

WORK ON GDR BORDER INSTALLATIONS CONTINUES

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[Alois Theisen report]

[Text] There is no exact statistic, but the SM-70 automatic firing devices in the gray boxes along the GDR border have been death traps for about six refugees a year. By the fall of 1983, the GDR had installed about 50,000 such automatic killing devices along a 440-km stretch of the border. Slightly more than 10 percent of these devices have since been dismantled.

According to observations by the Federal Border Police [BGS] here at the border south of Ratzeburg, GDR border troops are dismantling additional automatic firing devices here, just as they are along several other sections of the intra-German border. Experts assume that practical, and not just political, reasons are behind the action. The automatic firing devices, which are prone to failure, require a great deal of maintenance and cost the GDR a great deal of money.

Near Luebeck, GDR soldiers are removing another symbol of the inhuman character of the intra-German border: the mines in the so-called death strip. The BGS calculates that in the section between Schleswig-Holstein and the GDR alone, about 100,000 mines have been laid. So far, only 9,000 have been removed.

However, this does not make the border any easier to cross. Instead of mines and automatic firing devices, the GDR is developing a substitute in the rear area. About 500 meters behind the border fence -- and difficult to observe from the FRG side -- the so-called protective-strip fence is being considerably reinforced.

[Begin BGS officer Juergen Vogler recording] The fence has been raised from 2 to 3 meters. In some sections, concrete slabs have been installed to prevent escape holes from being dug under the fence.

In addition, contact wires have been installed that are powered with low voltage and that trigger a light and sound signal when touched. This means that this fence is practically insurmountable. [end recording]