



Centre for Security Cooperation

INTERNATIONAL TRUST
FUND FOR DEMINING AND
MINE VICTIMS ASSISTANCE



Conference

“Towards a Sustainable Solution for Excess Weapons and Ammunition: Policy, Logistical and Financial Aspects of Excess Weapons and Ammunition Disposal”

30 May – 01 June 2011, Pula, Croatia

Activity Background

With the aim of bringing together representatives of logistics, policy/planning and finance departments in ministries of defense of the regional countries and providing them with an opportunity to exchange relevant information and experience regarding disposal of excess weapons and ammunition, RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation, in cooperation with the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Croatia, organized and carried out the “Towards a Sustainable Solution for Excess Weapons and Ammunition: Policy, Logistical and Financial Aspects of Excess Weapons and Ammunition Disposal” Conference.

Aging, excess, and unstable stockpiles of conventional weapons and munitions are recognized as posing a dual threat of illicit proliferation and accidental explosion, both of which can lead to causing humanitarian disasters and destabilizing individual countries or regions as a whole.

Indeed, it is impossible to neglect a number of incidents involving uncontrolled explosions of obsolete ammunition surpluses which have taken place in the SEE region over the last decade, causing tragic losses of human lives and destruction of property.



Family photo

Furthermore, stockpiles of conventional weapons and munitions pose a potent security threat even if an explosive incident does not take place: they represent a tempting bait for individuals and organized groups who either seek an illegal economic gain by selling stolen weapons and ammunition, or need them for perpetrating other forms of illegal activities. Thus, it is necessary to constantly guard such stockpiles with no defense value and maintain the storage sites, which represents an additional burden to often already tightened defense budgets.

However, the most logical solution to the problem of excess and unstable stockpiles – their disposal – inevitably brings enormous financial expenses for each state in the Region. One of the main reasons is to be found in an inadequate information exchange among the countries of the Region on their existing disposal capacities, especially if we take into account the

existing independent quests towards development of disposal capacities. In this light, regional approach to excess weapons and ammunition disposal is seen as the key to finding a lasting solution to this problem.

By organizing this conference, RACVIAC served as a forum for both raising the awareness of the excess weapons and ammunition disposal, and facilitating the process of finding a sustainable solution to this problem.

Thus, developing a shared vision of a future solution to this problem was the desired outcome of the Conference, while more specific objectives were:

- to exchange information on the current status of national stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition and capacities for their disposal;
- to present national excess weapons and ammunition related policies and plans for the future;
- to examine how excess weapons and ammunition disposal process is connected with national cycle of defense budget planning and realization;
- to identify possible areas of regional / international cooperation in this field;
- to prepare a paper highlighting issues of regional importance in the field of excess weapons and ammunition disposal.

Activity Venue, Duration and Participation

The Conference was held between 30 May and 01 June 2011 in the Croatian Armed Forces Club in Pula (Croatia).

The Conference comprised four sessions. In the first session, representatives of

international organizations presented their views on excess weapons and ammunition stockpiles, as well as on the process of their disposal, from both regional and international perspective. In the following three sessions national representatives gave presentations on logistical, policy and financial aspects of the process of excess weapons and ammunition disposal. The sessions were designed to include both presentations and discussions, with sufficient time left to properly address the participants' questions and exchange the views.

The participants were representatives from six countries and five organizations, namely: Albania (3), Bosnia and Herzegovina (3), Croatia (5), Serbia (3), the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia¹ (2), Montenegro (2), International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance – ITF (3), NATO HQ Sarajevo (1), Regional Cooperation Council – RCC (2), Small Arms Survey (1) and RACVIAC (6).



Welcome address by RACVIAC Director, Ambassador Todorčevski (right). Croatian Logistic Command Commander MG Mate Ostović (left).

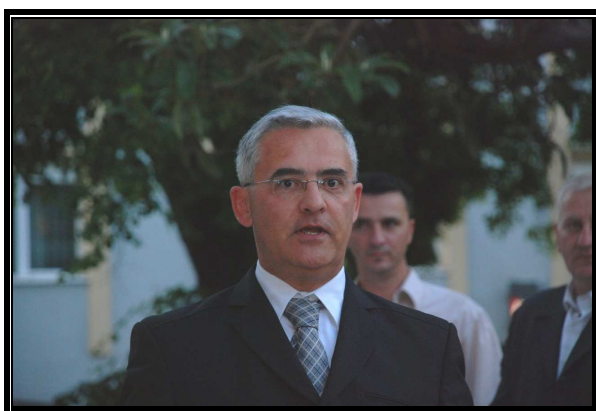
Conference Opening

Opening the Conference, Ambassador Nikola Todorčevski, Director of RACVIAC, emphasized that RACVIAC recognized the

¹ Turkey recognizes The Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.

importance of this topic and thus the necessity of bringing together experts from the regional countries, as only by providing them with an opportunity to exchange relevant information and lessons learned regarding disposal of excess weapons and ammunition could a shared vision of a future solution to this problem be developed.

Thanking the participants for the attendance, the Ambassador called for their proactive contribution and for openness, national regulations permitting.



Mr. Davor Ćutić, Croatian MoD, greets participants at the welcome reception on 29 May 2011

The Ambassador went on to remind the participants that one of the Conference goals was to produce a paper highlighting issues of regional importance in the field of excess weapons and ammunition disposal, to be used later on as an information tool for the higher levels of governance on the most important issues in this field.

The participants were subsequently welcomed by the representative of the Minister of Defence of the Republic of Croatia, Logistic Command Commander, Major General Mate Ostović. He briefly presented the Croatian situation in terms of stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition and Croatia's view on how to deal with the issue. In his final words, General Ostović wished the participants a pleasant stay in Croatia and successful work.

Keynote Speech

Following the welcome addresses, the Conference participants had the honor to hear the keynote speech delivered by Mr. Zoran Šajinović, Assistant Minister for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Defence of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the current MAG Chairperson.

During his speech, Mr Šajinović offered a comprehensive, yet succinct picture of the current situation in the SEE region concerning stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition. He once again stressed the multifaceted nature of hazard posed by these stockpiles: from accidental explosion, through illicit proliferation to theft by criminal individuals or groups seeking to make economic gain or facilitate other forms of illegal activities they undertake.



Keynote speech delivered by MAG Chairman, Mr. Zoran Šajinović

Mr. Šajinović cautioned that even if none of the above-mentioned scenarios happened, stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition still represented a heavy burden for ministries of defence and armed forces. Therefore, in order to minimize accidental explosions, stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition have to be stored properly, and armed forces compelled to maintain more weapons and ammunition storage sites than they actually need for storing operationally indispensable weapons and

ammunition. Besides that, as Mr Šajinović pointed out, armed forces frequently deploy soldiers to perform guard duties in order to prevent theft, whereby their training and performing of operational duties might be obstructed. Such essentially improper use of armed forces further reduces the amount of financial means for the necessary modernization.

Mr Šajinović reiterated that excess weapons and ammunition disposal was a highly relevant issue for the SEE region. Despite a number of similarities, individual countries still face country-specific problems and different disposal capacities. In that light, he wrapped up his speech by expressing hope that the conference would bring about bilateral or other forms of international cooperation related to specific problems and capacities to deal with them.

Session I. Towards a Sustainable Solution for Excess Weapons and Ammunition: Regional and International Perspective

Ms. Jasna Lazarević acquainted participants with the Small Arms Survey (SAS) and its projects addressing threats of inadequately managed weapons and ammunition storage sites and stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition. Special attention was given to the reports, papers and other products resulting from SAS activities and projects. Ms Lazarević also presented the Regional Approach to Stockpiles Reduction (RASR) initiative and explained the SAS support to RASR. It is noteworthy to mention that RASR maintains a website where numerous useful materials in languages of the SEE region can be found. Ms Lazarević spared no effort to share the wealth of her personal as well as SAS excess weapons and ammunition related experience gathered around the world, thus adding a special value to the conference.



Conference session in progress.

ITF Director, Mr. Dorijan Maršić, acquainted participants with the ITF in general and its activities. He pointed out that the ITF had broadened not only the area of its activity, but the scope of its activities as well – from dealing exclusively with demining in the beginning, to reducing threats to human security from post-conflict challenges other than landmines, supporting conventional weapons destruction programs and reducing threats to human security from disruptive challenges. Mr. Maršić also addressed the issue of the ITF support to RASR initiative. Mr. Blaž Mihelić complemented the ITF presentation by providing details on its activities.



RACVIAC Director, Ambassador Todorčevski, expressing gratitude to ITF Director, Mr. Maršić

LTC Alexander Bauer from NATO HQ Sarajevo concluded the first session by informing the participants on the NATO

support to reduction of small arms, light weapons, ammunition and ammunition storage sites in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Session II: Logistical Aspect of Excess Weapons and Ammunition Disposal

During this session representatives of the participating countries had an opportunity to present the current status of stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition in their respective countries and to provide information on their national disposal capacities. All the countries' representatives provided details on current amounts and types of excess weapons and ammunition as well as on national disposal capacities, and shared information on the problems and challenges they were facing, unable to solve them on their own. Such fruitful information exchange paved the way for international cooperation, as it led to identifying a lack of disposal capacities for certain types of ammunition in some countries on the one hand, and the excess of the same capacities in other countries on the other hand. During the lively discussion, a majority of participants agreed that in this area bilateral cooperation would be more productive than any other form of international cooperation. However, it was stressed that conferences of this type created the propitious atmosphere and indispensable preconditions for such cooperation to be developed.

Session III: Policy Aspect of Excess Weapons and Ammunition Disposal

During the third session, it was concluded that a common approach to solving the problem of excess weapons and ammunition included, in order of priority, selling, donation and finally their destruction / disposal. This conclusion coincides with the

findings of Small Arms Survey's researches in other regions of the world.

Subsequently, attention was drawn to the fact that besides becoming obsolete for technical reasons, e.g. through aging, new amounts of excess weapons and ammunition are created through the normal process of armed forces restructuring. Therefore, the frequently present opinion that the process of excess weapons and ammunition disposal is relatively short, with a clear end in sight, is misleading and inadequate as it may result in reluctance to commit funds to disposal capacities development. On the contrary, creation of surplus weapons and ammunition in armed forces is a normal and constant process and, thus, disposal capacities and processes have to be a standing part of the armed forces' structure and procedures.



Assistant Minister for Material Resources in the MoD of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ilija Pilipović, during a relaxed discussion with the Albanian delegation

Session IV: Financial Aspect of Excess Weapons and Ammunition Disposal

During this session all the countries representatives stated that they were facing lack of financial means which would enable them to continually carry out of excess weapons and ammunition disposal. In the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, a calculation was presented showing that the cost of guarding locations with excess and non-prospective weapons

and ammunition amounted to around 1 million Euros annually.

It was also noted that the disposal process can create revenue for the countries, as a result of selling weapons and ammunition or materials remained after demilitarization. However, due to specifics of legislation, not in all countries can these financial means be used to directly enhance the disposal process.

In order to fill the financial gaps, countries are seeking various forms of international cooperation, either directly with individual partner countries or through international organizations. For instance, a NATO Trust Fund was established on Albania's initiative to assist the country to carry out disposal of its once huge stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition. The country is currently trying to initiate a second cycle of the NATO Trust Fund.



H.E. Mr. Draško Jovanović, Deputy Minister of Defense of Montenegro, during his exposé on financial aspects of excess weapons and ammunition disposal

Summary

The conference proved to be worthwhile, as it provided an opportunity for experts dealing with disposal of stockpiles of excess weapons and ammunition to share experience and know-how, and to initiate crucial partnerships. In addition, the participants had a unique opportunity to acquaint themselves with regional and

international organizations dealing with the subject matter and providing assistance, as well as to get a deeper insight into existing programs and initiatives in the region, such as RASR. Social events organized during the conference played an important role in establishing and fostering network of experts dealing with the same issues.

As a result of the conference, a paper, highlighting issues of regional importance in the field of excess weapons and ammunition disposal, was prepared by RACVIAC staff guided by Mr. Sorin Sterie, expert on security issues working with the RCC. The goal of the paper is to, within the RASR framework and with the support of the RCC and the SEE Defense Policy Directors, identify an appropriate ministerial meeting, such as the SEECP Ministers of Defense Meeting, where there is a possibility that the identified forms of regional cooperation could be endorsed.

Compiled by: Major Saša Konjević, Planning and Liaison Officer for SEE, RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation (Course Director for the Towards a Sustainable Solution for Excess Weapons and Ammunition Conference).