

THE DEMILITARIZATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AMMUNITION IN ALBANIA – A NATO PFP TRUST FUND PROJECT

By Rodrigue Boulay, CD, MSc, Project Technical Adviser,
and Arben Kotobelli, Project Supervisor, NAMSA Project Office - Albania
Translated into Albanian by: Ms Jonida Pepa, Project Assistant, NAMSA Project Office – Albania
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The second NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) Trust Fund Project in Albania began in December 2002 with two primary objectives; demilitarize 11,665 tonnes of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) Ammunition and improve Albania's industrial demilitarization capability. Selected to execute the project, the NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) opened a Project Office at the Albanian Ministry of Defense Headquarters in Tirana in March 2003.

The initial efforts were directed towards planning the demilitarization activities and identifying the support requirements of the project. Several activities in support of the project were possible in co-operation with Albanian organizations:

- The Albanian Armed Forces to provide for the transportation of ammunition from its storage place to the demilitarization facilities.
- The Albanian National Demilitarization Centre (NDC) for:
 - The training of Albanian Armed Forces drivers for the safe transportation of ammunition and explosives and the emergency procedures in the event of an accident. 128 drivers were trained.
 - The re-packing of loose small arms ammunition (SAA) that had been recovered from the public. 2,700 tonnes will have been re-packed by the end of 2006.
 - The provision of auditing services to monitor the production rate and the safety of the demilitarization activities at ULP Mjekës and KM Poliçan, where demilitarization activities are taking place.

The tendering process for the procurement of an Explosives Waste Incinerator to be installed at ULP Mjekës, near Elbasan, was started in July 2003. A contract to produce and install the EWI was awarded to El Dorado Engineering, from Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. The delivery and installation began in October 2004 and was completed in March 2005.

During the initial commissioning, a fire destroyed part of the pollution abatement system and delayed the start of operation. Upon completion of the repairs, the operational capability of the EWI was demonstrated during the commissioning phase. The EWI can incinerate a wide variety of ammunition while ensuring the air emissions are within legislated limits. The EWI was officially inaugurated on 5 October 2005 by the Honorable Fatmir Mediu, Minister of Defense, and Major General Karl-Heinz Münzner, NAMSA General Manager. It has been operating continually (24/7) since then.

A first demilitarization contract was awarded to ULP Mjekës for the demilitarization of 1,500 tonnes of Chinese hand grenades. This contract required a special tool to remotely remove the grenade wooden tail from the body. The tool was designed and constructed at ULP Mjekës. The TNT in the grenade bodies was recovered for re-use in Ammonite, a blasting explosive produced at ULP Mjekës. This contract was completed in February 2005.

The second demilitarization contract was also awarded to ULP Mjekës for the incineration of SAA. This contract includes the preparation of the SAA for incineration in the EWI, the operation and the maintenance of the EWI, and the handling and disposal of the scrap materials resulting from the incineration. By the end of December 2006, the EWI is expected to have incinerated in excess of 71 millions small arms projectiles of calibres ranging from 7.62 mm to 14.5 mm, weighing nearly 3,500 tonnes.

A third demilitarization contract was awarded to KM Poliçan for the demilitarization of 82,500 units of 107 mm mortar ammunition. For this project, the mortar ammunition is manually dismantled into its components. The TNT is removed using autoclaves and recovered. The other components containing explosives or propellants are incinerated. This project begun in September 2006 and will

be completed by the end of December 2006, increasing the quantity of ammunition destroyed by the project by 1,073 tonnes. Table 1 summarizes the ammunition demilitarized by the project at the end of September 2006.

Table 1 - Ammunition Demilitarized as of 1 October 2006

Description	Quantity Demilitarized	
	cartridges	tonnes
7.62 mm Mod 56	30,635,525	643.3
7.62 mm Mod 53	32,277,100	1,000.6
12.7 mm All Types	3,235,360	355.9
14.5 mm All Types	1,952,610	390.5
Chinese Defensive Hand Grenade	1,958,737	1,500.4
107 mm HE Mortar	15,562	202.3
	Total	4,093.0

Besides reducing the stockpile of surplus ammunition in Albania, the project is generating local employment, providing work to more than 130 employees at ULP Mjekës and KM Poliçan. The number of personnel hired through NDC varies between three and 15. The project team also employs four Albanians; the Project Supervisor and the Project Assistant are employed on a full-time basis while two consultants are employed on a part-time basis.

Though scheduled to be completed in December 2006, Canada, the Lead Nation for this project, approached the donors to extend the project until 31 December 2007. Canada is actively seeking donations to operate the EWI and continue the demilitarization operation in 2007.

The commissioning of the EWI at ULP Mjekës and its continuous operation is a major achievement of the project. By the end of this year, it is expected that the project will have demilitarized in excess of 6,000 tonnes of ammunition. With the continuous support from donors, demilitarization activities will continue throughout 2007 to meet the original objective to demilitarize 11,665 tonnes of ammunition and continue to improve Albania's demilitarization infrastructure. The management, engineers and workers of ULP Mjekës can be proud of the fact that their work with the explosive waste incinerator is one of the most productive and efficient operations of its kind anywhere in the world.