

Lebanese Army reconnaissance in a chemical warfare agent release context during CBRN Intermediate Training.



Civil Defence exercise.

In October 2018 the Lebanese Armed Forces arrested a terrorist claiming to be with ISIS. He was suspected of an attempt to poison a military water tank with chemical products. This event stressed even more the need for Lebanon to increase its preventive and response capabilities to CBRN threats.

Preparing for CBRN in

LEBANON

The Middle East has long been a region of turmoil and instability with internal and external players daily shaping the lives of its inhabitants. Torn by decades of wars, revolutions and broader interconfessional tensions, Lebanon finds itself taking part in this regional spiral. In the midst of a plethora of challenges, the risk of CBRN-related events emerges and calls for national and international attention

Andrea D'Angelo and Lt Col Andrea Gloria review EU efforts to assist Lebanon in CBRN risks mitigation

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The onset of the Syrian crisis in 2010 exacerbated this country's economic, social and security situation with the influx of over 1.5 million Syrian refugees – added to the pre-existing 500,000 Palestinians – who had to be hosted by an already-fragmented nation with overburdened public institutions.

Rising CBRN threats

The accidental release from Lebanese facilities situated in densely populated areas using hazardous chemical products, in addition to the possible release of chemical warfare agents (CWAs) by terrorist organisations within Lebanon as well as in neighbouring Syria, constitute a concrete menace to Lebanon's national stability.

In parallel, the risk of infectious disease outbreaks has been exacerbated

by the growing populations of refugees crossing borders without proper medical examinations and then living in poor conditions. Possible incidents involving radiological material and nuclear accidents in neighbouring countries represent another possible threat to Lebanon's safety and security.

National disaster plan

Prompted by the evolution of the national and regional context, the Lebanese Government, assisted by the international community, in 2010 drafted the National CBRN Disaster Management Plan and created the CBRN National Team – which evolved in the current National CBRN Commission – to be in charge of the national coordination of all CBRN-related prevention and response activities.

The chemical attack on Ghouta, Syria on 21 August 2013 increased the

perception by Lebanese authorities of the increasing CBRN risk in the region, calling for a stronger response capacity by national institutions. Subsequently, in 2016, the CBRN National Team collaborated with the European Union Joint Research Centre (EU JRC) to draft the National CBRN Action Plan.

This delineated the risk factors in contrast with Lebanon's ability to address these risks, and to set a framework and baseline for interagency cooperation and response during a CBRN incident or accident. This EU initiative was later followed by the launch of the EU Technical Assistance on CBRN Risks Mitigation in Lebanon in September 2018.

Within a €3.5-million comprehensive programme, some €1.2 million is dedicated to specialised equipment provision with €2.3 million for technical assistance and training. This brings together various national players to develop a complete CBRN preparedness and response capacity.

Implementing the plan

The three-year EU Technical Assistance (TA) project is currently implemented by the consulting firm Business & Strategy Europe (B&S Europe), in partnership with the NGO Security and Freedom in Europe (SAFE), the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Italian Ministry of Defence.

CBRN experts in EU Member States were brought on board the project team to ensure tangible operational results while reinforcing sustainable ties between Lebanon and EU Member States in this sensitive area of work.

The objectives of the project are to:

- 1 Enhance the technical capabilities of Lebanese first responders and the implementation of CBRN prevention and response tasks by the Lebanese Armed Forces, Internal Security Forces, Civil Defence, Beirut Fire-Fighters, the Lebanese Red Cross, and the Office of the Prime Minister



Lebanese Army warning and reporting exercise during CBRN Intermediate Training.

Beirut firefighters during basic training in a toxic industrial chemical release context.



Lebanese Army decontamination and related checks during CBRN Basic Training.

2 Increase interagency cooperation in the operational crisis management of CBRN events. Within this framework, the project provides high-level training and peer-to-peer mentoring and coaching by CBRN experts, along with the provision of specialised equipment.

Training progress

The EU TA project team employed a participatory approach in the first months of the project. The aim was to complete a thorough Gap Analysis to identify strengths and weaknesses of various Lebanese institutions, as well as prioritise potential actions to enhance CBRN capabilities and reinforce their operational capacities.

As a result, a training plan was designed and tailored to the roles and responsibilities of each of the participating institutions with reference to the National CBRN Action Plan and Disaster Management Plan. With the start of the implementation phase in January 2019, multi-level training has been carried out in parallel with the distribution of specialised equipment. The training structure allows a progressive learning curve for its participants, with challenges in subject matter areas increasing across the lifetime of the project.

By end 2019 at least 150 first responders had been trained in detection, sampling and identification of CBR agents, and in warning, reporting and decontamination in possible CBRN scenarios. The training sessions also serve as a platform to draft intra-agency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and establish an interagency information exchange mechanism to institutionalise practices and ensure multilateral sharing and coordination.

ARZ 1

In 2020, the TA will support CBRN Field Exercise ARZ 1. This activity will be funded by the Directorate General Development and Cooperation of the European Commission and organised by the UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and the International Science and Technology Centre. The Lebanese Prime Minister Office within the framework of the EU CBRN Centres of Excellence Initiative will assist in the CBRN terrorism response exercise.

At the end of the intra-agency training sessions, field drills and table-top exercises will take place to apply the SOPs and strengthen cooperation among the different institutions to achieve an effective and prompt response. Another essential aspect of the training is the development of self-sustainable capabilities through Train-the-Trainer modules. Selected individuals will constitute a national training body in charge of increasing CBRN awareness and education across their own institutions.

Coordinating projects

It is worth mentioning the innovative and proactive coordinating approach adopted by the TA project team. This is aimed at synchronising current CBRN activities with ongoing projects and bilateral initiatives funded by other donors. The target of these harmonisation efforts is to better serve the beneficiaries, while avoiding redundancy and overlaps.

For full development of Lebanese

inter-agency cooperation and response to CBRN events, a 'passport' of performance indicators to measure CBRN response capacities has been developed. This monitoring tool is intended to support the National CBRN Commission, policy-makers, and practitioners in monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan, measure the results achieved, and further define strategies and initiatives to be undertaken in the CBRN sector in Lebanon.

The EU-funded Technical Assistance on CBRN Risks Mitigation in Lebanon project is an example of successful public-private cooperation between specialised entities and practitioners from EU Member States. This highly technical and operational project highlights the efforts of the EU and its Member States to strengthen the resilience of Lebanon's security institutions against CBRN threats while reinforcing their roles as key drivers of stability, safety and national cohesion. 🇮🇹

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CRISTANINI CBRN DECONTAMINATION SYSTEMS



CBRN Light Multirole Vehicle LMV



For CBRN Recce, Survey and Scene Assessment (RSSA) for Defence and Civil Protection

- Stand-off Chemical Detection (to 5 km)
- Chemical Detection & Air Monitoring
- Biological Detection
- Nuclear Radiation Monitoring
- Meteorological Information
- Portable Detection Instruments
- Integrated CBRNe Software
- Knowledge & Information Management System (ATP-45D)
- Automated Sampling & Marking System
- Integral Decontamination System

Optional Capabilities:
 - Laser Warning System

Air quality control, air conditioned, with COLPRO and ballistical protection in accordance with NATO standard.



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