

Arms Control



In line with its mandate and relevant OSCE commitments, the Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina 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. 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.

Key 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 2024 data of the BiH Ammunition, Weapons and Explosives (AWE) Task Force, approximately 11,000 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, as of 2025 the Armed Forces (AF) of BiH still have a surplus of approximately 3,500 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 2024 Annual report of the BiH SALW Control Co-ordination Board, the overwhelming majority of criminal offenses involving

weapons include the use of illegally owned SALW - with men being both the prevalent perpetrators and victims of crime and homicide committed with such weapons. Firearms are also involved in nearly every second case of murder within a domestic context - the majority of the victims being women.

The role of the Mission

The Mission supports BiH in enhancing the implementation and harmonization of strategic, policy and legislative frameworks on arms control and stockpile management. This also contributes to BiH's compliance with OSCE and international commitments and good practices.

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 has been facilitating and supporting BiH in its arms control monitoring and verification, implementing measures to increase confidence and security, as well as in the safe reduction of weapons and ammunition surplus. Results 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 related action plans, policies, and legislation on weapons. Such support is also complementary to the implementation of the regional Roadmap for a Sustainable Solution to the Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW, their Ammunition and Explosives in the Western Balkans by 2030.

The Mission also plays an active role in implementation of the BiH Weapons, Ammunition and Explosives (AWE) Master Plan, which addresses the full life cycle management of weapons and ammunition. Mission arms control assistance involves:

[\(1\) 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 various law enforcement agencies across BiH;](#)

[and \(4\) developing 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 supporting upgrades to physical security infrastructure at storage sites and improved life cycle management, the Mission helps BiH ensure safer and more secure storage, handling and disposal of unstable and surplus ammunition, weapons, and explosives stockpiles. Since 2006, approximately 28,000 tons of ammunition have been safely destroyed or decommissioned in BiH and according to 2025 data there are still approximately 3,500 tons to be disposed.

The OSCE support has markedly and sustainably enhanced the physical security and stockpile management (PSSM) at the military weapons storage sites Teufik Buza near Visoko and Rabić near Derventa, as well as at the Krupa and Kula military ammunition storages sites (near Sarajevo and near Mrkonjić Grad, respectively). This assistance included the installation of systems for detection of intruders; construction of fences, observation towers and hydrant systems; and the donation of firefighting and fire protection equipment. These upgrades have 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 near Doboj as part of an existing Armed Forces of BiH facility for repair and dismantling of ammunition. This 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. 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.

Since its establishment, the Mission has supported the laboratory through annual visits to similar facilities in the OSCE region, allowing BiH experts to learn new testing methods and foster a professional network, as well as share their expertise with colleagues in countries establishing laboratories.

Further Strengthening of Arms Control and Security

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 supports the implementation of 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 OSCE commitments.

The Mission sustains 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 also assists the process of harmonization of legislation on weapons and improvement of standard operating procedures related to SALW.

Mission's multi-year extrabudgetary project Addressing Security and Safety Risks of Illegal Possession, Misuse and Trafficking of SALW and their Ammunition in Bosnia and Herzegovina advances the ability of BiH to mitigate security and safety risks. The project helps improve the SALW and ammunition storage infrastructure of BiH law enforcement agencies, and sustainably strengthens the capacity of police to use canine dogs (K9) to detect weapons, ammunition, and explosives. It also increases institutional and public awareness of the risks of illegal possession and misuse of weapons, supports the establishment of an integrated SALW and ammunition inter-institutional case database and tracking system, and assists the development and operationalization of the legislative and regulatory framework on SALW deactivation.

The Mission supports BiH in efforts to decommission and transfer non-essential military weapons and ammunition storage sites to local civilian authorities.

For more information, scan the QR code.



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