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PRESS RELEASE



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MACC and KFOR Demonstrate Mine Disposal Activity

PRISTINA---SRSG Bernard Kouchner and COMKFOR Lieutenant General Juan Ortuno, today witnessed a live mine disposal demonstration in Germia in Pristina, organised by the Mine Action Co-ordination Centre (MACC) and KFOR.

MACC and KFOR demonstrated several types of techniques of disposing of mines, including using trained dogs and remote controlled devices. They also organised a mine awareness class with children before the mine disposal demonstration.

Speaking on the occasion, the SRSG recalled that five days after the arrival of KFOR on 17 June 1999, UNMIK had established MACC which was to be the focal point for all mine clearance activity in Kosovo. It was the first time that such an action had been undertaken, he said.

Dr. Kouchner said that as a result of this initiative, casualties caused by mines had reduced dramatically, from over 140 per month in June and July 1999 to 20 per month from November 1999 onwards. In the meantime, 800 local Kosovars had been trained and 50 per cent of the schools located in high or medium mine contaminated areas, had been visited by mine awareness organisations and experts. "But the battle is still not won. Every mine or cluster bomb removed is a life or a limb saved," the SRSG added.

Dr. Kouchner said there are currently 1,415 known or suspected mine fields in Kosovo. Of these 503 are classified as priority one with a very high impact on the general community.

So far, 3450 anti-personnel mines and 3,800 anti-tank mines removed and over 4,100 cluster bombs destroyed. At this pace, Kosovo's mine problem can be solved in three years. "The speed at which clearance is occurring is unprecedented anywhere in the world," Dr. Kouchner stated.