



SERBIA

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2019
(NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	For 2016	For 2015
Problem understood	7	7
Target date for completion of mine clearance	5	6
Targeted clearance	4	4
Efficient clearance	6	6
National funding of programme	5	5
Timely clearance	4	5
Land release system in place	6	6
National mine action standards	6	6
Reporting on progress	6	6
Improving performance	5	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	5.4	5.6

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

In 2016, Serbia did not release any mined area. Serbia submitted a revised Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) implementation workplan, including updated milestones towards meeting its 2019 clearance deadline. However, the modest funds for demining allocated from Serbia's national budget, alone, are not sufficient to implement the workplan, and Serbia is hindered

by a lack of international funding. A re-assessment of the potential for increased use of technical survey by the Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC), taking into account Serbia's context-specific challenges and risk management requirements, is needed to improve land release efficiency and may help Serbia attract greater international support.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Serbia should commit more national resources for survey and clearance of mined areas, in order to fulfil its Article 5 obligations as soon as possible.
- SMAC should not conduct full clearance in areas where appropriate use of non-technical and technical survey would be more efficient in defining the actual hazardous area.

CONTAMINATION

As at 1 April 2017, 13 suspected hazardous area (SHAs) in Bujanovac covering more than 2.63km² were suspected to contain anti-personnel mines (see Table 1).¹ This represents a slight increase, compared to the estimated 1.94km² of mined area across 13 suspected mined areas as at February 2016,² and is due to newly identified mined area discovered during non-technical survey conducted by SMAC in 2016.³

Bujanovac is the only municipality in Serbia still contaminated. The contamination represents mines of an unknown origin and type, which have not been emplaced to follow a pattern, and for which there are no minefield records.⁴

Table 1: Anti-personnel mine contamination by village (as at April 2017)⁵

Municipality	Village	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	3	575,020
	Končulj	5	1,181,820
	Dobrosin	1	248,000
	Breznica	1	275,800
	Djordjevac	1	145,100
	Lučane	1	73,200
	Turija	1	131,400
Totals		13	2,630,340

Previously, for 2013, Serbia had reported 1.2km² of confirmed mined area and 2km² of suspected mined area. However, SMAC subsequently decided to re-categorise all confirmed areas as only suspected, based on a reassessment of earlier survey results that revealed a small number of mines across a relatively large area. In line with more efficient land-release methodology, which emphasises the need for evidence to confirm areas as hazardous, in 2015 SMAC announced its intention to use an integrated approach using survey, manual demining, MDDs, and other assets to cancel suspected areas without contamination, and thereby reduce to a minimum the area confirmed as mined, which would be subject to full clearance.⁶ However, following a change of director in the final quarter of 2015, the decision was taken to prioritise clearance over survey.⁷

Historically, mine contamination in Serbia can be divided into two phases. The first was a legacy of the armed conflicts associated with the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The second concerned use of mines in 2000–01 in the municipalities of Bujanovac and Preševo by a non-state armed group, the Liberation Army of Preševo, Bujanovac and Medvedja (OVPBM). The contamination remaining in Serbia is a result of this later phase.⁸ Contamination also exists within Kosovo (see separate report).

Bujanovac is one of Serbia's least-developed municipalities economically.⁹ The affected areas are mainly mountainous, but are close to population centres.¹⁰ Mined areas are said to impede safe access to local roads, grazing land for cattle, tobacco growing, and mushroom picking. In addition, mine contamination impacts negatively on potential construction projects for tobacco-processing facilities and other infrastructure.¹¹

Serbia is also contaminated with cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) (see Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2017 report for Serbia).

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

According to a Government Decree on Protection against Unexploded Ordnance, the Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior, acts as the national mine action authority (NMAA).¹² The Sector for Emergency Management is responsible for developing standard operating procedures (SOPs), accrediting demining operators, and supervising the work of SMAC.¹³

SMAC was established on 7 March 2002, with a 2004 law making it responsible for coordinating demining, collecting and managing mine action information (including casualty data), and surveying SHAs. It also has a mandate to plan demining projects, conduct quality control (QC) and monitor operations, ensure implementation of international standards, license demining organisations, and conduct risk education.¹⁴ A new director of SMAC was appointed by the Serbian government in the autumn of 2015.¹⁵

SMAC reported that in 2016, restructuring resulted in a greater proportion of operational posts among its staff, with personnel dedicated to survey, project development, and quality control.¹⁶

Standards

According to SMAC, survey and clearance operations in Serbia are conducted in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).¹⁷

National mine action standards (NMAS) were said to be in the final phase of development as at September 2015.¹⁸ In February 2016, however, the new director of SMAC reported that the NMAS were still being developed, and due to more pressing priorities within SMAC, would not be finalised until 2017.¹⁹ In April 2017, SMAC reported that along with the relevant national authorities, it was in the process of establishing a commission to develop national standards/SOPs to define methods and techniques for humanitarian demining in Serbia.²⁰ However, this process has been hindered due to lack of human capacity and resources.²¹

Under new directorship, SMAC has reassessed its land release methodology to prioritise full clearance over technical survey of hazardous areas.²² This does not correspond to international best practice, and is an inefficient use of valuable clearance assets. In February 2016, the new director of SMAC reported to Mine Action Review that while SMAC supports the use of high quality non-technical survey to identify areas suspected of containing mines, it will fully clear these areas, rather than using technical survey to more accurately identify the boundaries of contamination.²³

SMAC's preferred land release methodology for addressing mine contamination remained the same as at May 2017.²⁴ SMAC has reported that the results of the initial survey data are analysed and then further non-technical survey is conducted to assess conditions in the field, and to gather statements by the local population, hunters, foresters, representatives of Civil Protection, and the police, among others. Data on mine incidents is another significant indicator.²⁵

According to SMAC, in the context of Serbia, there is limited potential to obtain additional information on the location of mined areas from those who laid the mines during the conflict.²⁶ SMAC uses the results of the non-technical survey to "enable the defining of confirmed hazardous areas for which SMAC develops corresponding project tasks to commence demining tasks. Critical to this is the cancellation of areas registered as mine suspected areas that, through survey, are confirmed not to contain mines (in accordance with IMAS)".²⁷

SMAC's primary objection to using technical survey as a next step to further delineate confirmed mined area is its lack of confidence that such survey can effectively identify clusters of unrecorded mines.²⁸ Most of the remaining suspected mined areas in Serbia are mountainous with challenging terrain and thick vegetation. The fact that these areas have not been accessed since the end of the conflict, due to suspicion of mines, means that the land is unmanaged, making it even less accessible. SMAC deems that most of the suspected mined areas are therefore, not appropriate for the use of MDDs or machinery.²⁹

In response to the stated preference of international donors for technical survey above clearance, however, where appropriate, SMAC is prepared to conduct technical survey, in a form adjusted to the context of Serbia.³⁰

Quality Management

SMAC and its partner organisations undertake quality assurance (QA) and QC of clearance operations in mine- and ERW-affected areas.³¹ On every clearance project, SMAC QC and QA officers are said to sample between 5% and 11% of the total project area, depending on project complexity and size.³²

Information Management

SMAC does not use the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) at present, but has been discussing for some time the possibility of the system's future installation with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).³³ However, as at April 2017, SMAC confirmed there had been no progress in these discussions.³⁴

Operators

SMAC does not itself carry out clearance or employ deminers but does conduct survey of areas suspected to contain mines, cluster munition remnants (CMR), or other ERW. Clearance is conducted by commercial companies

and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which are selected through public tender procedures executed by ITF Enhancing Human Security.³⁵ No mine clearance operations were conducted in Serbia in 2016.³⁶

Non-technical survey in 2016 was conducted by SMAC staff.³⁷ Previously, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) personnel seconded to SMAC conducted all survey in Serbia,³⁸ but NPA did not conduct any survey in Serbia in 2016.³⁹

An explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) department within the Sector for Emergency Management, in the Ministry of Interior, responds to call-outs for individual items of ERW discovered, and is also responsible for the demolition of items found by SMAC.⁴⁰

LAND RELEASE

No mined area in Serbia was released by survey or clearance in 2016.⁴¹

Survey in 2016

SMAC reported that it conducted non-technical survey in 2016 and early 2017, which resulted in an increase of almost 0.7km² in SHA.⁴²

No land was reported as released through clearance or survey in 2016, which represents a decrease compared to 2014 when 0.41km² was cleared.⁴³ The failure to release land in 2016 was reported to be due to lack of funding.⁴⁴

Serbia announced in May 2016 that the tender process for implementation of 2016 mine clearance projects in Konculj, Ravno Vucje, Turisko Brdo, and Tustica, was due to be concluded in the near future.⁴⁵ In December 2016,

however, Serbia confirmed that fund matching had not been received in 2016, and the clearance projects could not be implemented.⁴⁶

Progress in 2017

In 2017, SMAC reported that it had developed a technical survey project for 2017, totalling almost 1km², which will confirm or reject suspicion of mine contamination in the project area. Area confirmed as contaminated will then be subject to clearance, and the remaining area cancelled. Having submitted the project to the ITF Enhancing Human Security, SMAC secured funding for the project from national sources matched by international funding from the United States. As at August 2017, tender procedures were being finalised for the selection of a contractor.⁴⁷

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the five-year extension granted by states parties in 2013), Serbia is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 March 2019. Serbia is not on track to meet this deadline.

As late as May 2012, Serbia had hoped to meet its original Article 5 deadline,⁴⁸ but in March 2013 it applied for a five-year extension. In granting the request, the Thirteenth Meeting of States Parties noted that "implementation could proceed much faster if Serbia was able to cover part of demining costs and thereby become more attractive for external funding." The states parties further noted that the plan presented by Serbia was "workable, but it lacks ambition, particularly given the small amount of mined area in question".⁴⁹

Furthermore, Serbia's claim to continued jurisdiction over Kosovo entails legal responsibility for remaining mined areas under Article 5 of the APMBC. However, Serbia did not include such areas in its extension request estimate of remaining contamination or plans for the extension period.

In the last five years Serbia has cleared less than one square kilometre of mined area (see Table 2).

Table 2: Mine clearance in 2012–16

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2016	0
2015	0.41
2014	0.27
2013	0
2012	0.16
Total	0.84

Serbia has fallen behind the clearance plan it set out in its 2013 Article 5 deadline extension request, which envisaged clearance of just under 0.49km² in 2013; just over 0.57km² in 2014; and just over 4.1km² in 2015.⁵⁰ In its original extension request Serbia also predicted it would complete survey by the end of 2015, which it did not achieve. In 2015, Serbia reported that it had adjusted its extension request plan and predicted that of the remaining 2.85km² of mined area, some 1.2km² would be surveyed in 2015 and the remaining 1.65km² in 2016. Of this, Serbia expected to clear a total of 1.6km² by 2018: 0.4km² in 2015, 0.6km² in 2016, and 0.6km² in 2017.⁵¹

In March 2016, Serbia submitted an updated workplan to the APMB Implementation Support Unit, announcing plans to address 0.8km² in 2016; 0.6km² in 2017; and 0.52km² in 2018; and to carry out “additional check-up and verification” in 2019.⁵²

However, Serbia was already falling behind on the 2016 updated workplan, as no land was released in 2016. Furthermore, non-technical survey resulted in an increase of 0.7km² in the total mined area.⁵³ In April 2017, Serbia included a new updated completion workplan in its Article 7 transparency report. It now plans to address five areas totalling 1km² in 2017; five areas totalling 1.2km² in 2018; and three areas totalling 0.45km² in 2019.⁵⁴ Serbia cautioned that implementation of clearance projects might be affected by funding, but that if additional funds were provided, the work could be completed more quickly.⁵⁵

In addition, Serbia reported that it faced additional challenges in complying with its Article 5 deadline, noting again that the remaining mine contamination is of an unknown origin, with mines having been emplaced with no particular pattern and without minefield records; climatic conditions preventing access to some contaminated areas for parts of the year; and challenges posed by contamination from CMR and other unexploded ordnance (UXO).⁵⁶ While its latest Article 7 report does include Serbia’s intention to undertake non-technical survey to delineate confirmed mined areas for clearance and cancel areas with no evidence of mine-contamination, the report does not make any reference to the use of technical survey, and only references the use of full clearance to release confirmed mined areas.⁵⁷

Since 2015, Serbia has been allocating funds for demining. In 2016, around €150,000 was allocated to SMAC from the Serbian national budget for salaries and running costs, and SMAC’s project and survey activities, in addition to €100,000 for survey and clearance operations.⁵⁸ Serbia did not receive funding from international donors in 2016.⁵⁹

The same amount of national funding was maintained in 2017.⁶⁰ As at May 2017, SMAC reported that national funds had been allocated for mine clearance operations in 2017, and that SMAC was in discussions with donors to match these funds.⁶¹

Serbia has stated that despite economic difficulties and the lack of national funding it remains strongly committed to making Serbia mine-free by 2019, and will make all efforts to meet its Article 5 deadline.⁶² However, no land was released by survey or clearance in 2016, and unless funds are secured to implement Serbia’s latest updated completion plan, it seems extremely unlikely that Serbia will meet its deadline.

- 1 Email from Slađana Košutić, Planning and International Cooperation Advisor, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 2 “Republic of Serbia Updated Detailed Work Plan for the Remaining Period Covered by the Extension”, submitted to the Implementation Support Unit (ISU), 3 March 2016, and provided to Mine Action Review by the ISU upon request.
- 3 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 4 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; Article 7 Report (for 2016), Forms D and E; and interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 5 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 6 Email from Branislav Jovanović, then Director, SMAC, 23 March 2015; Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form C; Statements of Serbia, 14th Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 1 December 2015, and 15th Meeting of States Parties, Santiago, 29 November 2016; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 7 Interview with Jovica Simonović, Director, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.
- 8 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, March 2013, p. 5; and Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form C.
- 9 “Republic of Serbia Updated Detailed Work Plan for the Remaining Period Covered by the Extension”, submitted to the ISU, 3 March 2016, and provided to Mine Action Review by the ISU upon request; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 10 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, March 2013, p. 23.
- 11 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and “Republic of Serbia Updated Detailed Work Plan for the Remaining Period Covered by the Extension”, submitted to the ISU, 3 March 2016, and provided to Mine Action Review by the ISU upon request.
- 12 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 70/13.
- 13 Emails from Darvin Lisica, NPA Regional Programme Manager, 6 May and 12 June 2016.
- 14 “Law of Alterations and Supplementations of the Law of Ministries”, Official Gazette, 84/04, August 2004; interview with Petar Mihajlović, and Slađana Košutić, SMAC, Belgrade, 26 April 2010; and SMAC, “About us”, accessed 3 June 2016, at: <http://www.czrs.gov.rs/eng/o-nama.php>.
- 15 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.
- 16 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 17 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D; and SMAC, “About us”, accessed 10 April 2017, at: <http://www.czrs.gov.rs/eng/o-nama.php>.
- 18 Interview with Branislav Jovanović, SMAC, in Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.
- 19 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.
- 20 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 21 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 22 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 25 Ibid.; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 26 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 27 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 28 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Ibid.

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- 31 Email from Branislav Jovanović, SMAC, 4 May 2015.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 35 Interview with Petar Mihajlović and Slađana Košutić, SMAC, Belgrade, 26 April 2010.
- 36 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 37 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 38 Emails from Darvin Lisica, NPA, 13 April and 6 May 2016.
- 39 Emails from Darvin Lisica, NPA, 11 April 2017; and Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 40 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 41 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.
- 42 Ibid; Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D; and Statement of Serbia, Intersessional meeting, Geneva, 8 June 2017.
- 43 Statement of Serbia, 14th Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 1 December 2015.
- 44 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 45 Statement of Serbia, Intersessional Meetings (Committee on Article 5 Implementation), Geneva, 19 May 2016.
- 46 Statement of Serbia, 15th Meeting of States Parties, Santiago, 29 November 2016.
- 47 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 4 August 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 48 Statement of Serbia, Intersessional meetings (Standing Committee on Mine Action), Geneva, 23 May 2012.
- 49 Analysis of Serbia's Article 5 deadline Extension Request, submitted by the President of the 12th Meeting of States Parties on behalf of the States Parties mandated to analyse request for extensions, 2 December 2013.
- 50 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, March 2013, p. 26.
- 51 Article 7 Report (for 2014), Form F.
- 52 Preliminary observations of the Committee on Article 5 Implementation, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–20 May 2016; and "Republic of Serbia Updated Detailed Work Plan for the Remaining Period Covered by the Extension", submitted to the ISU, 3 March 2016, and provided to Mine Action Review by the ISU upon request.
- 53 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 54 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Ibid., Forms D and E.
- 57 Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 58 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 59 Statement of Serbia, 15th Meeting of States Parties, Santiago, 29 November 2016; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 60 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017; interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and Article 7 Report (for 2016), Form D.
- 61 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.
- 62 Statements of Serbia, Intersessional meetings (Committee on Article 5 Implementation), Geneva, 19 May 2016, and 15th Meeting of States Parties, Santiago, 29 November 2016; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 6 April 2017.