

OSCE activities on SALW and Conventional Ammunition Projects

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The purpose of this article is primarily “awareness” and to share some information on the OSCE (the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) work, focusing on SALW (Small Arms and Light Weapons) and CA (Conventional Ammunition) projects within the OSCE region. The presentation also aims to show the OSCE contribution to the implementation of the *UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All its Aspects (2001)* (UN PoA).

Background

The end of the cold war and the substantial downsizing of armed forces in Europe, withdrawal and restructuring of troops within the former Soviet Union have left behind large stocks of surplus SALW and CA. In a number of the affected countries there are not sufficient national capacities to destroy or to store weapons and ammunition or to store them in a safe and efficient way, permanently due to the lack of technical, administrative as well as financial resources. Due to these shortcomings, it is of course very difficult to safeguard the stockpiles from not only a military, but also from a humanitarian and environmental perspective. The risk of illicit trade of SALW and CA is, as everyone can understand, evident and will for sure escalate further unless actions are taken to prevent this from continuing.

Cross-Dimensional Approach

The OSCE work on SALW and CA should be regarded as cross-dimensional in nature: it is a politico-military and security problem, but also just as much a humanitarian and an economic and environmental problem, i.e. the three dimensions of the OSCE. In this perspective the OSCE field missions play an important role by engaging themselves in all dimensions in order to raise awareness in the respective governmental authorities and to assist in the implementation of OSCE decisions and projects.

Some examples on why this should be regarded as a cross-dimensional problem:

- Health and environmental damage – rocket fuel Mélange, hexogen;
- Theft by terror or organized crime groups;
- Risk of being channelled to instable/conflict areas.

The fact is: the more weapons can be destroyed and the more the security aspect around the SALW- and CA storages can be improved, the less the risk will be that weapons and ammunition end up in wrong hands and in the wrong place, or that ammunition depots explode, like the one in Novobohdanivka (e.g. spontaneous explosions affect surrounding areas (villages, infrastructure) – Depot 275 (Ukraine) in May 2004, June 2005, and August 2006) and endanger the lives of thousands of innocent people.

Best Practice Guide on SALW

The OSCE has developed a Best Practice Guide on SALW in order to provide assistance/guidelines to OSCE participating States concerning implementation of SALW decisions. The Best Practice Guide contains 8 chapters:

- I National Controls over Manufacture of SALW
- II Marking, Record-keeping, and Traceability of SALW

- III National Procedures for Stockpile Management and Security
- IV National Control of Brokering Activities
- V Export Control of SALW
- VI Definition and Indicators of a Surplus of SALW
- VII National Procedures for the Destruction of SALW
- VIII SALW in Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Processes

The Annex to the Best Practice Guide contains – since March 2006 – National Procedures for Stockpile Management and Security of MANPADS (Man-Portable Air Defence System).

With the OSCE decisions and the ongoing work, one could rightly state that the OSCE is in the frontline concerning the implementation of the UN PoA and aims to remain there.

OSCE Response to Participating States Requests for Assistance

According to the OSCE Document on SALW and CA, participating States can request assistance from the OSCE concerning surplus stockpiles of SALW and CA (including rocket fuel Mélange) consisting of destruction, stockpile security, management assistance in creating project proposals etc.

Initially, an official request has to be forwarded to the OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation in order for the OSCE to be able to engage actively. Delegations are invited to informal meetings – Informal Groups consisting of interested participating States are established.

Assessment visits are being organised in order to assess the situation according to the information provided by the requesting state. This information from the requesting State should mainly include:

- Nature, amount, technical characteristics of each type of conventional ammunition, explosive material or detonating device or ammunition storage material;
- Location of stockpile (coordinates, rural/urban vicinity);
- Security of stockpile (management and condition);
- Nature and level of risk (to the population/environment, vulnerability to intrusion/theft, etc.);
- Existing plans and/or methods used for destruction/enhancing stockpile management;
- Possible national contributions/commitments in order to facilitate and support the project (transportation and other logistical support, tax reductions, national focal points, national experts etc);
- Assistance requested.

The Assessment Team (AT) contains experts from participating States, international organizations and representatives from the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre. The aim of the assessment visit and the task for the AT is to develop and produce suitable, cost effective and “donor friendly” projects. Project proposals are presented to OSCE participating States in order to find donors for the project, since the projects are mainly financed through extra budgetary funds.

The final phase is the implementation of the project. One could see different possibilities: implementation by an implementing agency (the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Belarus) or a Lead Nation Concept. The latter has been practiced in conducting an assessment visit in the Russian Federation/Kaliningrad after to a request for destruction of conventional ammunition.

As mentioned earlier the Best Practice Guide (BPG) on SALW gives guidelines to participating States. There is a work going on in the Forum for Security Co-operation to develop a Best Practice Guide on CA. The BPG on CA will be a valuable tool and guideline in the same way as the BPG on SALW.

Examples of Requests for Assistance from OSCE Participating States

Ukraine

An official request from Ukraine was sent to the OSCE/Forum for Security Co-operation concerning two different problems:

- Destruction of 16,500 tons of the Rocket fuel “Mélange”
- Rehabilitation of Military Ammunition Depot 275 in Novobohdanivka, where 92,000 tons of ammunition were stored.

A first joint assessment visit for the OSCE Project in Novobohdanivka was organized between the OSCE and the European Commission (EC) in July 2006, in order to assess the situation on the ground. Spontaneous explosions had affected surrounding areas in Novobohdanivka (villages, infrastructure) three times until now (May 2004, June 2005, August 2006). OSCE Emergency Phase Project was prepared by the Office of the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine. The first joint OSCE/EC High level assessment visit took place in June 2006 and a report was delivered to the OSCE in September 2006. The intention is to continue and develop the co-operation between the OSCE and the EC in order to find the best way forward on how to clear up the area in Novobohdanivka.

Belarus

The project proposal on SALW Stockpile Management Security was prepared by the United Kingdom, Spain and Switzerland, with the support of South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of SALW (SEESAC) and the Belarus authorities. The proposal was introduced to the Forum for Security Co-operation in October 2005 and contains 16 storages in Belarus. The total cost for the project on a long term basis was estimated at 3 Million Euros. In order to launch the project and to start the initial phase, a cut off point of 500,000 Euro was necessary. This level has been reached by donations from OSCE participating States through the UNDP Trust Fund.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UNDP and the OSCE Secretariat was signed in June 2006, which enables a co-operation on a technical basis regarding implementation of OSCE SALW/CA projects. Based on this MoU, UNDP will act as the implementing agency for the OSCE SALW project in Belarus.

Concerning the request for CA destruction in Belarus, there are 99,000 tons of ammunition in Belarus with a growing rate of 4-9,000 tons/year. The ammunition is partly located in radioactively contaminated area and the national capacities are overstretched to deal with the problems. There is a requirement for ecologically friendly technology.

Tajikistan

The project in Tajikistan is the most successful OSCE project on SALW and CA so far. It is implemented by the OSCE Centre in Dushanbe with support of a Chief Technical Adviser (provided by Norway). The implementation of this project has had positive effects also on other OSCE projects in the other OSCE dimensions in Tajikistan, due to the fact that the OSCE Centre has received positive publicity and has been able to expand its cooperation with Tajik officials and governmental authorities.

Phase I was completed in December 2006 and phase II (also called the final phase) started in the fall of 2006. Phase II is a continuation of the first phase, but with more focus on regional measures. Phase I included four projects (SALW and Conventional Ammunition destruction, capacity building, and storage security). Phase II comprises five projects (conventional ammunition destruction, capacity building, storage security focusing on regional measures). The aim is to finalize phase II by the end of 2008.

The project in Tajikistan is a good example on how to implement a project within the OSCE, and it also shows the important role and advantages for the OSCE Centre in the region when it engages itself in a cross-dimensional project of this kind.

Kazakhstan

The project in Kazakhstan contains a request for SALW and CA destruction and Stockpile Security (the latter also includes building up a database for documentation and record-keeping). In preparation of this project, a first joint OSCE-NATO assessment visit took place in June in conjunction with a Workshop on SALW and CA in Almaty in June 2005.

NAMSA (NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency) has taken a lead role in SALW destruction in Kazakhstan and is working bilaterally with Kazakh MOD (Ministry of Defence). The project concerns around 26,500 SALW and some 350 MANPADS.

Concerning Stockpile Security and CA destruction, additional information is needed in order to be able to develop suitable projects. It is mainly and primarily a question of clearing out the financial assistance, which is estimated to around 11 million US\$ for disposal of 2,5 million pieces of conventional ammunition.

Mélange

The rocket fuel Mélange is a liquid component propellant used for larger rockets and guided missiles. The component “Mélange” is a complex chemical substance, extremely active, easily evaporating and highly toxic.

The OSCE is dealing with requests for destruction of the rocket fuel “Mélange” in three phases:

- Phase I is a Scoping Study on the elimination of the rocket fuel Component Stocks, based on the assessment visit
- Phase II consists of Tendering, Planning, Budgeting and Contracting
- Phase III is the implementation phase: environmentally sound elimination of the Melange by recycling it into a harmless product of waste

The OSCE Centre in Armenia is handling 876 tons of Mélange. Furthermore, there are requests for destruction of Mélange from Kazakhstan (1,550 tons), Ukraine (16,500 tons), Uzbekistan (1,000 tons) and Azerbaijan (1,200 tons). The OSCE cooperates and coordinates its activities with other international organizations, on a case by case basis, in order to find the best technical solution for the respective projects, possible “division of labour”, and to avoid duplication in work. The latter is of course important from a donor’s perspective, since several of the OSCE participating States also are members of other international organizations (NATO, EU, and UN).

Concluding Remarks

The OSCE Documents on SALW and on CA as well as the Best Practice Guides are effective and useful tools in addressing the problems arising from SALW and CA, and in fostering transparency as well as confidence among the participating States. They serve as important frameworks for dealing with surpluses and stockpiles of SALW and CA with a view to reducing the risk of destabilizing accumulations and uncontrolled proliferation.

The co-operation and coordination with other international organizations are of great importance in order to find best possible solutions and to synchronize the efforts. Key words in the area of SALW and CA projects are: “step by step, on a case by case basis”, “joint seminars/workshops” and “joint assessment visits”.

The OSCE, as a regional arrangement under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, gives a substantial contribution and has taken a leading role by placing itself in the front line concerning the implementation of the *UN Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW in All its Aspects* (2001).