

Arms Control



In line with its mandate and relevant OSCE commitments, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) works closely with institutional partners in developing a better-governed security and defence sector capable of more effectively responding to contemporary and emerging threats and challenges to national and human security. Such Mission support includes assistance in decreasing the risk of accidental explosion, theft and proliferation of weapons, ammunition, and explosives in BiH. It also includes support to ensuring BiH compliance with and timely reporting on OSCE arms control commitments.

Challenges

As a post-conflict country, BiH continues to grapple with high numbers of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in

illegal possession, as well as with large quantities of surplus and old/unstable weapons, ammunition and explosives - including mines. According to 2022 data collected by the

BiH Ammunition, Weapons and Explosives (AWE) Task Force, approximately 11,500 tons of ammunition and explosives - some more than 40 years old - and more than 67,000 weapons of different calibres are stored at 14 sites across the country. In view of the needs outlined in the Defence Review, the Armed Forces (AF) of BiH have a surplus of approximately 4,000 tons of ammunition and 42,000 weapons remaining for disposal. Some of these are stored in inadequate conditions and are insufficiently secured. As such, they pose a serious security and safety risk to BiH and the wider region in terms of accidental detonation, theft, and onward proliferation for use in crime - including terrorism.

According to the 2021 annual report of the BiH SALW Control Co-ordination Board, the overwhelming majority of criminal offenses involving weapons include use of illegally owned SALW - with men being both the prevalent perpetrators and victims of crime and homicide committed with such weapons. There is also a strong link between the presence of SALW and domestic violence. Nearly every second person murdered within a domestic context in BiH is killed by weapons - the majority of the victims being women.

The role of the OSCE

Mission support aims to enhance implementation and harmonization of strategic, policy and legislative

frameworks on arms control and stockpile management – thereby also contributing to compliance with related OSCE and international commitments and good practice.

Based on the [General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH](#) and the [Decision on OSCE Action for Peace, Democratic and Stability in BiH \(MC\(5\).DEC/1\)](#), the Mission facilitates arms control monitoring and verification, measures to increase confidence and security, as well as the safe reduction of weapons and ammunition surplus. Results in these areas of engagement contribute to regional and global arms control and non-proliferation.

In line with OSCE documents on [SALW](#) and [Stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition \(SCA\)](#), the Mission is a key international partner to BiH in the implementation of the [national strategy for control of SALW](#), as well as the related action plans, policies, and legislation on weapons. Such support is also highly complementary to implementation of the regional [Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024](#) (the regional Roadmap on SALW Control).

The Mission also plays an active role in implementation of the BiH Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives (AWE) Master Plan, addressing the full life cycle management of weapons and ammunition. The foremost types of Mission arms control assistance involve: (1) awareness raising on relevant international and regional standards and good

practices; (2) infrastructure upgrades at storage sites; (3) capacity-building for members of the Armed Forces of BiH and law enforcement; and (4) development of policy, mechanisms and operational protocols for safe and secure storage of weapons and ammunition as well as for transparent, safe and efficient disposal of surplus stockpiles.

Through upgrades to physical security infrastructure at storage sites and improved life cycle management, the Mission is helping BiH ensure safer and more secure storage, handling and disposal of unstable and surplus ammunition, weapons, and explosives stockpiles. Since 2006, approximately 27,600 tons of ammunition have been safely destroyed or decommissioned in BiH.

Longstanding OSCE support has markedly and sustainably enhanced the physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) at military weapons storage sites Teufik Buza near Visoko and Rabić near Derventa, as well as at military ammunition storages sites Krupa and Kula. This assistance has included installation of systems for detection of intruders, construction of fences, observation towers and hydrant systems, and donation of firefighting and fire protection equipment. These upgrades have greatly reduced the risk of theft and onward proliferation of stored ammunition and weapons, as well as arson and accidental detonation, and bolstered the safety of the civilian population as well as of the military personnel serving at the storage sites.

In 2018, the Mission helped the BiH Ministry of Defence establish a state-of-the-art military ammunition-testing laboratory as part of an Armed Forces of BiH facility for repair and dismantling of ammunition near Dobojo. This OSCE assistance included setting up an organizational personnel structure and an on-site training facility, personnel training, and donation of new equipment and materials required for chemical and thermal testing of ammunition propellant charges. According to information obtained from the Ministry of Defence, the establishment of the laboratory led to a tenfold increase in tested ammunition samples, including more timely detection of highly unstable ammunition that poses a danger. This result has generated a marked increase in the safety of storage, handling and disposal of ammunition stockpiles.

The Way Ahead

In partnership with the BiH Ministry of Defence, the BiH Ministry of Security, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and law enforcement agencies in BiH, the Mission will continue supporting implementation of the BiH's key strategic documents and action plans in the area of arms control and SALW control, as well as BiH compliance with and reporting on related OSCE commitments.

The Mission will sustain assistance to advancing PSSM of SALW, particularly by helping increase the capacity of military and law enforcement agencies to manage the life cycles of ammunition and weapons stockpiles. It will also assist the process of harmonization of legislation on weapons

and improvement of standard operating procedures relating to the SALW. The Mission will moreover support BiH in any future efforts to decommission and hand over non-essential military weapons and ammunition storage sites to local civilian authorities.

The multi-year OSCE project Addressing Security and Safety Risks of Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition in Bosnia and Herzegovina will continue to advance the ability of BiH to mitigate the related security and safety risks. The project will help to greatly improve the SALW and ammunition storage infrastructure of law enforcement agencies, and will sustainably strengthen the capacity of police to use canine dogs to detect weapons, ammunition, and explosives. It will also increase institutional and public awareness of the risks of illegal possession and misuse of weapons, support the establishment of an integrated SALW and ammunition inter-institutional case database and tracking system, and assist the development and operationalization of the legislative and regulatory framework on SALW deactivation.

For more information, scan the QR code.

