

Arms Control



In line with its mandate and relevant OSCE commitments, the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina (the Mission) works closely with defence and security sector institutions to decrease the risk of accidental explosion, theft and onward proliferation of weapons, ammunition, and explosives in BiH.

Through upgrades to physical security infrastructure at storage sites and improved life cycle management, the Mission contributes to safer and more secure storage, handling and disposal of unstable and surplus ammunition, weapons, and explosives stockpiles.

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 also facilitates arms control monitoring, measures to increase confidence and

security, and limitations on weapons of war.

Arms control in Bosnia and Herzegovina

A post-conflict country, BiH continues to grapple with high numbers of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in illegal possession, as well as large quantities of surplus and old/unstable weapons, ammunition and explosives (including mines). According to 2020 data, approximately 11,000 tons of ammunition and explosives - some more than 40 years old - and more than 67,000 weapons of different calibres are housed at 15 storage sites across the country. Some of these are stored in inadequate conditions, are improperly handled or

insufficiently secured, and are easily smuggled or trafficked. 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.

The overwhelming majority of criminal offenses involving firearms include use of illegally owned SALW - with men being both the prevalent perpetrators and victims of crime and homicide committed with such weapons. Moreover, there is a strong linkage between the presence of SALW and domestic violence. Nearly every second person murdered within the domestic context is killed by firearms - the majority of whom are women.

The role of the Mission in the area of arms control

The Mission supports BiH in developing a better-governed security sector capable of more effectively responding to contemporary and emerging threats and challenges to national and human security. The Mission's activities aim to enhance implementation and harmonization of strategic, policy and legislative frameworks on arms control and stockpile management - contributing to compliance with related OSCE and international commitments and good practice. The Mission assists BiH institutions in conducting effective arms control, safely reducing weapons and ammunition surplus, and contributing to regional arms control and non-proliferation efforts.

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 related action plans, policies, and legislation on weapons. Moreover, such support is highly complementary to implementation of the regional Roadmap on SALW¹.

Mission efforts are co-ordinated through the BiH Strategic and Co-ordination Committees for Weapons, Ammunition and Explosive Ordnance. The

Mission plays an active role in implementation of the BiH Ammunition and Weapons Master Plans, 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;
- (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.

Mission support has contributed to significant progress in the BiH's military's Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM), and to the safe destruction of ammunition and weapons surpluses. Multi-year extra-budgetary projects have improved physical security at prospective weapons and ammunition storage sites (i.e. weapons storage sites TBT Visoko and Rabić, ammunition storages sites Krupa and Kula) as well as at the facility for ammunition delaboration and repair in Doboje. This has included installation of

intruder detection systems, the construction of fences, observation towers and hydrant systems, as well as the procurement and provision of firefighting and fire protection equipment. Since 2006, approximately 23,000 tons of ammunition have been safely destroyed or decommissioned in BiH.

As part of its work to increase the safety of ammunition stockpiles in BiH and enable safe disposal, the Mission supported the BiH Ministry of Defence in the establishment of a state-of-the-art military ammunition testing laboratory at a facility for repair and delaboration of ammunition in Doboje. The Mission provided new equipment and materials required for the chemical and thermal testing of ammunition propellant charges, and enhanced sustainability by helping develop an organizational-personnel structure for the laboratory, establish an auxiliary on-site training facility, and train laboratory personnel.

Key Mission activities

Support to the implementation of the SALW Control Strategy in BiH, the BiH Ammunition and Weapons Master Plans, and the regional Roadmap on SALW are overarching priorities of co-operation with the BiH Ministry of Defence, the BiH Ministry of Security, and law enforcement

agencies. The Mission focuses on advancing the physical security of SALW, including by helping increase the capacity of military and law enforcement agencies to manage the life cycles of stored ammunition and weapons stockpiles. Support is also provided to harmonization of legislation on weapons and to adjustment of standard operating procedures related to the SALW. The Mission supports BiH in all efforts to decommission and hand over non-prospective military weapons and ammunition storage sites to local civilian authorities.

In addition, a multi-year extra-budgetary project supports BiH to reduce security and safety risks related to illegal possession, misuse, and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition - primarily by increasing prevention, detection, and outreach capabilities. The project helps improve the SALW and ammunition storage infrastructure of law enforcement agencies, as well as the capacity of police to use dogs to detect weapons, ammunition, and explosives. It also aims to increase institutional and public awareness on the risks of illegal possession and misuse of firearms, to establish an integrated SALW and ammunition inter-institutional case database and tracking system, and to support development and operationalization of the legislative framework on SALW deactivation.

¹ Roadmap for a sustainable solution to the illegal possession, misuse and trafficking of SALW and their ammunition in the Western Balkans by 2024

Follow OSCE Mission to BiH



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