1. INTRODUCTION

Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), the existing surplus and shelf life exceeded stockpiles of Conventional Ammunition (CA) still pose significant hazards to people, the environment and the security of countries. Thus, the Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM) remains one of the main areas where further efforts should be made.

International organizations have addressed this issue in several initiatives aimed at improving the situation through international cooperation and assistance. Joining these efforts RACVIAC, in cooperation with the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), the Verification Centre of the Federal Republic of Germany and the authorities of the Republic of Austria, organized for the first time a PSSM Executive Level (PSSM Level-2) Course from 08 to 12 November 2010. The course was sponsored by the Republic of Austria and the Federal Republic of Germany. The DTRA supported the activity by providing modules of the course agenda and participants’ handouts.

2. PROGRAMME/METHODOLOGY

The duration of the course was one week. It was carried out in English language and it comprised lectures/presentations and practical exercises. The theoretical part took place at the RACVIAC facilities and participants visited the Croatian weapon and ammunition storage site in Velika Buna for practical exercise.
2.1 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the course was to train executive managers to assess national stockpiles, operational procedures, and infrastructure, while providing them with ways for potential improvements in security and management, and introducing them to the best international practices in Physical Security and Stockpile Management (PSSM).

The objectives were:
- To train experts in executing their professional tasks;
- To provide executive authorities with relevant valuable experiences;
- To highlight main challenges in stockpile management;
- To deepen contacts between representatives of national organizations and agencies engaged in PSSM.

2.2 Participation

Seventeen participants took part in the course, namely three (3) from Albania, two (2) from Croatia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* respectively, one (1) from Bosnia and Herzegovina, one (1) from Hungary, three (3) from the International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance, four from international organizations stationed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely EUFOR ALTEA (1), NATO (1), OSCE (2), and one (1) representative of the UNDP in Zagreb.

RACVIAC hosted altogether five lecturers from Austria (2), the DTRA (1) and Germany (2). During the visit to Velika Buna the commander of the storage site and his staff supported us with briefings on their facilities and procedures.

2.3 Overview of the Course

The first phase (08–10 November) was conducted as a combination of presentations, lectures, classroom exercises and preparations for the field exercise in Velika Buna. The presentations covered the following topics:

- SALW Proliferation Threat
- International Agreements

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* Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
The lecturers efficiently covered all the topics and presented a comprehensive overview of all aspects of the PSSM. Briefings, which included pictures and video materials, were very well prepared. Mr Johnson captured the attention of the audience with his extraordinary capabilities of sharing knowledge and experience. The rewarehousing classroom exercise and the compatibility demonstration were also much appreciated by the audience.
During the second phase (11-12 November) of the course, participants visited the weapon and ammunition storage facility of the Croatian Armed Forces in Velika Buna. After the commander’s briefing, participants were split into two groups and they subsequently examined the existing storage site conditions, and compared them to the best international practices discussed during the course.

The following morning, the participants were given one hour to prepare a list of their findings with recommendations on how to improve the physical security and stockpile management practices of the visited facility. Finally, the two teams made their presentations.

3. SUMMARY/RECOMMENDATIONS

According to experts’ and participants’ assessments provided at the end of the event, the course proved to be successful. The professional lectures and lecturers’ personal experiences attracted the attention of the participants, while the classroom and field exercises further increased their motivation. Participants significantly improved their knowledge about the PSSM and learned the methods of assessment and preparation of recommendations for improvement. They returned to their respective armed forces, international organizations and verification centres with the additional knowledge and skills gained during this course, which they can apply in their current or future positions.

This was the first such course organised by RACVIAC. For the benefit of the SEE region, it is highly recommended to continue with a technical level (Level-1) PSSM course and a higher level (Level-3) SALW course in the next year as well. It is also important to carry out the field exercise in the form of a visit to a storage site during such courses, since it gives the participants a unique opportunity to compare the existing conditions to the international best practices, and to practice the assessment procedures and the preparation of recommendations.

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*R*Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.