

STOCKPILE DESTRUCTION: Canada and Ukraine reach interim accord

Lieutenant-Colonel Normand Levert recently took part in a Canadian Mine Action delegation which had been invited by the Ukrainian Army to visit ammunition sites and witness storage conditions. Here he reports on the practical challenges of stockpile destruction in the Ukraine, and invites other donors to contribute to a destruction program in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The best place to attack anti-personnel mines is before they find their way into the ground – that is, to destroy stockpiles. Stockpile reduction is safer, faster and cheaper than hunting hidden live mines. In minefields, success is measured one mine at a time: in stockpiles, success can be measured by the boxcar.

In stockpile destruction, success can be measured by the boxcar.

Many people living near stockpiles worry justifiably that they are a threat. Poorly stored explosives can deteriorate to the point where they are unstable.

We were pleased therefore, when the Ukrainian Army

invited a Canadian delegation to tour their stockpiles. Our team embarked on the trip as part of the effort to help Ukraine sign the Ottawa Convention and destroy their stockpiles. The invitation was the second of an ongoing series of visits.

Our Ukrainian hosts were forthcoming, open and cooperative. We found both sites well guarded with substantial fencing and round-the-clock patrols. As in Canadian practice, every bunker was locked and the staff kept close records of all access. We were escorted to the bunkers and allowed to inspect row upon row of carefully stacked wooden boxes of landmines.

In order to assess best destruction methods, we asked to see the packaging which can provide clues as to the condition of the mines. On one site we brought out the notorious "butterfly mines", designed to be dispersed in great numbers from helicopters. They were sealed within a thick polyethylene bag. Another box held PMN mines. We found the mines in excellent condition – good news, as stable mines are more



Above: Colonel Fitch and Colonel Mikhaelenko display mines from Ukrainian stockpile.

Left: Officers closely examine mine packaging for clues to the stability of the weapons.



easily destroyed.

As a result of the visit, Canadian and Ukrainian officials initialed an interim accord, still to be negotiated and approved at the political level, on the destruction of millions of AP mines. For me, this is evidence that trust between nations is built upon trust between people.

Canada invites other interested donors to develop consortia to finance this and other destruction programs.

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Commander Rick Williams

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA:

Early this year, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia established a Trust Fund aimed at supporting mine clearance and victim assistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

To help support this initiative, in May 1998 the United States Congress allowed a U.S. contribution to be made of up to \$38 million (U.S.) into the Trust Fund. This was conditional upon other donors contributing matching funds.

On November 6, 1998 Canada announced a \$1 million contribution to the Fund. Following a First Donors Conference on November 8-9 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the Fund's

Fund to ease landmines crisis

account grew to approximately \$3.5 million U.S. With the matching contribution from the United States this meant that a total of \$7 million (U.S.) was available for demining and victim assistance, with the prospect of much more to come from donors.

"Canada applauds and encourages the spirit of regional cooperation shown in the development of this Fund," said Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy. "This partnership will have long-term benefits for mine action on the ground in Bosnia and Herzegovina."

Canada has committed \$10 million over five years to support mine action initiatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and welcomes the opportunity to encourage other donors through this initiative. •
by Gerry Robinson,
Foreign Affairs Special Representative.

Sarajevo Cemetery marked out for demining.



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