Somaliland

Country Profile
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Landmine and unexploded ordinance (UXO) problems in Somaliland is the result of the 1964 and 1977-78 border wars with Ethiopia and the 1988-91 civil war between the Siyad Barre regime and the Somali National Movement. The Barre regime put a two-pronged plan of the landmines, using mines to threaten the population and protect military installations and civilian infrastructure against SNM attacks. The Republic of Somaliland declared independence from Somalia in May 1991, however, since the international community does not recognize it as an independent state, it is unable to accede to the Anti-Personal Mine Ban Convention. Somaliland officials have expressed their commitment to the Convention, but no legal measures have been taken to prohibit use, production, trade or stockpiling of anti-personal mines. Somaliland has also not formally acceded to the Geneva Call-proclaimed Duty to Protect even though it is signed by 17 faction leaders elsewhere in Somalia.

The Landmine Problem
A Landmine Impact Survey of four regions (March 2003) found 357 mine-impaired communities and 276 casualties between 2001 and 2005. For 2006, the UNDP’s Mine Action Center recorded 38 new mines/UXO casualties through August. Landmines and UXO block roads and access to pasturelands; the most serious blockages are of drinking water sources and stagnation of agricultural land.

No formal mining or fencing of mined areas is being implemented, due to the perils of the material and the difficulties of accurately mining mined areas that are often already at least partially used by local populations. According to Nick Bannerman, a representative for Danish Demining Group, the biggest blockages due to landmines are old roads that were mined during the civil wars, but communities quickly set up de-mining operations. Another factor is that there is little constraint in terms of mobility. Mine Action Efforts
National efforts. The National Demining Agency and the Somaliland Mine Action Center are responsible for mine-action activities in Somaliland. SMAC, established in 1999 with United Nations Development Programme support, carries out mine-clearance, planning and quality management with a staff of 32 professionally trained employees. With UNDP support, SMAC approved a National Policy on Mine Action, which is being reviewed in the Somaliland House of Representatives. The NDA is responsible for building local capacities for clearance/surveys and mine-risk education. The main goals for SMAC are to clear access to water sources and grazing areas, allow high-impact areas by 2006 and reduce the number of incidents from mines and UXO.

Danish Demining Group. DDG began its mine-clearance operations in Somaliland in 1997. The operation includes 135 local staff, one 65-man demining team and four mobile explosive ordnance disposal teams. From 1999 to 2005, DDG cleared 50 mine-clearance areas and 90 battle-ax clearance EOD tasks totaling 1,380,887 square meters (341 acres). DDG’s original focus was to establish a mine-clearance capacity that the Somaliland government would take over. According to Bannerman, DDG stopped focusing on this goal because it is currently not a workable solution, and a mine-action capacity within the government is unlikely to be developed or effectively sustained. For the past year, DDG has instead focused on developing a final two-year phase of the Village by Village EOD Clearance Program, with help from UNICEF and Handicap International, attracting donors, and creating a workable plan to hand over responsibilities for community-based EOD work to police EOD teams when DDG leaves Somaliland in March 2006.

DDG’s vision for Somaliland’s mine clearance is to reduce the effects of UXO/mine contamination to levels that are not worse than other socioeconomic problems such as poor health or educational services, and does not hinder economic development. DDG believes that with additional well-targeted assistance from international NGOs, most communities will be able to effectively manage the problem. This vision has largely been realized, ERW in Somaliland is now a "minor blip on the humanitarian screen." DDG workers are enthusiastic about the communities’ progress and look forward to clearing the remaining UXO/landmine contamination areas. A Mine-Safe Somalia
If mine-action centers are established in southern and central Somalia, it is plausible that, working with the centers in Somaliland and Puntland, they could develop a national mine-action strategy. Establishing a united mine-action effort will be the biggest step toward creating a mine-safe Somalia. The United Nations believes "the mine and UXO threat in Somalia is a limiting problem," one that can be solved in seven to 10 years if given the appropriate amount of attention and resources.

To view endnotes and references for this article, visit http://mai.jnu.edu/ journal/10.1/profiles/somaliland/somaliland. htm/#endnotes.

Megan Wertz
Editorial Assistant
Journal of Mine Action
Mine Action Information Center
E-mail: mas@jnu.edu

Nick Bannerman
Representative
Danish Demining Group-Krom & Ekat
45-55, Krom & Ekat Rd.
Buenos Aires
Argentina
Tel: +54 011 4351 1023
Cell: +6 54 09 245 472
Fax: +54 011 4351 1021
E-mail: ddg.buenosaires@dkr.dk.

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Mine Action

DDG’s vision for mine-action work in the center for the whole of Somalia is not there is a mine-action strategy. The United Nations Development Programme has been in Somalia since 2003, focusing on mine-action capacity building and technical assistance. The UNDP "mine action work plus Somalia includes supporting activities to establish sustainable ESDO [explosive ordnance disposal] and mine clearance teams based on existing local police and army capacity, and the creation of mine action centers in affected regions to coordinate activities." The UNDP focuses on local and national capacity building. In southern and central Somalia, an unacceptable security situation blocked coordinated mine-action planning throughout 2004. The UNDP is planning coordination with regional authorities and has begun discussions with the Transitional Federal Government. Until a central mine-action authority is created, the UNDP and non-governmental organizations will carry out mine-action coordination in these areas. It is hoped that between 2006 and 2008 a mine-action center will be established in each of the three different regional phases of the NDA. In Puntland, the Puntland Mine Action Centre is the coordinating body for mine action. The PMAC was established in 2003 by the UNDP with funding from the European Commission. A Peace F and H-Landmine Impact Survey was completed in May 2005 in the Bari, Nogal and Mudug regions. The LI completely destroyed 35 affected communities; nine high impact, mine medium impact and 17 low impact. Seventy-seven percent of the mine-affected areas are in the Galgalka and Galdagki districts in the Mudug region. By mid-2005, police EOD teams started addressing spot clearance tasks identified in the LIS. The goal for 2006 is to establish a national clearance capacity in Puntland to address the longer-term problem while having an international governmental organization start immediate activities to clear all the high-impact areas.

A Mine-safe Somalia

From August 2005 until May 2006, when she graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor of Science in technical and science communication, Wertz attended The George Washington University where she is obtaining a Master of Arts in public policy. She hopes to pursue a career in environmental policy.

Megan Wertz
Editorial Assistant
Journal of Mine Action
Mine Action Information Center
E-mail: mas@jnu.edu

The Canadian Landmine Foundation recently held a special event to mark the 50th anniversary of Canadian peacekeeping efforts. Between May 19 and August 9, CLMF encouraged Canadians to register their yard sales online and receive a tax benefit for any proceeds that were then donated to the group. The entire project is designed to increase Canadian awareness of the country’s traditional peacekeeping and current mine-action projects. Learn more at www.clmf.org.

Canadian Group Holds National Yard Sale for Peacekeepers

Profile Somaliland

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[Mine Action Information Center]

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