

1. EUBAM and partners take stock of progress at fourth Tri-Lateral meeting

At the fourth Tri-Lateral meeting of the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM) to Moldova and Ukraine and the security services of both countries, held in Odessa today, the Head of EUBAM Mr Udo Burkholder paid tribute to the joint efforts of all parties to tackle cross-border crime.

The chairman of the Security Service of Ukraine (SSU), Mr Valeriy Khoroshkovskiy, and director of the Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova (MDISS), Major General Gheorghe Mihai, joined Mr Burkholder in commending the “remarkable progress” achieved in critical areas of cooperation such as information exchange, joint intelligence-led investigations and joint border control operations, since the three parties signed the Joint Declaration at the first Tri-Lateral meeting in December 2006.

During the meeting Major Mihai stressed the need to address identified risks before they turn into reality. “In the future we think it is necessary to deepen the cooperation [with EUBAM], to further improve the information exchange process and to continue the introduction of risk analysis methodology to make export and import flows more transparent,” he said. “We are talking about utilization of a systematic approach in decreasing security threats in border areas.”

“I am delighted that we can join together today and reflect on a year of enhanced cooperation and partnership,” said Mr Burkholder. “It is obvious this cooperation is having a positive effect on the ground. But tackling cross-border crime is a collective responsibility and we can only achieve this in a spirit of partnership, which is one of EUBAM’s core values. Our positive working relationship with the security services of Moldova and Ukraine, just like our relationship with the customs and border services and other State agencies in both countries, is key to our operation and to our progress.”

As evidence of the intensified cooperation between EUBAM and both security services, the parties highlighted the efforts of the two ‘working groups’, one to address illegal migration and THB, and the second to address illicit smuggling activities. These working groups, coordinated by EUBAM, provide the security services a mechanism through which they exchange information.

The Joint Border Control Operation (JBCO) TYRA 2010 was also singled out for mention at today’s meeting. Together with other agencies, the SSU and MDISS played a major role in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the operation, which culminated in the seizure of more than EUR535,000 worth of smuggled goods – a significant increase on previous JBCOs.

“The cooperation facilitated by EUBAM helps to decrease the activity of smugglers on the Moldova-Ukraine border and increases the effectiveness of drug-smuggling prevention,” said Mr Khoroshkovskiy. “Through the cooperation the Security Service of Ukraine has an opportunity to use the European criminal intelligence model, advanced European mechanisms, and become familiar with methods in tackling illegal migration and inter-agency cooperation technology.”

Mr Khoroshkovskiy noted that the today’s meeting proved the law enforcement agencies of Ukraine, Moldova and European Union have common priorities, aimed at strengthening security on national, regional and European levels. He thanked colleagues from Moldova, and highlighted the high level of consultative and technical assistance provided by EUBAM representatives.

As for future cooperation, all three parties agreed that there was plenty of room for improvement. Mr Burkholder suggested that the areas of cooperation could be broadened – in line with the EUBAM mandate – in order to more effectively tackle the scourge of cross-border crime. Increasing instances of cigarette and drugs smuggling

were of particular concern, he warned, and as a pivotal part of the continued trilateral cooperation, another JBCO would be instigated in 2011.

“We have come a long way together,” he said. “But we must not rest on our laurels. There is still a long journey ahead of us, because big challenges remain.”

2. Senior Member of European Parliament Pays Courtesy Visit to EUBAM HQ

Senior management at EUBAM headquarters was delighted to host the visit of a leading figure of the European Parliament in Odessa yesterday.

Dr Hannes Swoboda, the Austrian vice-chairman of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament – and member of the Social Democratic Party of Austria – is an influential politician whose membership of the European Parliament stretches back to 1996.

The Head of EUBAM, Mr Udo Burkholder, greeted Dr Swoboda and presented an informal ‘progress report’ on behalf of the Mission. Items discussed included EUBAM achievements, works in progress, and projects for delivery over the coming months. In response, Dr Swoboda lavished praise on EUBAM and its contribution to border security on the Moldova-Ukraine common border over the past five years.

3. EUBAM hands over state-of-the-art equipment for Edison TD system to MDBGS

EUBAM yesterday donated two special computers for the Edison TD system - a travel-document database system - to the Moldovan Border Guard Service (MDBGS). The handover ceremony took place on the MDBGS headquarters during a meeting dedicated to the implementation of the Integrated Border Management (IBM) strategy in Moldova. The equipment will enable Moldovan border guards to better access the Edison TD electronic library that was provided to the Service last year through the ‘Strengthening Capacities and Cooperation in the Identification of Forged and Falsified Travel Documents at the Moldova-Romania Border’ project of the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).

One computer will be used by the border guards for the Edison TD databases at the MDBGS department for document examination, and the second one at Chisinau Airport. The equipment will significantly improve the fight against illegal migration and other cross-border crime by facilitating improved detection of forged and falsified travel documents.

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