

Josef Nothdurfter

SMUGGLING AND WEAPONS TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE: THE EUPM EXPERIENCE

As the only foreign police force in South East Europe, the European Union Police Mission has a complex task. This essay aims at acquainting the reader with the purpose, mission and successes of the EUPM.

What is our goal? We aim to establish a sustainable policing arrangement under *their* ownership in accordance with the best European and international standards. This was issued by the Council on Joint Action in Brussels. How long does our mandate last? We are supposed to leave Bosnia by the end of 2005. We are 500 international police officers from the EU member States. How will we achieve our goal? We do not arrest criminals on our own. We are not armed. We just monitor, mentor and we advise and inspect the local ministry of interior and local high ranking police officers. By this we hope that they will establish a sustainable police force.

We have no executive mandate, contrary to the international police in Kosovo. They have executive power, but we don't as I mentioned. But our priorities are of course to protect returning refugees and displaced persons. They should feel secure if they want to return in Bosnia – we are still expecting a lot of returnees – and if they don't feel secure, they will be reluctant to return. Then, we try to reach the goal that minority representation in local police force will be reached. Regarding the present percentage of the respective populations, the local police officers should be representative. In every police force, there should be Serbs, Croats and Muslims. And of course very popular topics at the moment is the fight against organised crime, because Bosnia is one of the main targets of human trafficking, and the restructuration of criminal investigation departments in accordance with uniform intelligence-led models. The criminal investigation department in Bosnia and in SEE are

very poorly organised. And of course, we put a very big effort in the de-politicization of the local police. There is no need to have political influence in the local police, because then the population will have no confidence in them.

Some operational and security aspects; the economic situation was mentioned, as was the assassination of Prime Minister Djindjic in Serbia², and we have a survey regarding the confidence of the local population in their police. The unemployment in Bosnia is 40%, in Kosovo 60% this influences the security feeling and smuggling and organised crime in the Balkans. Salaries and pensions are not regularly paid, then of course, there is low foreign investment, because if they don't feel secure, then why should they invest in the region? In Bosnia for instance, there is now a law on bankruptcy and liquidation. This will again raise the unemployment rate.

An enquiry and a survey done by SFOR shows you the confidence of the population in the local police. 34% of the local population have *some* confidence in the authorities and the police force, but 36% don't or have little confidence in the local police, and there, we have to build on this to look to a decrease of corruption and ensure that no politician will be involved in police activities.

Now a few words about weapons smuggling in SEE. In the Former Yugoslavia, the production of arms and military equipment was an important economic factor. Up to 60% of the State budget went into arms production. The majority of the mines laid in the Iraq-Iran conflict from 1980-1989 came from an ammunition factory in Bosnia. These arms exports culminated in the support of Iraqi air force by RS military officials. RS means Republika Srpska, which is a part of Bosnia. As you are aware, Bosnia is divided in two parts, the Republika Srpska and the Federation. And in the Republika Srpska there was this ORAU company which exported parts for aircraft in Iraq, and so violated the UNSC Resolution and the Dayton Agreement. And because of this so-called ORAU affair, the Serb member of the Bosnian presidency, Mr. Saravic

² Some perpetrators of the assassination of the Prime Minister of Serbia are supposed to be in hiding in Bosnia.

had to resign. This detection was initiated by the US Embassy and SFOR³. And latest statements in the news also allege exports of arms to Liberia by a Belgrade company which also would have violated the UNSC sanctions against Liberia. But these activities cannot be taken to be arms smuggling in the classical sense of course. But there are also such classical cases, although the statistics in this connection is very poor. A crucial role in the smuggling of arms to Bosnia was played by the Third World Relief Agency located in Vienna. In 1992, this agency opened an office in Sarajevo and became the main intermediary and facilitator in the smuggling of weapons for the Bosnian Muslim Army. But what are the reasons why smuggling is relatively easy?

First of all, consider Bosnia; this country is divided in two entities each having their own armed forces. But at this moment I need to state that the unification of the army is in progress. And they have rather weak central authorities. These are some of the reasons supporting smuggling activities. Customs remain under the control of the entities and this didn't change much even with the establishment of the State Border Service. The State Border Service is the Police Force which is in charge of checking and controlling the border. But the State Border Service's competence is limited to the border crossing of persons, while the flow of goods remain with the custom authorities under entity control. The borders are very porous and cooperation with the respective counterparts, with the local police, or with the border police of the neighbouring countries is very very poor.

There is one case I would like to emphasize. Recently, one year ago, big smuggling was detected from Gorazde⁴ to Kosovo, smuggling intended to support the Kosovo Liberation Army. Police have arrested 7 people in connection with a weapons smuggling gang which had been running arms from Bosnia to Kosovo. Among those arrested were a formal army general and two policemen. And here we see that corruption and the involvement of local authorities is still present. These weapons came from army and police depots. 300 automatic rifles and 1000 anti-tank rockets and 500 tank grenades, a lot of ammunition were hidden in a

³ SFOR is the NATO Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and there are 12000 soldiers within it.

⁴ Gorazde is a village in Bosnia.

truck under wooden boards when they were seized by KFOR and UNMIK Police in Pecs. Some sources state that this ring has smuggled arms to equip up to 50 000 Kosovo Albanians. But there is no evidence and this is just an estimation.

How can we reduce the huge number of weapons in the Balkans? Because there are lots of relics from the war and it is still a tradition to fire weapons in the sky, for weddings or something like this. This is called celebration fire. There is Operation Harvest under way, and SFOR is urging the local population to deliver or to hand over ammunitions and weapons to them for destruction. The results in 2002? 8000 small arms, 40 000 hand grenades, 4000 mines and a lot of ammunition were destroyed. And this year this trend continues. This is a very big success on the way to destroying the weapons that remain from the war.

Finally, we can answer the question how can we improve the situation? There must be better coordination between border guards of the countries. There must be better equipment and finally there must be better intelligence gathering in order to end the fight against organised smuggling.

Josef Nothdurfter
EUPM to Bosnia and Herzegovina
Operations Department
Sarajevo