



TIRANA, Albania -- Heavy casualties are feared after a series of powerful explosions at a munitions depot some 15km west of Tirana on Saturday (March 15th). According to official figures so far, seven people died and at least 244 were injured. Many private homes situated near the facility were heavily damaged by the blasts, which continued for two hours. The international airport in Tirana, located near the place of the incident, was forced to close for 30 minutes after all its windows were broken.

The explosions began as teams were moving stocks of World War II-era bombs, bullets and shells stored at the base, a central collection point for the arsenal amassed by Albania's former Stalinist dictatorship. The teams included experts from a US company, hired by NATO to assist the Albanian specialists in dealing with the old arsenal. The first explosion was so strong that it was heard in neighboring Macedonia and in Pristine, where people thought it was a powerful earthquake. Italy, Macedonia, Turkey, Kosovo and Greece have offered support to the Albanian authorities. The reasons for the blasts are still unknown. (Reuters, Makfax, Focus, Beta, AFP, DPA - 15/03/08)

Malteser Albania Civil Protection Department had been in Action. More information about it will be given.