

The work of the OSCE in the field

Source: On the frontlines of peace - OSCE in action- Vienna: OSCE [Prod.], 2005. Vienna, OSCE. - VIDEO (00:03:28, Colour, Original Sound Track).

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URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_work_of_the_osce_in_the_field-en-c6c906b3-1f8f-4b57-8b1f-0cc43ce85008.html



Last updated: 04/07/2016

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[Commentator] Of more than 3 500 OSCE staff, 8 out of 9 are in the field and 80 % of the budget is spent there too, dealing with the nuts and bolts of peace. The fire and smoke recall the white heat of battle when Bosnians, Serbs, Croats and Muslims fought each other in the 1990s not far from this field and what's now the ethnic Serb part of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Disturbing images, perhaps, except for anyone who felt threatened by these tanks. In the presence of OSCE representatives, the ethnic Serbs have already turned 350 tonnes of heavy weapons into innocent scrap.

[Serbian man] This is very hard work if you've never done it before.

[Commentator] Nothing forged for war yields easily, including attitudes. The OSCE knows well about that. For a decade under the Dayton Peace Accords, it's been working away on disarmament.

[Jovo Markovic] Republika Srpska is trying to, together with Bosnia-Herzegovina, trying to be a part of greater secure environment. So that means that we don't feel less secure.

[Commentator] It's not the end of hatred and hostility in former Yugoslavia, but as these pieces head to the scrapheap, so does a little of the tension.

For Europe, the farther away trouble can be stopped the better. So the OSCE has expanded operations eastward. Here, two kilometres up in the Caucasus Mountains, some of the OSCE's fittest field teams spent half a decade helping to build international confidence and prevent conflict by watching over 300 kilometres of border between the Republic of Georgia and the Russian Federation, as usual, embodying the OSCE's reputation for agility and its international make-up.

This is wild country with few roads and few people, where smugglers, bandits and unknown travellers can ratchet up cross-border tension.

[Michael Raynor] The patrols can either be foot patrols, vehicle patrols or helicopter patrols. We also have what are called OOPs, Overnight Observation Patrols, where the guys would go with a tent, enough stuff to last maybe one or two nights, observe the border in a specific location then patrol back.

[Commentator] From the day they deployed at Georgia's request, unarmed OSCE observers worked 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in good weather and bad. They spotted hundreds of illegal crossings a year. Most of the travellers, as harmless as these people, anything from a lone peasant to a horse caravan out of the days of Marco Polo.