



Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Montenegro
in partnership with
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
and
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Joint Press Release

Cutting of first T 55 tank marks beginning of implementation of Montenegro Demilitarization Programme

PODGORICA, 3 July, 2007 – The main gun barrel of the first of 61 surplus tanks T 55 of the Montenegrin armed forces was cut today to mark the beginning of implementation of the **Montenegro Demilitarization Programme (MONDEM)**, a joint project of the Montenegrin Ministry of Defence, the OSCE and UNDP.

The Ministry of Defence of Montenegro has indicated that demilitarization of conventional ammunition and the establishment of safe storage, based on appropriate UN agreements and NATO standards, as well as in line with OSCE commitments, is one of the priorities of the country's defence reform process.

“By ridding itself of these weapons, Montenegro is taking a crucial step in the reform of its defence forces into an efficient, modern and professional armed force to defend the country as part of a collective defence system,” said **Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Montenegro Vice Admiral Dragan Samardžić**.

Vice Admiral Samardžić emphasized that, by implementing the MONDEM Programme, the Government of Montenegro was demonstrating its full readiness to resolve the crucial problem of surplus weapons and ammunition.

“It is a cross-cutting programme which will have a positive impact on human security, reduction of environmental pollution, counter-proliferation policy, sub-regional confidence and security building measures and the national SALW Control Strategy of Montenegro, among other things,” said the **Head of the OSCE Mission to Montenegro, Ambassador Paraschiva Badescu**.

“We hope that our joint efforts will lead to a rapid and successful completion of this very important programme which will contribute to greater prosperity, security and stability in the country,” Badescu added.

Recalling Article 26 of the Charter of the United Nations, which envisages a system of international peace and security based on the “least diversion for armaments of the world’s human and economic resources”, the UN Development Programme in Montenegro commends the Government of Montenegro for making this State become the next to discard these expensive, heavy weapons systems of the past.

“The Government of Montenegro is to be applauded for this gesture of peace and reconciliation destroying weaponry of the former JNA, who waged war on neighbouring Croatia and Bosnia in the 1990s. Congratulations also to the Ministry of Defence for recognising that these tanks, which would be considered as antiques on a modern battlefield, can better serve Montenegro’s development by being melted down and recycled for new and more peaceful purposes,” said **Garret Tankosić Kelly, UNDP Resident Representative a.i./UN Interagency Focal Point in Montenegro.**

The aim of the project is to reduce the national defence stockpile from approximately 11,700 tonnes to 2,000 tonnes, to reduce the number of locations where ammunition is stored from ten to three, and to improve the stockpile management capacity as well as infrastructure development.

The OSCE and UNDP have experience on similar types of projects in Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Georgia, Moldova, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Lessons learned from these processes will be integrated into the MONDEM programme with the technical support of the South-Eastern and Eastern-Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

By destroying these outdated, offensive weapons in such a transparent manner, Montenegro is showing its partners, and more importantly the neighboring countries, its plans to contribute to regional disarmament, peace and security, while freeing its national resources to focus on sustainable economic development.

For additional information, please contact:

Mr. Vidak Latković, Spoksperson, Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Montenegro,
Tel/Fax: +382 81 246 274; E-mail: pr@mod.cg.yu,
Web: www.vlada.cg.yu/odbrana

Ms. Ana Dautović, Public Information Assistant, OSCE Mission to Montenegro; Tel: +382 81 406 432; Fax: +382 81 406 431; E-mail: ana.dautovic@osce.org
Web: www.osce.org/montenegro

Ms. Nadica Dujović, Communications Associate, UNDP Montenegro; Phone: ++382 81 231 251; Fax: ++382 81 231 644; Cell: ++382 69 319 709; E-mail: nadica.dujovic@undp.org
Web: www.undp.org.yu/montenegro