

Canada to chair Stability Pact Regional Support Group for Mine Action



What is the Stability Pact for South East Europe?

It is a process to promote peace, prosperity, stability and regional cooperation through the full integration of all countries in southeastern Europe into the European and Euro-Atlantic political, economic and security structures.

Why is it important?

The Stability Pact unites, in a single forum, attempts to bring about political, economic, social and security reforms to the region and provides a mechanism through which the region's states can express their views.

What is the Stability Pact's relationship to mine action?

A special committee on mine action has been created under the auspices of the Pact's Working Table Three: Security Issues. Since many of the states of southeast Europe are mine affected, it is logical that mine action form part of a wider approach to improving security for participating states.

The Stability Pact has established a Regional Support Group for Mine Action and for the moment Canada is in the chair. The roles and responsibilities for this group are currently being developed.

What will the Regional Mine Action Support Group do?

Broadly speaking, the Regional Mine Action Support Group will act as a catalyst to promote regional mine action, to facilitate synergy within the region and to highlight where maximum value might be attained with on-the-ground projects.

The group will act as a focal point for exchanging information and standards and as a liaison between all members. Our overall functions are to facilitate, support, coordinate and encourage. The group does not have any mandate to evaluate, manage or direct existing programs, and above all, we do not wish to duplicate existing frameworks for coordination, such as the United Nations. ●



Canadian Lieutenant General (retired) Gordon Reay has recently been named chair of the Regional Support Group for Mine Action under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South East Europe. Here, in an interview with SafeLane, Gen. Reay explains the group's mine action efforts.

Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council engages in mine action

In the traditional sense, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) does not have a mandate for humanitarian mine action, with the exception of clearing mines in support of military tasks.

However, in the context of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC), which

includes NATO allies as well as members of the Partnership for Peace, humanitarian mine action has become an area for cooperation, information sharing and confidence building between partners.

In December 1999, a Partnership Work Plan report outlined the way forward for the EAPC. Tasks include the creation of a trust fund for stockpile destruction, information sharing on standards and technologies, increased training opportunities and sharing of technical expertise.

In May 1999 the EAPC held a workshop on Regionally Focused Mine Action in Thessalonika, Greece. This workshop explored possibilities for cooperation on mine action between partners in the region, on data collection, promotion of standards, training and stockpile destruction.

Canada will continue to work with this group and other groups in the region, to promote as much activity, by as diverse a range of actors as possible, on the landmine issue. ●

Canadian technical advisor to assist with Albanian stockpile destruction

In September 2000, Canada will send a technical advisor to Albania to assist with the destruction of stockpiled munitions, including landmines.

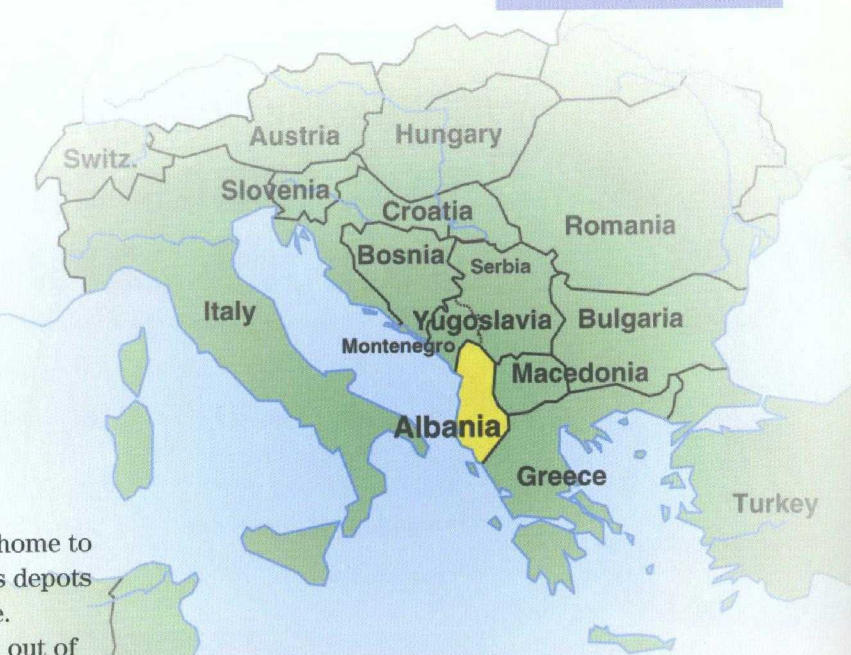
The advisor will be deployed for one year to the Albanian Ministry of Defence where he will assist with the destruction of stockpiled munitions and help develop a national plan for clearance of unexploded ordnance throughout the country.

Located in a region plagued by conflict in recent

decades, Albania is home to numerous munitions depots stockpiled over time.

Increasingly coming out of isolation, the former Communist state in southeastern Europe signed the Ottawa Convention September 8, 1998 and it ratified February 29, 2000. It requires technical and financial assistance to meet its Convention obligations. An initial mission to Albania by Canada's Ambassador for Mine Action Daniel Livermore confirmed

Canada's willingness to sup-



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port mine action and stockpile destruction there.

Though landmines are not as large a problem in Albania as unexploded ordnance, the Canadian advisor will help the country confront the organizational challenge of setting priorities and developing programs to dispose of munitions.

This project is being co-financed by Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Department of National Defence. It is hoped that the operation will assist Albania in the safe disposal of its munitions and in monitoring any future Canadian-assisted stockpile destruction projects in Albania. ●