

SUMMARY

NATO SEEI TRUST FUND PROJECT FOR DESTRUCTION OF ANTI-PERSONNEL LANDMINES STOCKPILE IN SERBIA AND IN MONTENEGRO

1. Serbia and Montenegro acceded to the Ottawa Mine Ban Treaty on 18 September 2003 and became a State Party on 1 March 2004. Soon after, Serbia and Montenegro requested assistance of the NATO South Eastern Europe Initiative Trust Fund (SEEI TF) to undertake destruction of its anti-personnel landmines (APL) stockpile of 1,320,620 mines in accordance with its international obligations. Previously, the first ever SEEI Trust Fund project in Serbia and Montenegro, with the Netherlands as a lead nation and worth EUR 375,000, successfully destroyed 27,530 Small and Light Weapons (SALW) in Čačak, Serbia in 2003. Following the independence of Montenegro, the Trust Fund has been continued with Serbia.
2. The APL stockpile was being stored at approximately 53 locations throughout the country. Maintaining and storing of the obsolete stockpile posed a safety and security threat and placed a heavy burden on Serbia and Montenegro limited financial resources. At the same time Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of Serbia have been going through demanding reforms which created considerable logistics challenges for maintaining and keeping the APL stockpile of ammunition, which had by far exceeded its safe shelf life.
3. At the request of the Canadian Joint Delegation to NATO in October 2004, a proposal for international project to demilitarize obsolete stockpile, managed under the auspices of the SEEI Trust Fund was prepared by the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) in close cooperation with the Ministry of Defense of Serbia. Canada and Austria soon accepted the honor of leading the project, while their efforts have been additionally supported by 8 other partner nations: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. NAMSA was trusted with the role of the executing agent for the project. The total estimated value of the project was set at EUR 1,689,996.
4. The types of mines in the stockpile undergoing destruction are suitable for demilitarization by reverse assembly using existing techniques and methodologies. This joint NAMSA – Ministry of Defense of Serbia project addresses destruction of the stockpile, by reverse assembly and subsequent recycling of TNT into commercial explosives. The actual demilitarization work is undertaken by the Ministry of Defense Technical Repair Bureau KRAGUJEVAC, where existing ammunition process buildings and a well trained and technically competent workforce are employed in an environmentally safe manner.
5. TNT from the mines is being recycled at the “PRVA ISKRA- BARIČ” explosives factory by using existing techniques and procedures. Up to date over 100 tones of TNT was recycled and converted to commercial explosives for civilian use. The value of the resulting commercial explosives offsets the cost of transporting the TNT to BARIČ and the recycling process itself. All mine components from the project are being destroyed, recycled or converted to non-military applications.

6. Special emphasis in the project was given to the promotion of safety at work measures up to NATO standards. The project invested in building and extending demilitarization capacities of the Technical Repair Bureau Kragujevac and "PRVA ISKRA- BARIČ" factory which creates an additional value within the overall framework of future cooperation of Serbia with NATO and the international community in the area of SALW control.

7. NAMSA manages the project assisted by its local representative in Serbia, who also acts as process Verification Auditor and a liaison officer to the Serbian authorities. Technical oversight is provided by continuous monitoring of the project progress, reinforced with regular visits by NAMSA specialists.

8. Serbian essential contribution include provision of demilitarization technology and know how, objects and workshops, mechanical tools and equipment, transport vehicles and labour for loading, maintenance, transporting and off loading of mines, logistic support and office support to the NAMSA team and provision of all explosives and accessories required for the destruction of detonators and fuzes.

9. The project started in February 2005 after the conclusion of the necessary agreements and contracts between NAMSA and Serbia. Demilitarization work was successfully initiated on 17 August 2005 with a peak demilitarization of over 4.000 mines per day. 73 % of the entire stockpile has been destroyed up to date and the project progresses on schedule towards its successful completion by the end of May 2007.

10. The success of the project would mean destruction of the last declared stockpile of antipersonnel landmines in the region. It will also represent an important milestone in cooperation of Serbia with NATO and the international community while providing a contribution to the peace and stability of the region.