

OSCE Newsletter

Border Security and Management National Focal Point Network

Issue 3. March 2008

Border security and management as a priority for the Finnish OSCE Chairmanship

(Finish Delegation to the OSCE)

The Chairmanship considers border security and management as an indispensable component of regional security in the entire OSCE area. The OSCE's Border Security and Management Concept, adopted at the Ministerial Council Meeting in Ljubljana in December 2005, is an important tool in promoting co-operation and implementation of border-related commitments by the participating States. Thus far the Concept has been successfully put into operation in South-Eastern Europe. Much, on the other hand, remains to be done in support of open and secure borders in the rest of the OSCE area. Development in Central Asia and Afghanistan should be emphasised in the coming years.

Finland fully supports the implementation of existing border-related activities as well as extending the scope of co-operation to Afghanistan in accordance

with the Madrid Ministerial Council Decision on OSCE engagement with Afghanistan. Finland has also contributed considerably to projects in Tajikistan to develop a National Border Management Strategy and to enhance tactical and surveillance patrolling capacities. However, further border management initiatives, both in Tajikistan and across the OSCE area, are needed for the full operationalisation of the Border Security and Management Concept. Further training of border officials, capacity building and customs facilitation, as well as other cross-border co-operation are all required.

In the view of the Chairmanship, improving the capacity of the Central Asian countries to manage their borders effectively is an essential prerequisite for ensuring security and stability in the region. In this regard, the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on the overall security in the OSCE area should also not be underestimated. In order to improve security in the OSCE area in an efficient manner, co-ordination and co-operation between authorities on both sides of the border must be ensured. It is essential also to co-ordinate with other international actors and regional organisations working in the relevant fields to avoid competition and duplication of efforts. A goal-oriented approach is the recipe for successful activities and co-operation in this field.■

Representatives of the OSCE National Focal Point Network

(OSCE OS/Borders Team)

On 21 November 2007, the Operations Service's (OS) Borders Team hosted a "Meeting of Representatives of the OSCE National Focal Point (NFP) Network" in Vienna. The meeting provided the first opportunity to introduce the NFPs to the history of the OSCE, its structure and role and brought together 25 representatives of the National Focal Point Network, representing 21 participating States, one representative from the European Commission in Brussels, and one from the Delegation in Vienna. In addition, 22 OSCE staff members representing 16 Field Operations (FOs) attended.



Meeting of the OSCE Border Security and Management National Focal Points, Vienna, November 2007

The participants were firstly briefed on the OSCE's Border Security and Management Concept (BSMC) and the potential opportunities it offers. Secondly the

OS/Borders Team presented Permanent Council Decision 757 that establishes the NFP Network and opened a discussion on related subjects: ways to make the Network a useful instrument for the OSCE participating States and means by which information may be shared through the Network.

The OS/Borders Team and representatives from the FOs explained their roles and activities and provided a general overview of OSCE assistance to participating States in the area of border security and management. The development of good practices and lessons learned in border security and management was discussed.

The NFPs expressed their support for the Network, which, with time, they believe will grow into a useful

tool. They expressed the view that the Network's most valuable asset is its potential use for exchanging information. A number of means by which the NFP Network might be developed were proposed, these included a recommendation that the NFPs should meet on a six monthly basis in Vienna and another that the NFP Network might be provided with a dedicated website and an IT based system by which information could be exchanged efficiently and in a timely manner. The NFPs asked the OS/Borders Team to look into the possibility of implementing these recommendations. It is hoped that a second meeting of NFPs will take place in Vienna in the summer of 2008, at which the OS/Borders Team will report upon progress in developing the recommendations made in last November's meeting.■

Travel Document Security Programme

(OSCE ATU)

The Action against Terrorism Unit (ATU) is the OSCE's focal point for the co-ordination and facilitation of OSCE initiatives and capacity-building programmes relevant to the struggle against terrorism. Travel document security has formed part of the core of the Organization's counter-terrorism work since 2003. The Bucharest Plan of Action and subsequent Ministerial Council decisions have given the ATU the mandate to create a comprehensive assistance programme, which offers three strong elements of added value by addressing in one envelope concerns of terrorism, organized crime and trafficking in all its forms.

The ATU has developed a comprehensive assistance programme based on four objectives:

- Facilitate upgrades of travel document security features;
- Improve handling and issuance processes;
- Encourage reporting of invalid document numbers to INTERPOL and to provide real-time connection to their databases at border control; and
- Organize training for border control officials in identifying forged documents.

OSCE participating States are increasingly incorporating digitised photographs, machine-readable zones and biometric identifiers in their passports and identity cards. This is beginning to have a large impact on border control procedures, including increased calls for training to detect new



Border police officers during training on the recognition of false travel documents

trends in forged documents – an area where ATU and the OS/Borders Team closely co-operate. Another important aspect of travel document security at border control which the ATU promotes is providing real-time query connection to INTERPOL databases. Another vital issue which ATU supports is the harmonization of the system of rules for transliterating various alphabets into the Roman-Latin script for use in the machine-readable zone.

Currently, the ATU has travel document security project portfolio running in 12 OSCE participating States. In addition, the Unit actively co-operates with relevant organizations such as International Civilian Aviation Organization (ICAO), INTERPOL, International Organization for Standardisation (ISO), International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the European Union. The majority of the funding for the programme has come from Spain and the United States.■

Border Projects in Belarus

(OSCE Office in Minsk)

Over the past five years, within the framework of its mandate, the OSCE Office in Minsk has implemented a number of projects to promote institution- and capacity-building in Belarus. One of these has been initiated in co-operation with the Belarus State Border Committee and is entitled "Development of a border control computer database system to detect and record the criminal activities across the state border of the Republic of Belarus".

The project aims at enhancing the Belarusian border troops' capacity to fight criminal activities across the Belarusian border, by creating a database system in conformity with the modern internationally recognized standards. It also includes a study visit for 6 Belarusian experts to a border analytical centre of an EU country, as well as a 3-day seminar with the

participation of Belarusian authorities and international experts.

Undoubtedly, this project's implementation will considerably strengthen the Belarusian border troops' professional and technical skills in preventing illegal migration, trafficking in human beings, illegal trade in drugs and other threats and challenges to peace and security.

It should be stressed that the project is part of a broader undertaking by the international community and that the Office has coordinated its activities with the UNDP and TACIS offices in Minsk, which have also been engaged in similar programmatic activities.

In co-operation with the OS/Borders Team of the OSCE Secretariat the Office has conducted fund raising activities for this extra-budgetary project and the OSCE Office in Minsk would like to thank the Governments of Finland and Germany who have made valuable contributions. It is expected that the project will be implemented during the current year.■

Leaders of Border Police of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia meet in Pogradec, Albania

(OSCE Presence in Albania)

On 23 January 2008, the leaders of the Border Police of Albania and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, with the facilitation of the OSCE Presence in Albania and the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje, met in Pogradec, Albania, to further co-operation along the borders between the two countries.

An analysis of the results of co-operation between the border agencies during 2007 was conducted and the managers of both agencies agreed that co-operation should be strengthened, especially regarding work at the local level. It was jointly concluded that meetings at local and regional level were successful, but that there is a need for a more formal and institutionalized schedule of meetings to be adopted.

Representatives from the central Border Police Directorates of each country presented their Integrated Border Management (IBM) Strategies and Action Plans. On both sides of the border IBM Strategies are adopted and the implementation is underway.

Selection and training of personnel was stressed in the meeting as well as the institutionalization of joint training, joint patrols, communication and exchange of



Participants of the cross border co-operation meeting

data, the need for proper infrastructure and equipment at the Border Crossing Points (BCPs), and the use of liaison officers for the coordinated implementation of Action Plans.

Nevertheless, the legal basis for the practical implementation of IBM Strategies in both countries needs some improvement. Both countries border agencies have identified the need for additional agreements and protocols, especially for the practical implementation of joint patrols. It was agreed that the fifth Annual Review Conference on Border Security in South East Europe organized by DCAF (Geneva Center for Democratic Control of Armed Forces) and the Ministry of Interior of Montenegro in Budva in February 2008, would be the perfect venue for the signing of such agreements and protocols.

The two OSCE Field Operations expressed their readiness to continue assistance to both border police agencies.■

Georgian MIA Border Police – In Leaps and Bounds

(OSCE Mission to Georgia)

A new international border

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Georgian Border Service was founded in 1992 within the Ministry of Defense of the newly independent State. At that time, the standard and condition of the equipment and existing infrastructure had been left in dire need of modernization and urgent reform was required. The only clearly defined land border was with Turkey (the ex-Soviet Border – at the time still guarded by border units from the Russian Federation). The Georgian borders were porous and the Service was overstuffed, undertrained, under-resourced, underpaid and corruption was rife.

From the moment of the Soviet Union dissolution, Georgia faced the lack of an all-party agreement on demarcation and delimitation of some segments of its international borders. There was also the issue of control over border sections which fell within South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

To date, 1739 km of the country's 2148 km of green and blue border is under the control of Georgian Border Police. The most recent segment to be incorporated into Georgian border management responsibility was a section along the Georgian-Turkish border, after the departure of the last border unit of the Russian Federation in 1999.

Since 1992, the border service has been going through continuous evolution, from a defensive military structure into a law-enforcement border police agency. The initial step in reform came in 1994, and saw the Border Defense Office separate from the Ministry of Defense, to become an independent government department and, two years later, formally becoming the State Department of the State Border Guard of Georgia. In 1998 the law on "State Border of Georgia" was adopted, the Coast Guard Service was founded and one year later the Border Aviation Service was formed as part of the Department.

A further step in the reform saw the State Department of the State Border Guard being incorporated into the Ministry of Interior in 2004 and, based on the adoption of the new law on Border Police in 2006, transformed into the Georgian Border Police (GBP). In an effort to adopt international models of border security, the agency distanced itself from the traditional military-type border guard activities and became a law-enforcement policing body. The agency took charge of migration management and rescue operations. Conscripts were replaced with professionally contracted personnel, salaries were increased, new uniforms were provided, a training center was developed and the infrastructure underwent an extensive overhaul.

Support for reform has been forthcoming. As well as the OSCE, a wide range of other international organizations and agencies have made substantial contributions to assisting the preparation and implementation of comprehensive reforms on both the strategic and operational levels. The Finnish Border Guard, the Federal Border Service of Germany, Lithuania, Poland, the Turkish Armed Forces, the US Homeland Security, the European Union, International Organization of Migration have all contributed to efforts to provide operational training, support and advice in developing legal frameworks, infrastructure and have donated equipment.

The OSCE contribution

Since the launch of the Border Monitoring Operation in 1999, the OSCE Mission to Georgia has assisted the Georgians in strengthening their border security and management.

It was agreed that there was a need for basic border guard training enabling the service to effectively conduct its assigned duties in the rugged terrain of the Caucasus Mountains. Consequently, a year-long OSCE Training Assistance Programme was developed and delivered from July 2005 up to June 2006. Practical and theoretical training sessions of this programme were designed to: strengthen rescue operation skills in the context of security in hazardous mountainous areas; develop operational planning and management skills of members of border units, whether for day or night; enhance patrolling, observation and reporting methods, recording techniques, map reading, land navigation, radio communications, first aid, basic computer skills and environmental awareness.

Following the successful completion of the Training Assistance Programme, the OSCE developed a 12 month Capacity Building Programme aimed at training senior border police officers in educational methods, decision-making methodology, operational planning, and skills for rapid reaction to border incidents including helicopter and mountain search and rescue.

States which are reforming their border management system can take advantage of the Organization's common goals and various OSCE structures and expertise, and can benefit from shared experience. An example of this in the border management context came in March 2007, when representatives of the OS/Borders Team of the OSCE Secretariat, the OSCE Spillover Monitor Mission to Skopje and the Border Police of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia visited Georgia to exchange information on experiences gained and lessons learned during the reform process of the Border Police of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and their subsequent adoption and implementation of an IBM Strategy. This fruitful and highly productive visit revealed that, despite the distance, Skopje and Tbilisi have similar issues to overcome in the process of implementing an integrated border management approach and the insight and discussions between the respective border agencies were beneficial to all parties involved.■