

RANSAC Policy Update

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Albanian Chemical Weapons Destruction

Jeffrey Read

Background

Albania ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) on May 11, 1994. During a meeting of CWC States Parties in mid-March 2003, Albania announced that it had discovered a stockpile of chemical weapons outside Tirana, the capital. In June 2003, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) Director-General, Rogelio Pflirter, reported that Albania would promptly submit a timeline to the organization for the destruction of its stockpile. He noted that Albania expected to complete destruction of its Category 1 chemical weaponsⁱ by the CWC-imposed deadline of April 29, 2007.

In December 2004, the OPCW granted Albania an extension of its intermediate deadlines under the CWC for the destruction of its Category 1 chemical weapons. Under the treaty, all states with declared chemical stockpiles are required to have destroyed 1 percent of their munitions by 2000, 20 percent by 2002, and 45 percent by 2004. Peter Kaiser, spokesman for the OPCW noted that because Albania had only recently declared their stockpile, it would certainly miss all three of these treaty-stipulated deadlines. Albania now has until March 2005 to submit plans to the OPCW for its chemical weapons destruction project, including revised intermediate destruction deadlines. Albania intends to remain in compliance with the final deadline of all its Category 1 chemical weapons of April 29, 2007.ⁱⁱ

Albania's declared stockpile consists of 16 tons of bulk chemical agent. Analysis conducted during 2004 revealed that the stockpile included yperite, or sulfur mustard, as well as lewisite and adamsite, which are arsenic-based. On January 10, 2005, the *Washington Post* reported that China was the source of the stockpile. U.S. and Albanian officials believe that Albania acquired these chemical weapons in the mid-1970s, when relations between China and Albania were at their height. While China has never acknowledged transferring chemical weapons abroad, the appearance of Chinese-origin

chemicals in Albania has led some to speculate that similar forgotten or abandoned stockpiles may exist in other countries that received Chinese military aid during the same period.ⁱⁱⁱ

International Assistance

Soon after Albania declared the existence of its chemical weapons stockpile, the United States moved to help secure the stockpile. In April 2003, the United States approved funds to install security fencing and monitoring equipment, in light of concerns over theft and potential black market sale of the weapons. The State Department's Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund supplied \$555,000 to assist Albania in securing the site.^{iv}

In April 2004, the Center for Policy Studies in Russia organized a conference focused on issues related to the G8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction. During this conference, a Swiss Foreign Affairs Ministry official, Andreas Friedrich, declared that Switzerland would "cover the cost of OPCW inspections in Albania, which could amount to \$60,000" and mentioned that Switzerland might also aid in the actual destruction of the weapons.^v

Switzerland subsequently agreed to not only pay for the OPCW inspection of Albania's stockpile, but at the request of the United States also performed a chemical analysis to determine the exact chemical composition of the weapons in question. According to the Swiss Foreign Affairs Ministry, this analysis "will enable the United States to finalise its project to [set up] a facility in Albania for the destruction of chemical weapons." Switzerland also "plans to supply Albania with the equipment required and to train the staff of the laboratory of Albania's Ministry of Defence to enable it to carry out the analyses necessary for the chemical weapons destruction process."^{vi}

Prior to Albania's March 2003 declaration, Switzerland had provided Albania \$1.5 million in financial assistance to help dispose of nonweaponized chemicals under the name of the VETOXA project. Switzerland's history of assisting Albania has fostered good working relations between the two nations, building confidence and trust in the current dismantlement effort.^{vii}

On October 20, 2004, President Bush signed a Presidential Determination providing \$20 million in funds for United States' chemical weapons destruction efforts in Albania. Funds for the destruction were authorized under the 2003 Nunn-Lugar Expansion Act, which allows for the use of up to \$50 million in Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) program funds for projects outside the former Soviet Union. Albania will be the first country to receive assistance under this extension of the CTR program.

Senator Richard Lugar, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, praised the United States' efforts to expand the program outside the former Soviet Union in order to address other pressing non-proliferation concerns. "Today, we must be prepared with money and expertise to extend the Nunn-Lugar concept wherever it can be usefully applied. I applaud Albania's leadership in seeking United States assistance in destroying

these dangerous weapons....Nunn-Lugar has developed a unique capability to meet a variety of proliferation threats and I am excited that it will address this unique threat present in Albania.”^{viii}

Currently, the project is in its initial phase when a comprehensive project plan will be developed and a site visit to Albania will be conducted to survey the storage, location, infrastructure, and available support. The Department of Defense will develop a contracting strategy and life-cycle schedule for the project based on information gathered during this phase.^{ix}

The United States has agreed to loan Albania a custom-made mobile chemical weapons incinerator. Once the incinerator is operational, the destruction of the weapons will be conducted by U.S. contractors. A contract is scheduled to be awarded in September 2005.^x The Department of Defense will provide project management and oversight support for the elimination. Upon completion of the destruction project, the incinerator will be returned to the United States.^{xi} Destruction of the 16 tons of chemical weapons is to be completed in November 2006.^{xii}

Jeffrey Read is RANSAC's Research Assistant. He is currently working toward a Master of Science in Foreign Service at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. He holds a B.A. in Political Science and International Studies from the University of Oregon and is a member of Phi Beta Kappa.

ⁱ Category 1 Chemicals are those which have the highest potential for use as a chemical weapon. Examples include Sarin, VX, and Ricin.

ⁱⁱ Global Security Newswire, 12/3/2004

ⁱⁱⁱ Washington Post, 1/10/2005

^{iv} Department of State, Nonproliferation and Disarmament Fund, <http://www.ndf.org/Projects/ViewProject.jsp?ProjectId=124>

^v The CBW Conventions Bulletin, Issue No. 64. June 2004

^{vi} “Switzerland and Global Chemical Weapons Disarmament”, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, December 2004

^{vii} Global Security Newswire, 4/26/2004

^{viii} Press Release, Office of Senator Richard Lugar, 10/21/2004

^{ix} Cooperative Threat Reduction Report to Congress FY 2006, Department of Defense, 2/28/2005

^x Ibid.

^{xi} “Albania Special Weapons”, Globalsecurity.org, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/albania/>

^{xii} Cooperative Threat Reduction Report to Congress FY 2006, Department of Defense, 2/28/2005