



# FACT SHEET BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## Weapons and Ammunitions Logistics in the Western Balkans - Austrian Activities in the Framework of EUFOR ALTHEA

### PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES

The disintegration of Yugoslavia had far-reaching repercussions for weapons and ammunitions logistics in its successor states, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) has been affected in particular by a serious fragmentation of the relevant capabilities and practices. Key factors were, on the one hand, the longstanding war situation between the different entities with different possibilities of access to weapons and ammunition as well as uncontrolled smuggling activities; on the other hand, there was the fact that this area was widely neglected by the international community – neither UNPROFOR (1992 – 1995) nor NATO-led IFOR (1995/96) or its successor operation SFOR (1996 – 2004) had explicitly mandated tasks to address weapons and ammunition management.

In the early post-conflict period, IFOR and SFOR conducted only quantitative inventories; in addition, there were extensive seizures, which consequently led to an accumulation of stocks of civilian weapons and ammunition. The Dayton Agreement recognized, among other things, the military division of BiH; immediately after the conflict, the autonomous entities carried out different (global) procurement processes: in the Federation procurement took place in the framework of the US-led “Train and equip” programme, while the Republika Srpska mainly inherited large quantities from the Yugoslav People’s Army. In addition, the armies of both entities were downsized and the number of weapons- and ammunition storage sites were reduced from more than 500 in 1999 to approximately 50 in 2004 and finally to less than 10 in 2019.

Ultimately, all these developments led to an **extensive accumulation of unstable ammunition of various types, stored in an unsafe way under inadequate security conditions**. Slowly, a change in thinking took place: The Office of the High Representative, for example, made the disposal of surplus ammunition a top priority in the early 2000s. The overall objective for the total stockpile was set at around 7,500 tonnes; around 35,000 tonnes were identified as surplus. In 2004, SFOR estimated that almost half of BiH’s ammunition stockpiles presented a genuine and current threat and required immediate disposal. However, different political agendas of the entities and the complex BiH-internal structures did not allow any progress.

### FACT BOX

**National territory:** 51,209 km<sup>2</sup> (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 51%, Republika Srpska 48.6%; District of Brcko 0.4%)

**Population:** 3,531,159 (2013), Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 62.9%, Republika Srpska 34.8%, District of Brcko 2.4%

**Official languages:** Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian

**Capital:** Sarajevo 275,524 (2013)

**Form of government:** federative, rotating tripartite presidency

**Religions:** Muslims (about 50%), Orthodox (about 30%), Catholics (about 15%)

**Gross domestic product:** USD 18,9 billion (2020)

**Currency:** 1 Convertible Mark (BAM) = 100 Feninga

**Defence spending:** USD 169 million (2020)

**Share of GDP:** 0.9%

**Total strength:** 10,500 (active service)

**Troops abroad:** Albania OSCE 1, Central African Republic EU EUTM RCA 2, Democratic Republic of Congo UN MONUSCO 3, Mali UN MINUSMA 2, (2020)

**International troops in the country:** EUFOR Operation ALTHEA approx. 600 (2019)



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SOURCES: Own materials, Military Balance, SIPRI

LAYOUT: REF III/Medien, IFK, IMG; FOTO: BMLV

AS OF: June 2022

## BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE ENGAGEMENT

At the end of 2004, EU-Operation EUFOR ALTHEA replaced the NATO-led SFOR and took over its tasks. In addition to the continuation of the executive mandate, there was a shift towards gradually focussing on education and training. After merging the two entity armies under a single BiH Ministry of Defence in 2006, responsibility for weapons and ammunition logistics was transferred to the national level, however, without taking further necessary steps. It was not until 2011 that the Mobile Training Team, deployed for weapons- and ammunition logistics in the framework of EUFOR ALTHEA started to support the establishment of national capacities.

## PREVIOUS ACTIVITIES AND OUTLOOK 2022/23

Contributions to the MTT were made by Switzerland, Sweden and Austria in different forms. Since 2011, the project partners have implemented a complex, multi-layer training and advisory programme, with **Austria focussing primarily on ammunition logistics.**

**In a first phase (2011 to 2014)**, training focused on stockpile management and safe handling of ammunition in accordance with international standards; for this purpose, AUT MTT provided a chemical laboratory level 1 for stability testing of propellants in July 2013. In addition, advice was given with regard to the establishment of a permanent training structure (which is still only on temporary basis), including the selection of personnel.

**In the second phase (2015 to 2019)**, the knowledge transfer was further intensified through training and advising for the 100% inventory and visual inspection of existing ammunition. In parallel, additional training modules on dismantling and conserving of ammunition as well as weapons storage were implemented. Special instructor training in Austria complemented the knowledge transfer.

**In the third phase (as of May 2019)**, the focus is placed on advice and cooperation; in order to strengthen the regional approach, instructors from BiH have been integrated into the Austrian trainer team during project implementation in Montenegro.

## CHALLENGES AND SENSIBILITIES

- The large number of international actors, in particular the UN, the OSCE, the EU and NATO, as well as a number of bilateral projects, with sometimes diverging agendas and approaches with the resulting overload of the national structures in BiH.
- The multitude of challenges BiH has to face as well as the lack of financial and human resources at national level.
- The establishment of sustainable structures and mechanisms at national level.
- The official authorities in BiH favour the disposal of weapons and ammunition via export sales while the international community would favour their destruction. This issue is still controversial today.

## OBJECTIVES OF AUSTRIA AND IN PARTICULAR OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/AUSTRIAN ARMED FORCES

The Western Balkans is Austria's priority region in terms of security policy. The engagement is a concrete contribution to stabilisation in the immediate neighbourhood, to risk reduction both for the civilian population and with regard to the illicit proliferation of weapons and ammunition, and to the prevention of negative impacts on the environment. In addition, it is intended to establish a cooperation.



Ammunition disposal training

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE AUSTRIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENCE/AUSTRIAN ARMED FORCES

Project steering at the strategic level is carried out by the Military Policy Division, project implementation is realised by the Armed Forces Logistics School/International Capacity Building Section, supported temporarily and as required by other experts from the Austrian Armed Forces Logistics School, the ammunition depots and the Armament and Defence Technology Agency as well as the Armed Forces in implementing the pool of civil-military capabilities for mission-related special tasks in accordance with the Austrian Security Strategy. With its expertise, the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management supports the dissemination of information to the public interested in security policy.

## METHODICAL APPROACH

- Mobile Advisory and Training Teams (MATT) are temporarily present in the field.
- Implementation of the *train-the-trainer* approach – a sequence of one moderating, one mentoring and one monitoring phase – with the aim of transferring education and training into national ownership with permanent national training structures.
- Special *train-the-trainer* qualification both in BiH and in ammunition depots in Austria managed according to international standards.

