WP6.2.6 Baltic CWA Contingency Plan: National contingency plans in Finland

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1. Introduction

This report contains the information obtained from the national contingency plans of Finland concerning with the fished or ashored chemical weapons. The work has been carried out by inquiries to the national authorities that may be concerned with this issue, namely MRCC Turku, Department for Rescue Services of Ministry of the Interiors, Headquarters of The Finnish Border Guard, Deployable CBRNE Laboratory of Finnish Defence Forces, Centre for Military Medicine of Finnish Defence Forces, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, and Finnish Poison Information Centre. This information is intended to assist the compilation of unified contingency plan, which will be the one of the important outcomes of the CHEMSEA project to be presented to the national authorities in the Baltic Sea area.

The authors like to thank the following people for their assistance in providing the information reported here: Capt. Ville Halonen (Chief Officer, Deployable CBRN Laboratory, Military Engineer and CBRN Defense School, Engineer Regiment, Finnish Defense Forces), Vesa Karttunen (Director on occupational issues, Federation of Finnish Fisheries Associations), Samu Hiljanen (MRCC Turku), Pekka Parkkali (Finnish Border Guard, Headquarters), Tiina Santonen (Finnish Institute of Occupational Health), Kalle Hoppu (Poison Information Centre), Jarkko Kangasmäki (Centre for Military Medicine), Kristine Jousimaa (Ministry of the Interior), and Tomi Kuusamo (Helsinki City Rescue Department).

2. Chemical contamination ashore (inland)

In case of accident concerning with chemical contamination ashore (inland) most probable chain of actions starts by a distress call (emergency phone number 112) to the Finnish Emergency Response Centre[2]. FERC alerts the appropriate units, i.e. Police, Rescue Department services, and Medical Ambulance services for the crisis management, and describes the situation on the basis of eye-witness description, but does not coordinate further the actions on site.

Local rescue departments, which function under the Department for Rescue Services, Finnish Ministry of the Interior, do not have any specific instructions for the CWA-related accidents. However, the rescue department have active role in securing the area and possibly contacting other responsible authorities like police and Finnish Defence Forces. Actions will be done according to guidelines related to explosives, and taking into account the possible chemical warfare agents. When the situation involves highly toxic chemicals, the members of the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats[3], most likely Finnish Defence Forces' Deployable CBRN laboratory with consultation with VERIFIN[4], the National Authority for the Chemical Weapons related issues, will assist the assessment of proper actions.

The first aid of the possible injured is most likely conducted by municipal ambulance staff, and long-term medicinal treatment of the injured would be conducted in municipal hospitals. The larger hospitals have contingency plans for patients with highly infectious deceases or other kind of toxic contamination so they can be treated without contaminating other patients, medical staff or facilities. The members of the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats, i.e. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health[5] and Poison Information Centre[6] can offer assistance from the point of healthcare. There are no specific national guidelines for CWA-related accidents, but international guidelines (i.e. Swedish Poisons Information Centre, Micromedex Poisindex database) are available.

Police will focus in keeping public away from risk area and also that possibly contaminated persons would not leave the area without decontamination and proper treatment.

The clearance of the chemical ammunition and contamination would be on responsibility of Finnish Army engineers in cooperation with the Army's Deployable CBRN laboratory. The current official instructions of

[2] http://www.112.fi/download/33220_Hake_112esittely_englanti.pdf

[3] http://www.ttl.fi/partner/cosk/english/sivut/default.aspx

[4] http://www.helsinki.fi/verifin/VERIFIN/english/index.html

[5] http://www.ttl.fi/en/Pages/default.aspx

[6] http://www.hus.fi/en/medical-care/medical-services/Poison%20Information%20Centre/Pages/default.aspx

Defense Forces that are applied in old chemical weapons clearing consists of precautions regulations, guides and manuals related to the clearance and protection missions in general. However, these documents cover only marginally the clearance of chemical weapons in particular. The applied procedures will be chosen based on the national and international operations models on the clearance of chemical weapons.

3. Chemical contamination at sea

In case of accident concerning with chemical contamination at sea most probable chain of actions starts by a distress call to the MRCC Turku on West Finland Coast Guard District (Maritime SAR alarm number West Finland Coast Guard District +358 (0)204 1000, RF channels VHF-DSC 70; VHF 16; MF-DSC 2187.5 kHz). MRCC do not have any specific instructions for the CWA-related accidents, but they will carry out the rescue mission according to the general chemical accident protocols, which include consultation with the members of the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats, most likely Finnish Defence Forces and VERIFIN. If there are no imminent health concerns, the ship will be advised to sail to the closest port, e.g. in Port of Turku[7]. However, designated pier for contaminated ship is indicated by Finnish Transport Safety Agency[8] and Finnish Transport Agency[9], not by the Harbor Master.

When in ashore, the first aid of the possible injured is most likely conducted by municipal ambulance staff, and long-term medicinal treatment of the injured would be conducted in municipal hospitals. The larger hospitals have contingency plans for patients with highly infectious deceases or other kind of toxic contamination so they can be treated without contaminating other patients, medical staff or facilities. The members of the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats i.e. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and Poison Information Centre can offer assistance from the point of healtcare. There are no specific national guidelines for CWA-related accidents, but international guidelines (i.e. Swedish Poisons Information Centre, Micromedex Poisindex database) are available.

The clearance of the chemical ammunition and contamination would be on responsibility of Finnish Navy engineers in cooperation with the Army's Deployable CBRN laboratory. The current official instructions of Defense Forces that are applied in old chemical weapons clearing consists of precautions regulations, guides and manuals related to the clearance and protection missions in general. However, these documents cover only marginally the clearance of chemical weapons in particular. The applied procedures will be chosen based on the national and international operations models on the clearance of chemical weapons.

4. Conclusions

Summary of the actions in case of chemical contamination ashore (inland):

1. Notification is received by the Emergency Response Centre, which forwards the notification to local Police stations, Rescue Department services and Medical Ambulance services;

2. Resources and manpower are sent to the accident's scene in order to secure the area and transport routes (Police), to initially diagnose the accident's scene (Rescue Department), and to provide medical assistance (Medical Ambulance);

3. In case of probable Chemical Warfare Agent's presence, the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats will be contacted for further assistance in coordination of the proper response;

4. The clearance of the chemical contamination would be on responsibility of Finnish Army engineers in cooperation with the Army's Deployable CBRN laboratory;

5. Immediate medicinal treatment of the injured would be given by medical ambulance staff and long-term medicinal treatment of the injured would be conducted in municipal hospitals. The larger hospitals have contingency plans for patients with highly infectious deceases or other kind of toxic contamination. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and Poison Information Centre would offer medical advices for the assistance.

[7] http://www.port.turku.fi/portal/en/contact_details/port_administration/

[8] http://www.trafi.fi/en/maritime

[9] http://portal.liikennevirasto.fi/sivu/www/e/

Summary of the actions in case of chemical contamination at sea:

1. Notification is received by the MRCC Turku, which arranges resources that are sent to the accident's scene if immediate rescue is needed or advices the ship to sail to a closest harbor;

2. In case of probable Chemical Warfare Agent's presence, the Centre of Excellence for Serious Chemical Threats will be contacted for further assistance in coordination of the proper response;

3. The ship is advised to sail to the closest port, where the pier is indicated after consultation with Finnish Transport Safety Agency and Finnish Transport Agency;

4. The clearance of the chemical contamination would be on responsibility of Finnish Navy engineers in cooperation with the Army's Deployable CBRN laboratory;

5. Immediate medicinal treatment of the injured would be given by medical ambulance staff and long-term medicinal treatment of the injured would be conducted in municipal hospitals. The larger hospitals have contingency plans for patients with highly infectious deceases or other kind of toxic contamination. Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and Poison Information Centre would offer medical advices for the assistance.

Strengths and weaknesses:

The strengths of Finnish Contingency Plans are high level of readiness of system to conduct and coordinate rescue operation, availability of specialized Finnish Defence Force's Deployable CBRN laboratory, high efficiency of decontamination equipment of specialized chemical units of the Finnish Defence Forces, and access to international operations models on the clearance of chemical weapons as well as medical information for proper treatment of CWA related injuries.

However, because CWA ammunition related accidents have not ever happened in the Finnish economic zone, there are no specific contingency plans for such incidents in any of the parties involved in the operations. National guidelines for fishermen exist but date from 1990s and are therefore outdated (see WP6.2.1 Guidelines for fished munitions: National legislation and guidelines in Finland). Most of the fishing fleet that existed in that time has been scrapped. The average size of ships and the number of annual fishing days has increased. Fishing effort is focused on the Baltic Sea areas on or close to the Finnish economic zone, and fishing activities close to the primary chemical weapons dump sites has declined. Therefore, trainings for vessels' crews have not been conducted in years and vessels' crews do not possess individual protective kits. About half of the fishing fleet in the Finnish register is under Estonian ownership and occupied by Estonian crew. The flow of information to the Estonian crew must also be ensured.