



## Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management: Italy – Kosovo

### Project for the Establishment and Training of a Nucleus for Forest Fire Protection in Pec / Peja - Kosovo

#### 1. Goals, expected results and activities of the project

The general goals of the initiative were

- Improving cohesion in civil society in order to facilitate the standardisation of social life in the province;
- Improving the relation between people and the institutions by involving a methodological approach that would enhance the potentials of the community;
- Contributing to the defence of the forest heritage in Western Kosovo, that, despite the current problems, which cannot be quickly solved, is facing the serious threats of forest fires.

The specific goals of the initiative included:

- Turning a big nucleus of former combatants into civil officials of the civil defence body, while contributing to the respect of peace agreements and the calm of political atmosphere across the province.
- Training and equipment of former UCK members who, after the end of the conflict, envisaged the disarmament and demobilization. This was considered fundamental for fostering civil activities while facilitating the reintegration and rehabilitation.

The expected results included:

- On-site training of a nucleus of 250 former combatants in the operative forest firefighting techniques;
- Training of ten former combatants at a School of the *Corpo Forestale dello Stato* (CFS - the Italian State Forestry Corps) as forest fire fighting team leaders;
- Delivery of fire suppression equipment to the newly formed teams;
- Creation of a network of fire fighting teams to be distributed over the territory; and
- Creation of public awareness on the importance of forest defence.

The activities envisaged for the implementation of this initiative were:

- **A practical training course** (5 days) to be held in Kosovo for the training of a number of elements of the Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC) (Trupat and Mbrojtjes se Kosoves – TMK), up to a maximum of 250 units. The course would mainly be focused on fire fighting techniques with hand tools. The so formed units would form the operative “workforce” to be used in forest fire suppression.
- **First theoretical-practical training course:** 10 days of study for a limited number of people (some five or ten people, turned into 21 as explained afterwards) with the status of Incident Command Leader. This course would have been held in Italy, at the facilities of the CFS, with the detailed development of issues and topics related to forest fires putting off.
- **Complete supply of individual equipment** corresponding to the equipment provided to the Italian firefighters for all people attending the basic course (in Kosovo), material including a leather belt (as those already used by the CFS) with bill hook and case, flask and torch for orientation at night, moreover, individual equipment of protection helmet, working gloves and handkerchief to be used as protection against smoke;
- **Complete supply of team equipment:** fire swatters, rakes, shovels, pickaxes, chain saws, water sprayer, and first-aid boxes.

The intervention strategy of the initiative was mainly based on the training of former combatants currently in the civil defence corps, with no specific technical training.

A practical training in the base course for the operators of the fire line and a theoretic-practical one for a limited number of people was envisaged. The last one was addressed to all those who, after a selection, would have sent to Italy at the CFS Schools to become "Forest Firefighting Team Leaders".

The whole staff involved in the training process was envisaged to be supplied with elementary equipment ordinarily provided to Forest Firefighting Teams in Italy.

## **2. Partners and beneficiaries**

The project was carried out together with the Defence General Staff - III Division, Military Policy and Planning - Military Centre for Civil Defence and Operative Command of Inter service Summit. It was a training-didactic activity of high level where co-operation between the Defence General Staff and the State Forestry Corps was first evident.

Direct beneficiaries of the initiative were the members of the KPC / TMK. The training was originally addressed just to the III RTG of the TMK in Pec.

The KPC was established on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2000 with Regulation 1999/8 of UNMIK on the basis of Resolution 1244 of UN Security Council. On 21 September 1999 the KPC was officially presented with a ceremony. The KPC should be made of 3000 men in permanent service and 2000 reservists to be chosen on the basis of professional and functional profiles. The tasks of this civil defence Corps are:

1. First aid in case of natural or environmental disasters, including forest fires of particular dimensions and accidents in industrial buildings
2. Search and rescue services
3. Humanitarian assistance in particularly isolated areas
4. Assistance / participation in land mine clearing / drainage activities
5. Rehabilitation / reconstruction of infrastructures and communities
6. Other tasks requested by KFOR.

It was envisaged that the people of Western Kosovo indirectly would be a beneficiary of the programme. It would benefit from the reinforcement of the civil defence service and the forest fire fighting services, including the post-fire environmental rehabilitation. The transformation of the UCK into a civil defence corps would lead to a gradual decrease of the tensions across the province.

## **3. Project implementation and completion of the activities**

### **First mission (February 2004)**

In the time after the planning and the implementation of the project, the General Inspectorate of the State Forestry Corps felt the need to launch a mission of actualisation and logistic preparation in Kosovo in view of the implementation of training activities in the year 2004. That mission was carried out from 3 to 10 February 2004 by two SFC officials.

The officials proved that the significance and overall objectives of the project were valid and did not need to be altered and its political importance was considerably increased compared to the time of its planning, because of all political changes in the area and the situation the TMK was facing. During the meetings with the representatives of the TMK on the overall operative agreements related to the project, they showed a deep interest and satisfaction for the initiative.

### **New structure of the project**

During the debates it was also stated the need for adjusting the project to the changed organization system of KFOR and the new TMK situation. Therefore, the project was substantially changed as compared to its initial planning.

Indeed, in 2002, it was envisaged just for the benefit of the members of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Zone of the TMK corresponding to Pec/Peja, area of direct competence of Western Multinational Brigade, under Italian command. However, in 2003 another change occurred in the internal organization of KFOR, with a new territorial division of Kosovo in the following multinational brigades: the Multinational Southwest Brigade (headquarters in Prizren, under German-Italian command), the Multinational Eastern Brigade (headquarters in Gnjilane, under USA command,) the Multinational Northern Brigade (headquarters in Mitroviça, under French command), and the Multinational Centre Brigade (headquarters in Pristina, under Scandinavian command).

Subsequently the enlargement of participation in capacity building in firefighting was in line with

- request of Vice Commander of KFOR;
- request of the representatives of TMK, later formalised by an official note;
- full consensus of the commander of the Multinational Southwest Brigade and the request by TMK;
- the priorities set by the Italian Government to assist in stabilisation of the region.

Those attending the courses came not only from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Zone of the TMK, as originally envisaged, but also from all six zones of the TMK and the Central Fast Intervention Group (that is from the whole Kosovo). Afterwards it was decided to increase the number of attendants from 10 to 21 for the high level course which was to be held in Italy at the CFS School for getting the qualification of "Forest Firefighting Team Leaders", in order to guarantee a higher training to at least three elements for each TMK zone.

During the mission, the Officials of the SFC set all the practical aspects of the project implementation in Kosovo. An operative agreement was made with the Commander of Villaggio Italia, in order to use the logistic base of the Italian Army which offered adequate structures for the small contingent of the CFS dispatched to training 250 TMK members in forest fire fighting.

The availability of the structure of Italian base were extremely helpful not only for the mere implementation of the project activities, but also in terms of efficiency of the action for reaching the goals of the project. The availability of the structures of Villaggio Italia was the result of the initiative launched by the Defence Ministry involving the General Staff, the Inter-Agency Operative Command, and the Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

Also the Multinational Southwest Brigade Command provided its full availability to grant the implementation of the course and took charge of many burdens and costs for overcoming the problems of increasing costs as a consequence of the project enlargement.

## **Second mission and second non-burdensome changes**

From 11 to 14 May 2004 a second mission of CSF was sent to Kosovo, to gauge the political situation after the violent interethnic clashes of March 2004 and to further elaborate project.

## **Provision of equipment**

The equipment for the KPC staff envisaged by the project were bought in Italy and moved to Kosovo in the first week of June 2004 through military flights made available for free by the General Staff of the Army.

As agreed with the military authorities the theoretic base course for 250 people was implemented between 18 June and 6 July 2004 in the Italian military base "Villaggio Italia" in Belo Polje (Pec/Peja).

The subjects addressed by the course included the theoretical basis of fire behaviour, the fire impacts and problems associated with forest fires, and practical instructions of the use of hand tools and portable devices (chain saws and water sprayers) for forest fire suppression.

The program of the activities carried out (theoretic in the classrooms and practical in the areas of the rifle range linked to the Italian Military Base) is reported in the weekly timetable available in Italian, Kosovan-Albanian and for the first week only also in Serbian, since this minority was present in the

first contingent of attendants. All attendants were provided with the document drafted for the course and translated into Kosovan-Albanian and into Serbian too.

The level of preparation and learning of the attendants of the course was tested through a final evaluation, made up of ten questions with multiple answer for the drafting of a list according to merit. All attendants were given an attendance certificate.

Considering the importance of the initiative, some representatives of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) the UN leaders in Kosovo were invited as observers and actually followed the whole course.

From the presence register kept by the Secretariat of the Course results that the attendants of both modules were up to 246 Kosovars out of 250 envisaged. There was also a small number of representatives from the Serbian minority. A translation into Serbian of the didactic documents was provided.

At the end of both modules of the course the TMK/KPC was provided with the following equipment:

- 250 plastic protection helmets
- 250 tissues against smoke
- 250 pairs of leather gloves
- 250 fiber belts
- 250 plastic flasks with cover
- 250 torches for orientation at night with double battery charger (with direct power pack and power cable for cars)
- 250 bill hooks with cover
- 70 fire swatters (metal)
- 70 fire swatters (rubber)
- 35 fire shovels
- 35 pickaxes
- 70 fire rakes
- 7 chain saws
- 7 mist blowers
- 7 first aid kits

With the delivery of the materials the complete training and equipment of the TMK / KPC was successfully implemented, and the staff is therefore able to autonomously intervene in case of forest fires.



**Figure 1.** Unloading of hand tools on the Italian military base “Villaggio Italia”

## Course for Forest Firefighting Team Leaders

The second part of the project envisaged the launch in Italy of the “Qualification Course for Forest Firefighting Team Leaders”. The course was held from 16 to 26 November 2004 in Cittaducale (Rieti), at the SFC School.

21 members of the TMK/KPC (Trupat e Mbrojtjes se Kosoves/Kosovo Protection Corp) attended the course and they were carefully selected among the attendants of the base Course held in Kosovo. The above-mentioned Course sets the conclusion for the “Project for the establishment and training of fight against forest fires nucleus in Kosovo”.



**Figures 2 and 3.** Classroom training on the Italian military base “Villaggio Italia”

### ***Didactic activities***

The subjects of the course (after a general introduction on the dynamic of forest fires and the use of manual tools and portable devices for their putting off) focused on the main theoretic-practical notions of the Forest Firefighting Team Leaders.

The role and the tasks of the last were analysed, beyond the ways of actively fighting against flames and the case studies, the backfire technique, cartography and topography elements, first aid elements.

Activities were also carried out on the ground, with the monitoring and study of two different areas (one in the province of Terni and the other one in the province of Viterbo) crossed by fires and where all the tasks of the Forest Firefighting Team Leaders were introduced.

The level of preparation and learning of participants of the Course was tested through a final evaluation test. The activities of the Course were concluded with a Ceremony held on 25<sup>th</sup> November in the “Salone Giovanni Gualberto” of the Direction of the SFC school in Cittaducale, where the attendants were given an attendance certificate.





**Figures 4-5.** Forest firefighting field training in Pec/Peja, Kosovo

#### 4. Conclusions

The review of the didactic-training activities of both courses can be considered positive on the basis of several aspects, especially:

- the high number of attendants of the first course held in “Villaggio Italia”
- the interest of the attendants during the activities, their attention and care
- the high operative ability during the practical phase of the course with the use of manual tools (in the practical part of the course)
- the high outcomes reached in the final evaluation tests (in both courses).

Moreover, it is to be considered:

- The establishment in Kosovo of a structure able to face the emergencies of forest fires, since everybody received the proper training and supplied with adequate equipment.
- This project was the first example of didactic-training initiative across Kosovo related to TMK/KPC in view of its transformation into a civil defence structure also providing education and equipment.
- The project is the first example (also at international level) of dealing with environment protection and natural resources safeguard, beyond the protection of forest lives in Kosovo at risk because of forest fires in the framework of “peace military activities”
- The project was the first civil-military cooperation example bearing positive professional exchanges among the Defence General Staff – III Division, Military Policy and Planning-Military Centre for Civil Defence, the Italian Army and the Corpo forestale dello Stato carrying out the initiative.
- It was the first mission abroad for the CFS on specific tasks (but “Missione Arcobaleno” where the CFS had civil defence and humanitarian aid tasks).



**Figure 6.** Handing over of the diploma

According to what aforementioned, it is clear that the “Project for the establishment and training of nucleus against forest fires in Pec/Peja - Kosovo”, carried out by the CFS fully reached its goal, that is, on one hand, contributing to the stabilization process in Kosovo increasing civil defence tasks of the TMK-KPC, and, on the other hand, establishing a structure (through the training and the supply of individual safety equipment and the division equipment for flames putting off) for the safety and protection of forest resources in Kosovo, potentially threatened by the risk of forest fires.

#### IFFN Contribution by

Lillo Testasecca and Gianpiero Andreatta  
Corpo Forestale Dello Stato  
Ispettorato Generale  
Divisione V (Affari Forestali Internazionali)  
Via G. Carducci, 5  
I-00187 ROMA  
Italy

Tel: +39-06-4665-7047  
Fax: +39-06-4817-690  
e-mail: [l.testasecca@corpoforestale.it](mailto:l.testasecca@corpoforestale.it)  
URL: <http://www.corpoforestale.it>