

Facing mines head-on, despite the risk, KOSOVAPRESS, 26.09.2012

Many years ago he was a KLA member, partaking in the battles of Koshare which at that time were taking place between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serbian Army. But now wearing a KSF uniform, different from that of KLA, Demë Maloku, Leader of the First Demining Platoon in Koshare, carries out this work with dedication, exactly at the place where 13 years ago severe battles were taking place with the enemy.

He feels proud for what he has done previously and for what he is doing now, in the removal of unexploded ordinances, which remained from the war that took place between 1998-1999, which endangers the life of citizens of that area.

“It is a special feeling because at that time in 1998-99 we had different mission and purpose, which was the liberation of the country. Whereas today we have different mission and goal. But no doubt it is connected because it is a chronology of events. At that time, the war was specifically the reason that these mines were planted. Personally I feel myself morally and formally or officially responsible to put maximum efforts in removing these mines that are very dangerous to all Kosovo citizens. Speaking otherwise, civil population and different visitors are not to be blamed for the planting of these mines, so that people rightfully expect from the Kosovo soldiers to remove those mines so that people can go out and enjoy these exceptional natural beauties”, said Maloku.

He says that this site where we are doing the demining work was the front line where the war was taking place during the period of 1998-1999 between KLA forces and forces of Serbian army. According to him, mines have been planted in this area by Serbian forces whereby their purpose was to prevent KLA soldiers from penetrating into other areas. At this site, according to him, there are different UXOs, starting with mines of different types, anti-infantry mines, mortars, different mine launchers and bazookas which were used against infantry.

Whereas the deminer Gëzim Morina, who works for three years in this area, says that despite high hazard that he faces everyday, he does this job with great pleasure.

“We do this job with pleasure because we know we are clearing our mountains, fields of our country. We have been trained for 13 years; we do this job without a fear, because our working procedures are very complete, very accurate. We have never had any accident due to our procedures being very good, strict so that no soldier was endangered. We do this job with pleasure, because we know we are clearing our mountains, our children go to these areas freely over the weekends”, said he.

Among few women in the demining teams in this area was also Nita Vula, who says that despite doing a dangerous job, she is now accustomed so that this job can be done by women too.

“I work for 9 years in the demining. It is a little bit difficult job but women can also do it. We are three women working in the demining company as deminers. The job is a little bit difficult but women can also do it”, says she.

Whilst Major Fadil Sahiti, Commander of KSF Demining Company said that besides this site, KSF Demining Company is also engaged in four other sites in Dobërçan near Gjilan whereby clearance of minefield is taking place, as well as three other sites whereby clearance of battlefields is taking place, near the airport in Harilaq, at TRADOC Barracks in Ferizaj and Duple near Kleçka. During this year, according to him, there have been about 300 callouts, whereby about 500 different UXOs have been found.

“So far we have cleared an area of about 127k square meters and found about 300 UXOs, only from the clearance of battlefields and demining”, said he.

Whilst Ahmet Sallova, Head of KSF Mince Action Center said that great progress has been achieved as far as clearance of areas endangered by mines is concerned.

“Since 1999 great progress was achieved. Whereby out of 4500 dangerous sites, the number of sites was reduced to 57 and 44 which are still suspicious sites. Thanks to untiring work of the demining teams, more than 47 million square meters have been cleared and about 85 thousand different explosive devices have been found and demolished”, said he.

As a result of the recent war in Kosovo, from 1999 to 2012, mines have caused the death of 115 people, and 454 citizens were wounded by the UXOs and so currently 57 areas are still marked as dangerous and 44 suspected to be with mines.

Otherwise it is the third year that we are working in this area which is situated on an altitude of above 1400 meters. Here altogether we are 18 deminers working as KSF members.

KSF officials claim that working results are obvious and that so far over 20k square meters of mine field land have been cleared, and over 29 UXOs have been found in this area. They appeal to the citizens that in case they find any UXO they should not touch it but inform respective authorities of KSF, Kosovo Police and KFOR.