AZERBAIJAN

Country Profile

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Profile AZERBAIJAN

HISTORY: Azerbaijan declared independence from Russia in 1918, but was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1920. It again declared independence in August 1991, following the collapse of the USSR. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh region is still unresolved after 10 years and Baku has yet to settle disputes with its neighbors over oil rights in the Caspian Sea. During 1988–1994, Karabakh Armenians declared independence and seized almost 20 percent of the country's territory, creating an estimated 750,000 Azerbaijani refugees. As a result of the war, western Azerbaijan is plagued with landmines. Both sides have generally observed a Russian-mediated cease-fire since May 1994. Azerbaijan, with an estimated population of 8,000,000, adopted a new constitution in November 1995.

LANDMINE AND UXO OVERVIEW: The disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, torn by five years of war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, has a serious mine problem. Mines affect farm work throughout the region. The United Nations and the U.S. State Department estimate the number of mines to be 100,000. Considering the population density, the land area and the number of mines, the degree of infestation is close to that in Afghanistan. In Martakert, 78 miles of mined roads and 31 sq. miles of minefields have been identified. Both AT and AP mines have been found.

VICTIMS AND CASUALTIES: According to official reports, 7,000 people have been injured in the conflict with 70 percent resulting from landmines. The Ministry of Labor has allowed the ICRC to inhabit a building in Baku for prosthesis production. Rehabilitation and psychosocial programs are nonexistent.

DEMING: The National Agency for Rehabilitation and Reconstruction of Areas (ARRA) estimated it would cost $2.5 million dollars to demine 22 villages in the Fizuli region. Norway contributed 134,000 dollars in 1998. HALO Trust has trained six supervisors and 45 deminers from the local population. To date, HALO has destroyed four tons of UXO and has started mine awareness through the media. Demining by self-defense units would help increase arable land area by 20 percent.

WAR REALITY CHECK: The landmine problem was evident in the summer of 1994, when a full in fighting allowed time for the harvest. At least 10 people were killed and many more injured by exploding mines while working in the fields, reported the Tass News Agency.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Azerbaijan National Agency for Demining (ANAD)

Profile BELARUS

HISTORY: Belarus has had a long and devastating history that intertwines them with several different countries. The country has been filled with war and strife as far back as records can date. During the 19th and 20th centuries, Belarus was plagued with the Germans and Russians fighting in World War I, and they were severely plundered during World War II by many different foreigners. In 1918, the area now known as Belarus became a part of Russia after the Russo-German treaty, which helped end World War I. Despite the tight grip that Russia held on most of its republics, it allowed Belarus to establish individual ties with the United Nations. In 1991, after the USSR dissolved, Belarus claimed its independence and the republic's Communist party (CPB) appeared to take over. For the next few years the idea of a constitution and new leadership filled the country's atmosphere. Belarus has remained the closest country to Russia in hopes of becoming a member of the international community and has, within the last year, signed a treaty with Russia, which states that each country, Russia and Belarus, will work for greater agreement politically, economically and socially.

LANDMINE AND UXO OVERVIEW: Belarus has been plagued with war, landmines and UXO all throughout its borders. The most predominant areas are the battlefields from World War I and II. The cities and provinces closest to these grounds are believed to be affected. In 1994 when a lull in fighting occurred, a group of experts was able to move through areas and mark the areas where there were significant amounts of mines. The United Nations and the Russian government have worked to help educate the population on how to deal with landmines and UXO when discovered.

VICTIMS AND CASUALTIES: The major victims in Belarus are the children. Many of the officials in Belarus are trying to educate the public on how to deal with these areas in their country. There are many people who have been injured in mine explosions and have had to face over the past century. Even though much of the country is rural, there are several hospitals that can help with the medical needs of these people. The government has also established centers for agricultural rehabilitation and with hopes of allowing the disabled to maintain their jobs with the help of trained specialists. This attitude helps establish a better relationship between the Belarusian government and its people.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Belarus Campaign to Ban Landmines

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Belarus

Profile BELARUS

Gomel, Minsk, the capital, and the most heavily mined area, Vitebsk. Many of the officials in Belarus are trying to educate the public on how to deal with landmines and UXO all throughout its borders. The United Nations and the Russian government have worked to help educate the population on how to deal with landmines and UXO when discovered. The United Nations and the Russian government have worked to help educate the public on how to deal with landmines and UXO when discovered. The United Nations and the Russian government have worked to help educate the public on how to deal with landmines and UXO when discovered.

WAR REALITY CHECK: There have been many people maimed or killed as a result of these undiscovered landmines, and the horror stories of the victims and their families "pain touches the hearts of many who have listened to each individual story and understood the unfairness. The story of Alexey Delkov and Alexey Tolodanov swept throughout Belarus in 1998. Two teenage girls, both age 17, were killed by a UXO while walking near a railway station in Krugleuschina, the Dockishchi district. Vitebsk is one of the most heavily mined areas and even though most of the landmines are usually placed in rural fields, in which few travelers pass. There is still a threat to farmers and civilians even today.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Belarus Campaign to Ban Landmines
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