent of those who have not participated in MRE activities can comprise only 5.7 percent needed a way cleaned so that they can get to school.

  - Sixty-two percent of those who reported that they entered mined areas have not received MRE.

- The technical survey project, minefields and battle areas will be accurately defined and technical surveys initiated in the first quarter of 2002 with internal resources.

- With increased coordination and more efficient utilisation of demining assets, more than 7,000,000 m$^2$ of formerly conscripted land were released through survey and clearance during 2002.มงคลที่มา

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**Technical Survey**

UNDP will implement a 21-month EU-funded technical survey project by August 2003. The aim of the Technical Survey Project is to accurately delineate all of the minefields and battle areas.

- A functional IMSMA Cell was established in 2002 with ITF and Swiss support, and the database was populated with up-to-date mine action information. Albanian maps were georeferenced using a Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) projection with EU and ITF support. An Albanian ITF Chief was appointed as the Coordinating Director of the IMSMA and the QM system was implemented and IMSMA was updated to Version three. In the regional context the Albanian Red Cross and the Swiss Foundation for Demining have primarily carried out these activities.

- The Albanian Red Cross has been active in the mine action mission by March 2003. The physical delineation of known mine- and UXO-contaminated territory along the Albanian boundary had been problematic due to:

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In the Name of Humanity

A recent study of the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) mine action programme demonstrated the effective use of donations from political, financial and productivity perspectives. The premise of the study was that similar tasks, undertaken by a similar work force, with similar training and equipment, in the same time period, should be achieved with comparable timeframes and costs. Results and options of the BiH programme from the past several years are discussed below.

by Eddie Banks,
Project Director, E and I

Introduction

The continued suffering inflicted by landmines and UXO must be diminished in the shortest possible time period; indeed, the international community acknowledges that obligation. The Ottawa Treaty, Dayton Peace Agreement and the London and Bonn Peace Implementation Conferences, all with legal obligations addressing mine action that BiH has formally agreed to. BiH has to create a sustainable and effective mechanism that can then be extended to other regions of the world.

Rehabilitation Institute with ITF assistance. Mine victims were assisted by the ICRC to set up small enterprises. Several laws now afford the disabled special privileges. The Albanian government plans to ensure that mine victims are provided with employment. The temporary disability pension was recently increased.

Rehabilitation and occupational therapy is now available in three medical facilities for victims of demining accidents.

A comprehensive economic rehabilitation programme should be launched in 2005 to provide mine victims with some income and thus reduce their dependency on the social security system.

In order to undertake a full comparison between various organizations with different political, financial and institutional objectives, including conflicting political objectives, institutional rivalry and organizational management requiring donor support that is disproportionate to its limited output.

Data Collection and Performance Comparison Performance

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The Albanian government will assume full responsibility for mine action programmes by the end of 2005. After 2005, there will be a reduced mine action programme allowing for a leaner structure with only low-impact tasks left to demine. An Albanian capacity for denuming and victim assistance will be fully established by 2005; the MRE objectives will mostly have been reached, and a solid resource mobilization base will have been established.

Funding

Previous and current donor include the UNDP, EUR, DDF, EITF, ICRC, the Canadian, Danish, German, Swiss, Turkish and U.S. governments. In June 2002, the EU reached a consensus to fund mine action in Albania as "as far as possible" through the CARDS Programme (Integrated Border Management Project). Of the $5.068 million budget for 2003, $4.49 million has already been raised, leaving a shortfall of $0.578 million. The total budget for the next three years until 2005 will be around $3.9 million per annum.

Conclusions

There is a significant mine and UXO threat in northeastern Albania, but there is also an increased awareness and commitment to solving the problem. The year 2002 was the turning point for the Albania mine action programme, and 2003 will be crucial. Albania can now set the pace in the region on issues such as stockpile destruction. The focus in 2003 will be on accurately determining the extent of the mine and UXO problem and initiating the transition strategy to realise the strategic objective of making Albania free from mines and UXO by 2005.

The Albanian Mine Action Programme

Table 3: Victim Assistance Planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementing the victim assistance strategy</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training 200 suspected mine victims per year, including three rights acquisition workshops</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placing new raw materials to the Traimi Orthopaedic Centre with ITF</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training 200 suspected mine victims in Albania during EU support</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training the medical staff from northeastern Albania in all surgical procedures (disarmament and stabilization)</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance to orthopaedic technicians in upper limb prosthetics and training</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation of 50 mine victims in mine-affected areas</td>
<td>2001-2003</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabinis: Disabled Mine Action Programme</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision of mine victims to mine-affected areas</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>$300,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MKE</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>$65,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2001-2005</td>
<td>$711,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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