

# SEESAC

## South Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons

AR/026

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### SEESAC ACTIVITY REPORT 26

## MONITORING AND OBSERVATION OF SALW COLLECTION AND DESTRUCTION – TRAINING FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

SEESAC FUNCTIONAL AREA	<p>FA 5 – SALW Collection programmes FA 6 – SALW Destruction programmes FA 7 – SALW Stockpile Management issues</p>
SEESAC OPERATIONAL ACTIVITY	<p>SG 1 – Capacity Building SC 2 – Coordination Measures SG 6 – Technical Support and Assistance to NGOs SG 7 – Training Activities</p>

**Rakitje, Croatia, 09-11 March 2004.** From 09 - 11 March 2004 NGO representatives from South East Europe's SALW-affected countries joined staff from international organisations and governments on the first ever training course of its kind in Rakitje, Croatia. SEESAC and RACVIAC, the Regional Arms Control Verification Centre, combined their experience and facilities to provide students with an engaging mix of practical and theoretical work featuring simulated weapons collections, practical classroom exercises and lectures.

By introducing a first round of civil society representatives to the theory and practice of independent observation and monitoring support to SALW intervention operations, SEESAC and RACVIAC aim to provide a boost to the transparency of SALW collection and destruction in SEE. Civil society has so far played an important but narrow role in SEE SALW control efforts, confined mainly to awareness raising, and some research work.

In the future it will be possible for governments to draw upon the expertise of train members of civil society on a routine basis. The delivery of appropriate training to NGO representatives offers governments a core group of indigenous independent monitors who will be available to provide their services at the request of their governments. Their involvement in future operations would improve public confidence and provide new opportunities for awareness raising. Graduates from the newly devised RACVIAC/SEESAC training course will be capable of confirming that practical disarmament projects have been undertaken safely, transparently, and to



*Above: Croatian Army personnel play their part in a simulated SALW collection operation by manning the 'weapons-in' area of a well prepared weapons collection point established in the RACVIAC grounds.*

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plan. Given the aura of secrecy that sometimes still governs SALW management and disposal worldwide, empowering responsible laypeople to monitor the activities of governments is crucial.

The seminar also provided the organisers to test and refine their training curriculum, which will now be available for future events elsewhere. SALW collection operations typically require a large number of monitoring staff, so it is hoped that this training module can be made available in languages other than English, and delivered in future on a national basis to a wider range of civil society groups. Nevertheless, by bringing together participants from nearly ten countries to undertake the first training of this kind, it is hoped that the principle of civil society monitoring and observation will now be better understood and accepted across the region.



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