

**ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 31 DECEMBER 2024**  
 NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE (INTERIM DEADLINE)

### KEY DATA

**ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)  
 MINE CONTAMINATION: LIGHT**

MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

**AROUND**

**1 KM<sup>2</sup>**

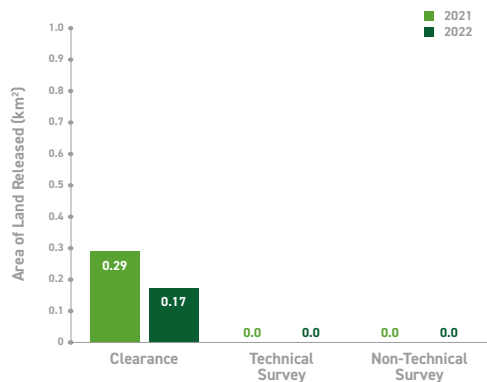
AP MINE  
 CLEARANCE IN 2022

**0.17 KM<sup>2</sup>**

AP MINES  
 DESTROYED IN 2022

**0**

### LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



**CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET** (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **LOW**

### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2022, Serbia cleared two of the three remaining known mined areas, although no mines were discovered during clearance and only four items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) were found and destroyed. The Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC) has still to survey the previously unrecorded mine contamination discovered in October 2019 and August 2021 following forest fires, but planned to commence non-technical survey (NTS) in 2023 to determine the amount of remaining mined area. Serbia intends to submit a new extension request by the end of March 2024, which will include a detailed work plan for fulfilment of its obligations under Article 5 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Serbia should consider using its armed forces for mine clearance or inviting demining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to help meet its treaty obligations by fulfilling its Article 5 obligations as soon as possible.
- Serbia should conduct as a matter of priority the planned survey of the suspected contamination identified in October 2019 and August 2021 in order to determine the size of the mined area and plan for its release.
- SMAC should conduct NTS and technical survey (TS), rather than full clearance, in instances where survey represents the most efficient means to release part or all of mined areas.
- SMAC should seek to develop national mine action standards (NMAS) as soon as a new mine action decree is adopted.

## ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2022)	Score (2021)	Performance Commentary
<b>UNDERSTANDING OF CONTAMINATION</b> (20% of overall score)	5	5	Serbia had 390,300m <sup>2</sup> of existing mined area remaining at the end of 2022, located in Bujanovac municipality, but had still to conduct NTS to determine the size of previously unrecorded mined area identified as a result of fires in 2019 and 2021.
<b>NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT</b> (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia has strong national ownership of its mine action programme and SMAC is nationally funded. Planned national funding of €260,000 for survey and clearance operations was maintained in 2022 and funds were matched with donor funds through ITF Enhancing Human Security.
<b>GENDER AND DIVERSITY</b> (10% of overall score)	4	4	SMAC does not have a gender policy in place and does not disaggregate relevant mine action data by sex and age. However, it does ensure that women and children, as well as ethnic or minority groups, are consulted during survey and community liaison activities and that there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men for survey and clearance positions.
<b>INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING</b> (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia submits accurate and comprehensive annual Article 7 reports on Article 5 progress, which are consistent between reporting periods, and provides regular updates on progress at APMBC meetings. SMAC plans to install the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA), with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). Work on designing the IMSMA Core system began in March 2023 and the system was being built from July.
<b>PLANNING AND TASKING</b> (10% of overall score)	7	7	Serbia produces revised annual work plans based on actual progress. In 2022, Serbia cleared two of the three known mined areas, but was unable to clear the remaining known area as planned, due to lack of funding. It planned to instead release this area in 2023. Serbia expected to survey the previously unknown mined area discovered through forest fires in 2023–24. Serbia is due to submit a final extension request and work plan in March 2024 that will be based on the results of the NTS and a clearer understanding of the extent and location of remaining mined area.
<b>LAND RELEASE SYSTEM</b> (20% of overall score)	5	5	Serbia does not currently have NMAS in place. While SMAC continues to express a preference for full clearance of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) and only conducted clearance tasks in the last three years, it has said it is willing to conduct TS where appropriate. The clearance of two mined areas in 2022, without discovery of any mines, highlights the importance of TS. Clearance capacity deployed is typically manual teams, as the terrain and climate tend not to be suitable for mine detection dogs or machines.
<b>LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE</b> (20% of overall score)	6	6	Clearance output in 2022 was a slight decrease on the previous year. Serbia cleared two of the three remaining known mined area in 2022, and planned to clear the third one in 2023. Serbia states that it remains committed to the aim set by States Parties of completing clearance by the end of 2025. Meeting the deadline is largely contingent on securing sufficient funding and on how much mined area is identified during the NTS.
<b>Average Score</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE</b>

## DEMINING CAPACITY

### MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior (acts as the national mine action authority)
- Serbian Mine Action Centre (SMAC)

### NATIONAL OPERATORS

- PMC Engineering

### INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- In 2022, 11 companies/organisations were accredited for demining, but only two NGOs conducted clearance of anti-personnel mines:
  - In Demining
  - Stop Mines

### OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

## UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

As at April 2023, one area in Bujanovac municipality, covering 0.39km<sup>2</sup>, was suspected to contain anti-personnel (AP) mines (see Table 1). However, this excludes previously unrecorded AP mine contamination that was revealed as a result of fires in Bujanovac municipality in October 2019 and in August 2021, the size of which is not yet known.<sup>1</sup> The contamination as at April 2023 was a reduction on the 0.56km<sup>2</sup> of mined area as at March 2022,<sup>2</sup> due to mine clearance in 2022.

**Table 1: AP mined area by village (at April 2023)<sup>3</sup>**

Municipality	Village	SHAs	Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Bujanovac	Ravno Bučje	1	390,300
<b>Totals</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>*390,300</b>

\* Excludes the newly discovered suspected mined areas

On 2–3 October 2019, in response to a request from local authorities, SMAC visited the villages of Đorđevac, Končulj, Lučane, Ravno Bučje, and Veliki Trnovac where fires had recently occurred and members of the local community had reported hearing explosions in several places, indicating the presence of mines. Mined areas identified as a result were marked with signs in both Serbian and Albanian, as the population in this area is multiethnic.<sup>4</sup> Fires also occurred in August 2021, in a different area of the municipality of Bujanovac, during which there were also reports of explosions.<sup>5</sup> The newly discovered contamination is not included in Table 1 above and has not been subject to detailed NTS.

In April 2023, Serbia had transferred national funds to be matched through ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) with funding from the US State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) and the Republic of Korea, and ITF was about to launch the tender process for the contractor.<sup>6</sup> The Serbian demining operator PMC Engineering was subsequently selected as the contractor for the NTS protect. Implementation was expected to begin from the end of August, in coordination with SMAC.<sup>7</sup> In response to questions from the APMBC Committee on Article 5 implementation, and in its revised 2022 deadline extension request, Serbia said that the planned NTS of the previously unknown mined areas would involve survey and risk education of nearly 4.37km<sup>2</sup> (divided into five projects/areas, all located in the municipality of Bujanovac). The whole of the

municipality is 461km<sup>2</sup> in size and has 38,300 inhabitants, 59 villages, and 30 local communities. Of the 4.37km<sup>2</sup> expected to be surveyed, SMAC expected that nearly 2.37km<sup>2</sup> will be cancelled, 1.5km<sup>2</sup> reduced, and 0.5km<sup>2</sup> cleared.<sup>8</sup>

Bujanovac is the only municipality in Serbia still affected by mines. According to SMAC, the contamination is from mines of an unknown origin and type which have not been emplaced to follow a pattern, and for which no minefield records exist.<sup>9</sup> According to the national authorities, previous surveys found insufficient evidence for mined areas to be classified as confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), so they remain as SHAs.<sup>10</sup> The fact that contamination is suspected makes it all the more important that SMAC conducts TS to confirm the presence of AP mines, before conducting full clearance. According to SMAC, the baseline of AP mine contamination has been established through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men, including, where relevant, from minority groups.<sup>11</sup> SMAC does not possess data on explosive ordnance contamination of military areas in Serbia.<sup>12</sup>

Historically, mine contamination in Serbia can be divided into two phases. The first exists as 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.<sup>13</sup> Contamination also exists within

1 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 6; Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, Senior Advisor for Planning, International Cooperation and European Integrations, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

2 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 6; Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

3 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

4 Statements of Serbia on Clearance, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019; and APMBC Eighteenth Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 26 and 30; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

5 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 14 September 2022.

6 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 24 April 2023.

7 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 31 August 2023.

8 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 40.

9 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 6 and 34; Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

10 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

11 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020 and 2021), Form D.

12 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

13 2013 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 5; and Article 7 Report (covering 2014), Form C.

Kosovo (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Kosovo for further information). SMAC requests that it be noted that all references to Kosovo should be understood

to be in the context of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).<sup>14</sup>

## OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Serbia is also contaminated with cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), which are the result of the 1999 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) bombing campaign, or remain from previous conflicts, or are the result of explosions or fire at military depots<sup>15</sup> (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023* report on Serbia for further information).

## NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

According to a 2013 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).<sup>16</sup> The NMAA is responsible for developing standard operating procedures (SOPs), accrediting demining operators, and supervising the work of SMAC.<sup>17</sup>

SMAC was established in 2002, with a 2004 law making it responsible for coordinating survey and clearance; 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, and conduct risk education.<sup>18</sup> As from 1 January 2014, according to the 2013 Government Decree, the Sector for Emergency Management, under the Ministry of Interior, was made responsible for accrediting demining operators. Previously, SMAC was responsible for doing so.<sup>19</sup>

The current director of SMAC was appointed by the Serbian government in July 2019.<sup>20</sup> As at April 2023, thirteen people were employed at SMAC: the director, two assistant directors, and ten other employees.<sup>21</sup> SMAC is fully funded by Serbia, including salaries and running costs, as well as for survey activities, development of project tasks for demining and clearance of contaminated areas, follow-up on implementation of project tasks, and quality assurance (QA) and QC of demining. In 2022, Serbia reported that around

€320,000 per annum was allocated from the national state budget for the work of SMAC,<sup>22</sup> the same amount as in 2021.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the UXO disposal work of the Sector for Emergency Situations of the Ministry of Interior is also State funded.<sup>24</sup>

National funding for survey and clearance remained at €260,000 for 2022<sup>25</sup>—the same as the previous year—and was expected to be maintained at this level through to 2025, matched with available donor funds through ITF.<sup>26</sup> In addition to the €1,040,000 of total national funding pledged for 2022–25, Serbia estimated it will also need to secure an additional €2 million from international donors.<sup>27</sup>

In 2020, SMAC and the Serbian Ministry of Defence (MoD) signed an Agreement on Cooperation in the field of demining and UXO/ERW removal. The Agreement is reported to envisage, among others, the joint participation in training of personnel to conduct demining and ERW demolition operations, training certification, joint participation in survey, collection of data on ERW-suspected and contaminated areas, as well as implementation of ERW removal projects, with monitoring and implementation of international mine action standards (IMAS) and regulations in the field of demining. The initial focus will reportedly be on the training of personnel in UXO/ERW demolition operations,<sup>28</sup> and not on clearance of mined areas.<sup>29</sup> In November 2022, SMAC organised training for MoD personnel on magnetometry. SMAC also organised this training for the personnel of the MoD's Technical Test

14 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 May 2021.

15 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

16 Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, No. 70/13.

17 Emails from Darvin Lisica, Regional Programme Manager, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), 6 May and 12 June 2016.

18 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 APMBC 2022 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 19.

19 APMBC 2022 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 20.

20 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

21 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

22 Ibid.

23 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022.

24 SMAC, "Mine situation", accessed 21 April 2023, at: <http://bit.ly/1Nom1V7>.

25 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

26 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, APMBC Nineteenth Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; and 2022 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 8 and 34.

27 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, APMBC (virtual meeting), 15–19 November 2021; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 9 and 37.

28 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form H.

29 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.

Centre, and in February 2023, SMAC concluded a contract on cooperation in mine action with the Technical Test Centre, relating to use of their demolition site.<sup>30</sup> A training centre within SMAC became operational in 2020. Together with experts from the Ministry of Interior, SMAC provides different training modules, including on ERW recognition, IMAS, medical aspects, and risk reduction.<sup>31</sup>

SMAC reports having a resource mobilisation strategy for Article 5 implementation.<sup>32</sup> No formal in-country national

platform for dialogue exists, but SMAC said that it cooperates closely with the Bujanovac national authorities and other relevant stakeholders, in particular the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and MoD, as well as embassies of donor nations.<sup>33</sup>

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is supporting SMAC to install the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core.<sup>34</sup>

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## ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

SMAC says it has been committed to taking environmental aspects into account and minimising potential harm from demining activities ever since its foundation. It reported that for each survey or clearance project task there is an obligation on the contractor (the demining operator) to include in its execution plan an environmental protection and a fire protection plan, together with a plan for health and safety at work. Illustrative examples related to environment being taken into consideration during CMR clearance operations include contaminated areas cleared in Kopaonik National Park. For these tasks, a special regime was required for the protection of native trees and other plant species. The chopping down of trees, and the cutting of tree branches and blueberry and juniper bushes, as well as the removal of plants could only be conducted in justified cases and after obtaining the consent of relevant authorities.<sup>35</sup>

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## GENDER AND DIVERSITY

In 2014, following the initiative of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister of Construction, Transportation and Infrastructure, a Coordination Body for Gender Equality was formed as a national coordinating mechanism for gender equality in Serbia. The coordination body recognises the importance of improving the position of women, focusing in particular on increasing the number of female entrepreneurs, as well as their equal participation in management bodies in education, science, culture, information, sports, agriculture, and rural development, among others.<sup>36</sup>

SMAC does not have a gender policy in place and does not disaggregate relevant mine action data by sex and age. However, it does ensure women and children are consulted during survey and community liaison activities. SMAC also reports that it ensures ethnic or minority groups are consulted.<sup>37</sup>

Serbia reports there is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance operations.<sup>38</sup>

At SMAC, five of the thirteen employees (38%) are women, with women holding two of the three managerial/supervisory level positions (67%) and three of the ten operations positions (30%).<sup>39</sup>

With respect to the new mined area identified as a result of fires in October 2019 and August 2021, SMAC planned to conduct a survey which will include representatives of both ethnic Serbian and ethnic Albanian personnel.<sup>40</sup>

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## INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

SMAC currently uses its own information management system. In early 2020, following initial discussions several years previously, SMAC informally discussed with the GICHD the possibility of installing IMSMA.<sup>41</sup> In August 2022, SMAC signed an agreement with the GICHD to enable it to support SMAC to implement IMSMA Core over a project period of one year. In

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30 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

31 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020 and 26 March 2021.

32 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

33 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022 and 25 April 2023.

34 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023; and SMAC, "GICHD Workshop on IMSMA Core for Mine Action Actors in the Republic of Serbia", 27 March 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/42PgTC7>.

35 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 March 2022 and 11 April 2022.

36 Article 5 deadline Extension Request (2022), p. 20.

37 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020, 26 March 2021, and 11 April 2023.

38 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020 and 11 April 2023; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

39 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

40 Statement of Serbia, APMBE Eighteenth Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

41 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

March 2023, the GICHD visited SMAC to hold a workshop with relevant stakeholders to better understand the context and the requirements of SMAC with the aim of defining and planning the next steps of their IMSMA Core Implementation.<sup>42</sup> Staff from SMAC attended the IMSMA Core training run by the GICHD in June 2023, and the work on building the IMSMA Core system commenced in July 2023.<sup>43</sup>

## PLANNING AND TASKING

The Government of Serbia adopts SMAC's annual work plans.<sup>44</sup>

In both its 2022 revised Article 5 deadline extension request, and in its 2022 annual work plan, Serbia reported that it planned to release all known mined area (covering 561,800m<sup>2</sup>) in 2022.<sup>45</sup> While Serbia did clear two of the three remaining known mined areas in 2022, due to lack of funding it was unable to release the final known mined area totalling 390,300m<sup>2</sup>. SMAC expected to implement this task in 2023.<sup>46</sup>

SMAC planned to conduct NTS of the previously unknown mined areas in 2023, in order to determine the location and extent of remaining contamination and plan for completion. SMAC has developed the NTS project and provided national funding, in order for ITF to match these funds with available donor funds. As at August 2023, the Serbian demining operator, PMC Engineering, had been selected as the contractor and the NTS project was expected to begin from the end of the month, in coordination with SMAC.<sup>47</sup> ITF was about to launch the tender procedure for the selection of a contractor. SMAC expects that the NTS project will take up to one year and will focus on the areas where explosions were heard during forest fires in 2019 and 2021. It will also include all other areas in Bujanovac municipality where

“the existence of other mine indicators might be reported”. During this period, TS projects will be developed, as well as land release projects for the assessed areas, and mine risk education (MRE) activities will be conducted in all 59 villages of Bujanovac municipality.<sup>48</sup>

Upon completion of NTS, SMAC expected to have a better picture of the remaining contamination with which to then inform a follow-on deadline extension request to be submitted in March 2024 and considered by the Fifth Review Conference in 2024. The request will include a detailed work plan for fulfilment of Serbia's Article 5 obligations.<sup>49</sup>

Serbia prioritises the demining of areas which directly affect the local population, such as those close to settlements where local people have abandoned their houses and stopped cultivating land due to fear of landmines. Prioritisation of hazardous areas takes place between Serbia, SMAC, and donors according to agreed criteria. SMAC also noted that donors themselves sometimes also influence the choice of the areas which will be demined first, depending on availability and amount of their funds.<sup>50</sup> Serbia has stated that if it cannot secure international support for demining, clearance will be delayed.<sup>51</sup>

## LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

### STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

According to SMAC, survey and clearance operations in Serbia are conducted in accordance with the IMAS.<sup>52</sup>

Serbia is planning to issue a new decree on protection against ERW. The draft decree, developed by SMAC and the Ministry of Interior, will introduce the concept of land release, which was not defined in the former decree, and foresees the development of NMAS. As at August 2023, the decree was still to be adopted by the government.<sup>53</sup>

42 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023; and GICHD, 26 May 2023.

43 Email from the GICHD, 28 August 2023.

44 2022 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7–8, 18, and 21; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

45 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7–8; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

46 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

47 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 31 August 2023.

48 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; Statement of Serbia on Clearance, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–23 June 2023; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

49 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7–8, and 35; Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2025.

50 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 12 April 2018 and 25 March 2022; Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 26 and 41.

51 Emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020 and 26 March 2021; Statements on Clearance, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019 and Eighteenth Meeting of States Parties (virtual meeting), 16–20 November 2020; and Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D.

52 SMAC, “Mine Situation”, accessed 21 April 2023, at: <http://bit.ly/1Nom1V7>; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Section 4.

53 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 31 August 2023.

Under new directorship in late 2015, SMAC reassessed its land release methodology in order to prioritise full clearance over TS of hazardous areas.<sup>54</sup> This does not correspond to international best practice and is an inefficient use of scarce clearance assets. In February 2016, the then new director of SMAC reported to Mine Action Review that while SMAC supports the use of high quality NTS to identify suspected mined areas, it will fully clear these areas, rather than using TS to identify the boundaries of contamination more accurately.<sup>55</sup> As at April 2023, SMAC's position on its preferred land release methodology remained the same under the current director, but there was a continued willingness to conduct TS in a form "adjusted to the context of Serbia", in response to the stated preference of international donors for TS above clearance, where appropriate.<sup>56</sup>

SMAC's reluctance to apply TS to delineate confirmed mined area is due to its lack of confidence that such survey can effectively identify groups of unrecorded mines, not planted in specific patterns.<sup>57</sup> According to SMAC, incidents involving people or animals have occurred in most of these suspected areas or else mines have been accidentally detected.<sup>58</sup> In its Article 7 report (covering 2022) and in response to questions asked by the Committee on Article 5 implementation, Serbia said that "the size of the area to be cleared is determined on the basis of processed data which have been collected by a non-technical survey",<sup>59</sup> suggesting that TS is not typically deployed to reduce mined areas.

SMAC has reported that the results of the initial survey data are analysed and then further NTS 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.<sup>60</sup> Also, in the context of Serbia, there is reportedly limited potential to obtain additional information on the location of mined areas from those who laid the mines during the conflict.<sup>61</sup> TS is employed "to additionally collect information by technical methods on a suspected area and in case when the data collected by a non-technical survey are not sufficient for suspected areas to be declared hazardous or safe".<sup>62</sup>

Clearance is reported to be conducted in accordance with the IMAS and to a depth of 20cm.<sup>63</sup>

As part of Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)'s project on enhancing quality management systems of national mine action authorities and centres in the Western Balkans, a consultant was hired to conduct a detailed capacity assessment of SMAC in 2023, to identify gaps and discuss required improvements, action points, and priorities, and to develop NMAS chapters as prioritised by SMAC.<sup>64</sup> Development of an NMAS chapter on "Quality Management, Quality Policies and Objectives" was in progress as at August 2023, having been identified as the prime concern during the assessment. Other NMAS chapters, as prioritised by SMAC, were planned, depending on the availability of funding.<sup>65</sup>

## OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

SMAC does not itself conduct clearance or employ clearance personnel but does conduct survey of areas suspected to contain mines, CMR, or other ERW. Clearance is conducted by commercial companies and NGOs, which are selected through public tender procedures executed by ITF, supported by international funding.<sup>66</sup>

Serbia said clearance productivity per deminer, depending on the mine situation, terrain configuration, land characteristics and vegetation, was up to 150m<sup>2</sup> per deminer per day.<sup>67</sup> This is a remarkably high rate.

The Ministry of Interior issues accreditation to mine action operators that is valid for one year. In 2022, 11 companies/ organisations, were accredited for demining,<sup>68</sup> but only two NGOs (both registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina) conducted clearance of mined areas (see Table 2).<sup>69</sup>

54 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, in Geneva, 18 February 2016.

55 Ibid.

56 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 30; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

57 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and 2018 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, Additional Information received 28 June 2018.

58 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D; and Statement on Clearance, Fourth APMB Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.

59 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

60 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

61 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017.

62 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C.

63 Ibid.

64 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

65 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 31 August 2023.

66 APMB Article 5 deadline Extension Request (2018), p. 18.

67 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

68 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

69 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

**Table 2: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2022<sup>70</sup>**

Operator	Manual teams	Total deminers*	Dogs and handlers	Machines**
In Demining	1	10	0	0
Stop Mines	3	36	2 dogs and 2 handlers	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>2 dogs and 2 handlers</b>	<b>0</b>

\* Excluding team leaders, medics, and drivers. \*\* Excluding vegetation cutters and sifters.

Clearance capacity in 2022 was a decrease on the previous year. No survey personnel were deployed in Serbia in 2022 or 2021.

In 2022, SMAC and Academy of Technical and Educational Vocational Studies Niš, conducted initial testing of drones for use in survey activities, at the SMAC Training Centre in Grock. In February 2023, SMAC and Academy of Technical and Educational Vocational Studies Niš signed a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of mine action. SMAC expects that this will lead, among other things, to more concrete steps regarding the use of drones in survey operations.<sup>71</sup> SMAC has secured donor funds to start the NTS project of the previously unknown mined areas, which will require recruitment and training of two mixed survey teams (one Serbian and one Albanian team of two surveyors each). SMAC will supervise and monitor the NTS in cooperation with the local authorities.<sup>72</sup>

The Serbian Armed Forces maintain a capability to survey, detect, clear, and destroy landmines. This capability includes many types of detection equipment, mechanical clearance assets, disposal expertise, and specialist search and clearance teams.<sup>73</sup> 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, and is also responsible for demolition of items found by SMAC survey teams and by contractors/operators during clearance.<sup>74</sup>

TS and clearance in Serbia are primarily conducted manually. Mine detection dogs (MDDs) were used in TS and clearance operations in 2018 to release land,<sup>75</sup> but according to the

authorities most of the mines are in mountainous areas with challenging terrain and thick vegetation and are not appropriate for the use of MDDs or machinery.<sup>76</sup> The fact that these areas have not been accessed since the end of the conflict (2001), owing to the suspected presence of mines, means that the land is unmanaged, making it even less accessible.<sup>77</sup> Serbian armed forces use their machines and vehicles (e.g. excavators, trucks, etc.) to improve the quality of access roads, ahead of clearance by contracted companies.<sup>78</sup>

SMAC uses data obtained by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to develop and monitor clearance and TS projects.<sup>79</sup>

In September 2022, representatives of SMAC, the Ministry of Interior, and Serbian demining operator PMC Engineering, attended the regional course on quality management in mine action, in Rome. The course was organised by the GICHD in cooperation with the Italian counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) Centre of Excellence and held for representatives of the Balkan countries.<sup>80</sup>

In November 2022, SMAC attended the 86<sup>th</sup> Partnership for Peace (PfP) training course on IMAS and conformance in Spiez, organised by the GICHD and Switzerland.<sup>81</sup> In December 2022, representatives from SMAC, the Ministry of Internal Affairs – Police Directorate, Sector for Emergency Management, and the Gendarmerie, participated in a regional workshop in Sarajevo for NPA's project on enhancing quality management systems of national mine action authorities and centres in the Western Balkans.<sup>82</sup>

70 Ibid.

71 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

72 Statement of Serbia on Clearance, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–23 June 2023; Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

73 Article 7 Report (covering 2018), Form J.

74 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request (2018), p. 18; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 3 June 2022.

75 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019.

76 Interview with Jovica Simonović, SMAC, Belgrade, 16 May 2017; 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 23; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

77 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019; and Article 7 Report (covering 2019), Section 4.

78 Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022; and 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 37.

79 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2019.

80 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023.

81 Ibid.; and SMAC, "SMAC Participation in IMAS and Conformance Training Course in Spiez, Switzerland", 8 November 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/41PV11F>.

82 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 11 April 2023; and SMAC, "Participation of SMAC at Regional Workshop 'Assessment of Needs and Planning of Improvement of Quality Management Capacities of National/State Mine Action Authorities' in Sarajevo", 15 December 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3AiX0eT>.



# LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

## LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

A total of 0.17km<sup>2</sup> of mined area was released through clearance in 2022, during which no AP mines were discovered but only four items of UXO. No mined area was reduced through TS or cancelled through NTS in 2022.<sup>83</sup>

## SURVEY IN 2022

No mined area was reduced through TS or cancelled through NTS in 2022<sup>84</sup> or in 2021.

## CLEARANCE IN 2022

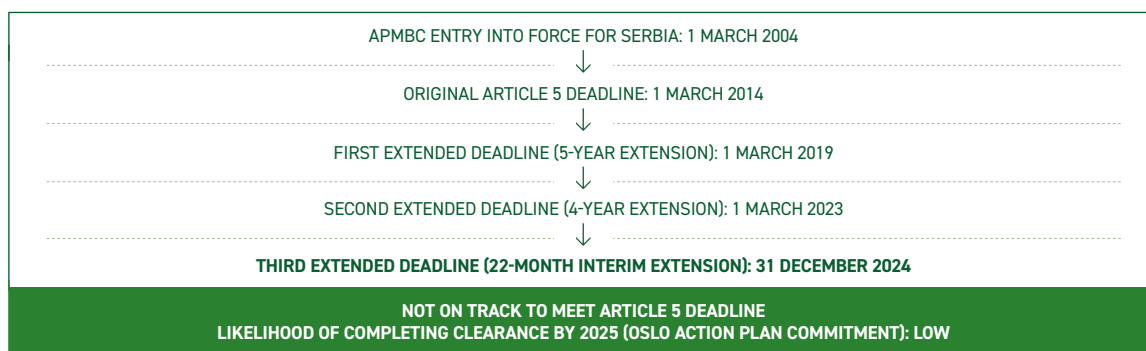
In 2022, a total of 171,500m<sup>2</sup> of mined area was cleared, destroying four items of UXO, but no AP mines (see Table 3).<sup>85</sup> Clearance in 2022 was funded by the Serbian government, matched through ITF with available funds from PM/WRA and the Republic of Korea.<sup>86</sup> Clearance output in 2022 was a slight decrease compared to 2021, when 294,230m<sup>2</sup> of mined area was cleared, destroying nine AP mines along with four items of UXO.<sup>87</sup>

**Table 3: Mine clearance in 2022<sup>88</sup>**

Municipality	Village	Operator	Area cleared (m <sup>2</sup> )	AP mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Bujanovac	Dobrosin	In Demining	28,000	0	0
Bujanovac	Končulj	NGO Stop Mines	143,500	0	4
<b>Totals</b>			<b>171,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

SMAC did not have available data on the number of mines destroyed by the EOD department within the Sector for Emergency Management during clearance or spot tasks in 2022.<sup>89</sup>

## ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 5 of the APMBC (and in accordance with the third interim extension (for 22 months) granted by States Parties in 2022), Serbia is required to destroy all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 31 December 2024.

Serbia submitted the revised extension request requesting an interim deadline of 31 December 2024 instead of 1 March 2025 in response to feedback from the Committee on Article 5 Implementation. In doing so, Serbia is requesting only the period of time necessary to complete NTS of Bujanovac municipality and gather necessary information to design a

83 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

84 Ibid.

85 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C and Annex III; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

86 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

87 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form D and Annex III; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022.

88 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C and Annex III; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

89 Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

work plan for completion as part of a subsequent request to be submitted in March 2024. Serbia's aim is to project with greater certainty the number and size of remaining mined areas and the amount of time and funds required to release the areas and fulfil its Article 5 obligations.<sup>90</sup>

The planned NTS of mined areas where forest fires occurred in 2019 and 2021 should enable a clear picture of the remaining contamination to be drawn.<sup>91</sup> Serbia has stated that the global 2025 completion goal remains its objective.<sup>92</sup>

According to SMAC, the following circumstances impeded it from meeting its extended 1 March 2023 deadline: unregistered mine contamination, emplaced in groups and not patterns; discovery of previously unknown mine suspected areas in 2019 and 2021; climatic conditions preventing access to contaminated areas for some of the year (the temperature must be above 5°C for demining operations to take place); and reduction in national funding for demining operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SMAC is also faced with explosive ordnance contamination other than mines, including clearance operations triggered by infrastructure development projects.<sup>93</sup> In its extension request, Serbia further highlighted the challenge of the lack and unpredictability of secure financial resources.<sup>94</sup>

Furthermore, Serbia's claim to continued jurisdiction over Kosovo entails legal responsibility for remaining mined areas under Article 5 of the APMBC.<sup>95</sup> However, Serbia did not include such areas in either its first or second extension

request estimates of remaining contamination or plans for the extension periods. In its 2022 APMBC Article 5 deadline extension request, however, Serbia stated that: "In the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, there are mined areas, as well as areas contaminated with cluster bombs remaining after the armed conflicts. Pursuant to Resolution 1244 of the United Nations Security Council (Annex II, item 6), it is envisaged that after the withdrawal, an agreed number of the Republic of Serbia personnel will be allowed to return to perform certain functions, including marking and clearing minefields. As this provision of Annex II has not been implemented, this issue is still within the competence of UNMIK in accordance with Resolution 1244."<sup>96</sup>

In the last five years Serbia has cleared a total of 1.63km<sup>2</sup> of mined area (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance**

Year	Area cleared (km <sup>2</sup> )
2022	0.17
2021	0.29
2020	0.27
2019	0.61
2018	0.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.63</b>

## PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

SMAC expects to need both national and international capacity to deal with any residual contamination that may be discovered following completion of planned mine clearance.<sup>97</sup> SMAC has reported that it has been cooperating with the Ministry of Interior and the MoD to plan for sustainable national capacity to address previously unknown mined areas post fulfilment of its Article 5 clearance obligations.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>90</sup> 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7; and email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 25 April 2023.

<sup>92</sup> 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 7 and 35; and emails from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022 and 25 April 2023.

<sup>93</sup> 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 34; Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form C; email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 13 April 2022; and Serbia, "Replies to the Committee on Article 5 Implementation on Questions Concerning the Requisition Submitted by Serbia", 3 August 2022.

<sup>94</sup> 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> See also in this regard UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999).

<sup>96</sup> 2022 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 23 April 2020.

<sup>98</sup> Email from Slađana Košutić, SMAC, 26 March 2021.