



Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR) **Information Handout**

What is RASR?

The Regional Approach to Stockpile Reduction (RASR) is a long-term, coordinated, regional approach to address the threats posed by excess, unstable, loosely secured, or otherwise at-risk stockpiles of conventional weapons and munitions. RASR encourages affected governments and relevant organizations to develop a proactive, coordinated, regional approach to securing and destroying small arms and light weapons by building local capacity, sharing best practices and lessons learned, and synchronizing resources in order to maximize their efficiency. The ultimate aim of the RASR initiative is to prevent disastrous explosions or destabilizing diversions of conventional weapons and munitions.

For more details, visit www.rasrinitiative.org or email info@rasrinitiative.org.]

Why is Albania Involved?

Albania is proud to participate in the RASR initiative for South East Europe. This is an informal yet serious opportunity for senior military officers and munitions experts from throughout South East Europe to occasionally come together and share ideas and discuss challenges that are common to them all in terms of reducing their enormous legacy of Cold War-era munitions that no longer have military value but that are an increasingly dangerous and expensive burden to protect and store. These conversations within the RASR context not only help to share useful technical knowledge among the militaries in this region, they also contribute to regional confidence building.

Why is Albania hosting this event?

Albania is proud to be the host for the first time for a RASR Workshop. The Ministry of Defense of Albania, is also pleased to have the opportunity to take our RASR guests to one of our facilities - ULP Mjebes - where they can see with their own eyes how Albania is dealing with its immense stocks of old munitions. We hope that some of the

processes they observe at Mjekes will give them useful ideas that they can emulate in their own countries. We also have free and unused capacity at the factory of Mjekes that could be used for demilitarization of other excess munitions if required.

http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/G-Issue-briefs/SAS-RASR-IB1_SE-European-Surplus-Arms-ALB-rev.pdf

Reduction of stocks in Albania;

What Albania has done on the area of demilitarization and stockpile reduction is mainly an outcome of individual national commitment and international cooperation. After the establishment of the democratic regime, the Albanian Government had to deal with the enormous stockpile of armaments, ammunition and other military equipment distributed in numerous small depots all around the country.

Albania became free of chemical weapons in 2007. With the assistance of OSCE, it is engaged in a project to safely eliminate the MoD's remaining stocks of harmful industrial and military chemicals.

During the last ten years, Albania destroyed most of its arsenal of weapons such as surplus tanks, artillery pieces and large weapons systems, as well as over one hundred thousand small arms and light infantry weapons.

What is the issue with old munitions in Albania?

Through its vigorous efforts to safely conduct HOTSPOTS clearance in various sites, and its efforts to safely and steadily demilitarize excess, unstable munitions at the ULP Mjekes facility and at other facilities in Albania, the Ministry of Defense is demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the safety of Albanian civilians and of its soldiers, reducing its spending on guarding munitions that no longer have any military value, and demonstrating that it is a responsible member of NATO.

Hot Spot Clearance

- Since the explosions at Gerdec in 2008, and with the generous assistance of the United States of America through Slovenia-based organization ITF Enhancing Human Security (formerly International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance), the site of explosion is well on the way to becoming fully cleared and safe for the local population. All of the giant craters caused by massive explosions have been cleared of UXO and refilled with soil, thus establishing as much as possible the original condition of the landscape. Most of the areas adjoining and surrounding the explosion site have been recovered as well. We thank the United States of America its assistance in reaching this advanced stage of the Gerdec valley rehabilitation.

www.itf-fund.si

- Part of the \$3.6 million dollars that the United States of America invested in 2011 alone just for the Gerdec task was also used to help clear dangerous UXO at two "Hot Spots" including one demolition range (former military firing ranges). This was done through a U.S. Government grant to the ITF, which sub-contracted the task to Sterling International, which sub-contracted with Danish Church Aid (DCA). We appreciate the American assistance and appreciate the excellent project management and hard work that was conducted by the ITF, Sterling, DCA, and DCA's brave Albanian employees.

What about Industrial Demilitarization of surplus munitions?

The demilitarization process gained special moment during 2009. A National Action Plan was put together for the elimination of surplus ammunition and the Albanian Government allocated each year some 3 million Euro for the process, in addition to the funds received from various international donors. Through the implementation of the Action Plan, Albania succeeded in eliminating more than 6 thousand tons of ammunition in 2009, over 20 thousand tons in 2010 and more than 26 thousand tons in 2011. The objective for 2012 is to eliminate around 26.000 tons, and during the first quarter of 2012, Albania has eliminated 6,500 tons. In total during the period of 2009 – April 2012, Albania has destroyed over 60,000 tons of surplus ammunition and the remaining will be destroyed by the end of 2013.

In the entire process of demilitarization, the key to Albania's success has been the international cooperation and assistance provided by USA Government, NAMSA, OSCE and through funds provided by Germany, Finland, Denmark and other individual countries. There have been two major demilitarization donor conferences, the first in Brussels in March 2010 and the second in Tirana in October 2011.

Through a series of Grants to the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA), the United States of America has enabled Albania to safely rid itself of tons of excess, unstable munitions at the ULP Mjekes facility. Over the last two years, the United States has already generously spent \$4 million at ULP Mjekes alone to help Albania rid itself of its old, useless Cold War-era munitions. This process has made Albania safer. By the end of this project, Albania will be in an even better position in these regards. This project has also helped Albanian workers to be gainfully employed.

- Thanks to the technical assistance provided by NAMSA, Albanian's ULP Mjekes facility has developed the expertise, infrastructure, and potential to help fulfill the demilitarization needs if required. ULP Mjekes success to date:

- **601 tonnes demilitarized, funded by the project in the three months January to March 2012**
- **5,509 tonnes demilitarized, funded by the project since the project started in January 2011**
- **Over 10 M separate items of landmines, mortars, shell and SAA delivered since January 2011**

http://www.namsa.nato.int/Demil/news_e.htm

- The focal point for United States conventional weapons destruction assistance to Albania has been and continues to be the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (www.state.gov/t/pm/wra).

Further Details are available in a series of FACT SHEETS:

1. NATO TRUST FUND PROJECT (Separate NAMSA Fact Sheet enclosed)
2. ITF
3. DCA Project
4. RASR Fact Sheet