

SMALL ARMS AND CONVENTIONAL AMMUNITION



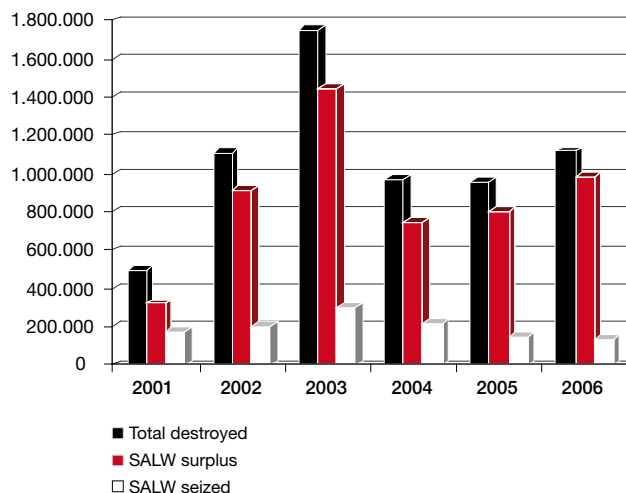


Working together to enhance security and stability:

OSCE Projects on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Conventional Ammunition

Destroying a gun does not take a lot more effort than opening this brochure. One can cut, burn, crush or shred weapons at a cost as low as 3 euros a piece. However, lucrative profits and the power that small arms and light weapons (SALW) bring have made them attractive to illegally produce, sell and smuggle. According to the Small Arms Survey, a Geneva based research institute, over 785 million small arms are in circulation worldwide. The number is likely to grow.

SALW destroyed by the OSCE participating States



Why are SALW an issue?

Small arms are the weapons most easily acquired and used in armed conflict by both states and non-state actors. They are often also the weapons of choice for rebels, armed groups, terrorists and criminal gangs.

To ensure that such weapons are not diverted from the legal market, their supply must be controlled. The production, transfer and stockpiling of SALW must be secured, and any surplus weapons properly disposed of.

The global trade in these weapons has been estimated to be 4 billion U.S. dollars.

Why is the OSCE involved?

The end of the Cold War left large stocks of surplus SALW and conventional ammunition on the territories of many participating States. The precarious conditions in which a number of these stockpiles are held present severe security and environmental risks and weapons could end up in the wrong hands.

Ensuring the secure and safe storage as well as destruction of surplus SALW and ammunition pose a serious challenge to many OSCE participating States. Because of limited national capacities and financial resources to address these problems, OSCE involvement is crucial. The nature of associated risks – to the environment, to human lives – means that OSCE assistance programmes in this field have to be **cross-dimensional**.

1,000 people die every day as a result of small arms.

Almost 90 per cent of illicit weapons are legally produced but later diverted into the illegal market.

What is *mélange* and why is it a security threat?

Mélange is a rocket fuel oxidizer formerly used by the Warsaw Pact armies. It is a corrosive, highly toxic and reactive substance that threatens the environment and public health due to its chemical composition and the progressive deterioration of storage containers.

Direct contact with *mélange* or inhalation of its fumes causes severe damage to the skin, mucous membranes, respiratory system and eyes. Rupture of a 100 square metre container would destroy biological life within a two-kilometre range and cause severe pollution within a 25-kilometre area. If leaked into the ground, the highly toxic chemicals could contaminate the environment for decades.

Where is *mélange* located?

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, thousands of tonnes of *mélange* were left on the territory of some OSCE countries. Some *mélange* storage containers date as far back as the 1960's, and in most cases, the containers' shelf-life of 11 to 15 years was already exceeded ten years ago. Some countries managed to remove their stocks of *mélange*. Others, such as Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Ukraine and Uzbekistan have been unable to cope with the problem on their own and have requested technical and financial assistance from the OSCE.

The OSCE response

By adopting the OSCE Documents on Small Arms and Light Weapons and Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition, as well as FSC Decision 15/02, the OSCE participating States committed to ensure effective controls of SALW and ammunition. The OSCE Forum for Security Co-operation also agreed to provide assistance with collection, destruction, improving stockpile management and security.

Facts about ammunition

- Several million tonnes of obsolete ammunition still remain on the territory of OSCE participating States. Inappropriate storage conditions and mismanagement threatens people and the environment.
- From 1995 to 2007, explosions occurred at 156 ammunition storage sites worldwide, killing over 3,500 and injuring over 4,100 people.
- According to the Small Arms Survey, 13 billion rounds of small arms ammunition were produced in 2005 alone.



Financial Needs

So far, 11 countries **have requested OSCE assistance on SALW and ammunition.**

Further funds are urgently sought for implementing the following projects:

- **2.3 million euros** to eliminate an initial 3,000 tonnes of Ukrainian mélange in 2008 and over 10 million euros to rid Ukraine of all mélange stocks totalling 16,000 tonnes by 2011.
- **1.25 million euros** to improve SALW stockpile security in Belarus (joint OSCE-UNDP Project).
- **3 million euros** to destroy 9,900 tonnes of conventional ammunition in Montenegro (joint OSCE-UNDP project).

Since 2004, the OSCE has accumulated extensive experience in managing assistance projects on surplus SALW and ammunition destruction, improving stockpile security and management, and eliminating mélange. Here are some examples:

The road to stability: Tajikistan

Tajikistan accumulated surplus SALW and ammunition stocks as a result of a weapons collection programme after the end of a civil war in 1994 and through ongoing criminal seizures. In 2004, the OSCE was requested to assist the country to destroy this surplus and to improve its stockpile security and management system.

The OSCE assessment conducted in 2004 confirmed that the stocks posed a high human risk. At many storage sites, minimum safety and security conditions were not met. Unexploded ordnance ready to detonate at any moment was stored in the backyards of governmental offices, and in one case next to a kindergarten. The OSCE response – the SALW and Ammunition Programme for Tajikistan – was launched rapidly in 2005 to build national SALW and ammunition disposal capacity and improve stockpile security in Dushanbe. The first phase was completed in November 2006, on time and within budget. In 2007, the OSCE launched Phase II of the programme, addressing SALW and ammunition problems throughout the country, including along the Tajik-Afghan border. **The total cost of the programme was approximately 2.3 million euros.**



“...factors suggest that ammunition is a strong ‘pressure point’ in efforts to reduce small arms misuse.” Small Arms Survey, 2005



Overcoming the Soviet Legacy

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, over 872 tonnes of mélange were left on the territory of the Republic of Armenia. The storage containers' shelf-life had expired, posing a high human and environmental risk.

Armenia, lacking technical and financial capacity, asked the OSCE for assistance. In May 2006, the OSCE and the Defence Ministry launched an OSCE- designed and -funded facility to convert this toxic substance into environmentally-friendly fertilizer. By September 2007, all 872 tonnes of melange had been converted and spread over agricultural areas.

The total cost of the project was approximately 1.3 million euros.

Increasing the capacity of local authorities

In May 2004, a fire occurred at a depot containing 92,000 tonnes of ammunition near the village of Novobohdanivka in Ukraine. Over half of the ammunition detonated, killing five people and injuring ten. Fires re-occurred at the depot in 2005 and 2006.

Ukraine asked the OSCE for assistance. Since 2005, the OSCE supported Ukraine's Unexploded Ordnance Clearance Programme by providing specialized equipment and training as well as personal protection equipment.



At the cost of 1.3 million euros, the OSCE helped Armenia destroy dangerous toxic chemicals that were left on its territory by the Soviet Army.



Who are our donors so far?

To date, the following countries have provided contributions to OSCE assistance projects on SALW and conventional ammunition: *Andorra, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.*

Would you like to help?

The FSC Support Section of the OSCE Conflict Prevention Centre co-ordinates and supports assistance projects that are financed with extra-budgetary funds provided by OSCE participating States. To sponsor a project or receive additional information, please contact the address below.

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