

The most urgent task is dealing with the basket of issues arising from the unprecedentedly rapid return of more than 750 000 refugees to their homes in Kosovo. Canada's priority has been to focus on improving safety and security. A pressing issue has been the establishment of a United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK). Canada is providing civilian police to UNMIK. Currently deployed in Kosovo are 38 officers, to be joined by another 17 in September. The Canadian contingent could eventually reach 100 police officers. Meanwhile, 5 police trainers are assisting in the development of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Police Training School, which will train new Kosovar police officers.

Equally urgent is the task of defusing and disposing of tens of thousands of landmines, booby traps and unexploded ordnance (UXO) such as shells and bombs.

Canada is in the forefront of these efforts:

- It is providing up to \$5 million over three years to help with the work of mine clearance, mine awareness and assistance to victims, and with the establishment of an international Mine Action Centre in Kosovo under UN aegis. The Centre assists mine victims, educates civilians on mines, and supports teams that survey and clear mines. A Canadian lieutenant-colonel is serving at the Centre as liaison officer with NATO.
- It is contributing \$200 000 toward the cost of dispatching to Kosovo teams from two Canadian private-sector groups specializing in UXO disposal. One is the Wolf's Flat Ordnance Disposal Corporation, an Alberta-based company owned by the Tsuu T'ina First Nation, with previous experience in Panama. The other is the Canadian International Demining Centre, an NGO based in Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Another high-priority task is war crimes investigation by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Sent to Kosovo in June was a nine-member team of crime scene forensic experts, organized by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and consisting of police and civilian specialists. They spent six weeks excavating mass graves and five crime sites, and conducting autopsies on 60 bodies; the aim was to collect evidence to support prosecution of those responsible for atrocities committed against ethnic Albanian villagers. The mission was considered so successful that Canada was asked to send another team, to be on site in September. Further, Foreign Affairs Minister Axworthy recently announced that Canada will aid in investigations by providing intelligence information to the Tribunal.

In addition to dealing with the immediate humanitarian needs and putting in place the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo, there remains the massive task of rebuilding the Balkans after nearly 10 years of armed conflict. European countries will play a leading role in this effort, acting for the most part through the Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe. This major instrument for Balkan reconstruction was signed in June by the foreign ministers of European Union countries, Canada, Japan, the United States, the Russian Federation and other nations.

Work to implement the Pact will proceed under the auspices of the OSCE. It will cover economic reconstruction, democratization (including the supervision of elections) and support for human rights, plus refugee issues and regional security matters. Canadian participation will focus on providing assistance in selected sectors where Canada is recognized as having the expertise to make a significant difference, while leaving long-term economic reconstruction to others. ●—



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