



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Secretariat

Conflict Prevention Centre
FSC Support Unit

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Report on the Termez – Hayraton Cross Border Training Programme

Background

In November 2002, the OSCE launched, as a part of a UN Interagency Training Programme, a two week pilot project on combating illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons in Termez-Hayraton crossing point on the border between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The aim of that training was to enhance the capacity of the local border guards and customs officials to combat illegal arms shipments. The initiative for the training came from the Uzbek authorities, who on different occasions had raised their concern about the high level of arms availability in the region. The training was well received and the participants gave positive feedback to the OSCE.

According to the feedback received from and the evaluation of situation by the OSCE team, it was suggested that an independent OSCE training for different government officials with specific topics could be organized. Therefore, in accordance with these recommendations a project under the title "Combating illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons through border management assistance" was conducted in Termez, Uzbekistan on 20-31.10.2003. This project was organized by the OSCE Centre in Tashkent together with the CPC and was a direct follow-up to the above mentioned pilot project. The objective of the project was very similar to the pilot project last year: to train and enable the law enforcement authorities to search, trace and seize the illegally trafficked SALW in the region, to examine the falsified travel and customs documents and to provide the law enforcement authorities material resources.

General Remarks

The follow-up project consisted of the following four elements:

1. The intensive theoretical training in Termez from 20-31 October 2003.
2. The intensive training period was supported by two months of practical training not only at the Termez check point but also in four different Uzbek check points. The training was conducted by two OSCE experts from 22 September to 15 November 2003. The purpose of this practical training was to work with and guide the local officials in their everyday work at the check points with a view to collecting information of needs and expectations for the intensive period.
3. Border issues related English language course for the local officials (will be conducted at the end of this year).
4. Small material assistance was provided to the officials at the border check point (inspection kits, document identification devices).

This year the main emphasis was placed on the internal co-operation between State's authorities and on the international co-operation between states sharing a common border. Besides that, topics like assessing body language, checking vehicles and containers, identification and seizure of weapons were covered.

The OSCE expert team was made up of two customs officers from Austria, one border officer from Finland, two firearms experts from the UK as well as representatives from the Conflict Prevention Centre and the OSCE Centre in Tashkent.

The participants this year consisted of border, customs and police officials from Termez (Uzbekistan side) and border and customs officials from Afghanistan, both from Hayraton and Kabul. This was the first OSCE project involving Afghanistan as the new OSCE partner for co-operation. The participation of officials from Afghanistan created a real added value to the training compared to previous year, since this time officials from both sides of the same border were brought together to the event to discuss the problems of trafficked weapons and possible solutions to that issue.

Conclusions

Upon the completion of the training both the trainers and the participants noted that the training was successful and useful for the local law enforcement bodies. Participants from both sides encouraged for similar seminars to be conducted in the future as well.

In accordance with the feedback received from the participants and thoughts and opinions from the trainers' side, some basic recommendations can be drawn:

This kind of training package is very practical, cost-effective and useful to be conducted also at different checkpoints and even in different countries. The training programme in Termez is universal, and only slight modifications would be needed in order to run this package in an other place. This kind of training seminars could also be organized at different levels (both for the central authorities in Tashkent as well as at the regional and local levels) on agreed topics. The experience of inviting partners for co-operation to the OSCE event was positive and this is worth continuing in the future too.

The OSCE should develop a long term programme not only in Uzbekistan but also in other Central Asian states on how to continue combating trafficking of SALW through the border management assistance. With the existing resources, it is not possible to handle big projects every year. It would be advisable to try to fulfill small steps annually, and by this way to achieve the longer term goal.

Regarding the border management assistance, there are other players in the field. Hence the OSCE should find its own role in the areas where it has expertise and other players cannot cover. The OSCE has certain advantages, like extensive representation in the Central Asian region. The OSCE document on SALW also gives a direct role or even a responsibility to assist the law enforcement bodies to combat illicit trafficking of SALW. But to avoid overlaps, co-ordination with other organizations and donor countries is needed.