February 2006

An Operator’s Perspective on Ottawa’s Article 5

Per Nergaard
Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol9/iss2/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
An Operator’s Perspective on Ottawa’s Article 5

The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]

...out-effectiveness in the traditional sense of the word has many aspects and can be displayed in many ways. Several practical examples have been presented at various occasions involving issues like coordination, toolboxes, complementarities of methods, technologies, etc. I will attempt not to prod any further into these.

What we need to do is ask some pretty tough questions at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

Preparation is something different from what a literal reading of the text or any treaty or policy position, but rather as positive test. The Convention was pushed through as a groundbreaking mechanism for mine action. It established structures and operations at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

There is substantial evidence to suggest many of the mines now being cleared are inert, degraded by the environment and thus pacifying mechanisms for mine action remain to be developed. The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]

...out-effectiveness in the traditional sense of the word has many aspects and can be displayed in many ways. Several practical examples have been presented at various occasions involving issues like coordination, toolboxes, complementarities of methods, technologies, etc. I will attempt not to prod any further into these.

What we need to do is ask some pretty tough questions at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

Preparation is something different from what a literal reading of the text or any treaty or policy position, but rather as positive test. The Convention was pushed through as a groundbreaking mechanism for mine action. It established structures and operations at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

There is substantial evidence to suggest many of the mines now being cleared are inert, degraded by the environment and thus pacifying mechanisms for mine action remain to be developed. The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]

...out-effectiveness in the traditional sense of the word has many aspects and can be displayed in many ways. Several practical examples have been presented at various occasions involving issues like coordination, toolboxes, complementarities of methods, technologies, etc. I will attempt not to prod any further into these.

What we need to do is ask some pretty tough questions at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

Preparation is something different from what a literal reading of the text or any treaty or policy position, but rather as positive test. The Convention was pushed through as a groundbreaking mechanism for mine action. It established structures and operations at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

There is substantial evidence to suggest many of the mines now being cleared are inert, degraded by the environment and thus pacifying mechanisms for mine action remain to be developed. The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]

...out-effectiveness in the traditional sense of the word has many aspects and can be displayed in many ways. Several practical examples have been presented at various occasions involving issues like coordination, toolboxes, complementarities of methods, technologies, etc. I will attempt not to prod any further into these.

What we need to do is ask some pretty tough questions at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

Preparation is something different from what a literal reading of the text or any treaty or policy position, but rather as positive test. The Convention was pushed through as a groundbreaking mechanism for mine action. It established structures and operations at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

There is substantial evidence to suggest many of the mines now being cleared are inert, degraded by the environment and thus pacifying mechanisms for mine action remain to be developed. The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]

...out-effectiveness in the traditional sense of the word has many aspects and can be displayed in many ways. Several practical examples have been presented at various occasions involving issues like coordination, toolboxes, complementarities of methods, technologies, etc. I will attempt not to prod any further into these.

What we need to do is ask some pretty tough questions at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

Preparation is something different from what a literal reading of the text or any treaty or policy position, but rather as positive test. The Convention was pushed through as a groundbreaking mechanism for mine action. It established structures and operations at this stage. Yet at the same time, we need to prepare ourselves for constructive criticism and self-analysis, a rather normal but unpleasant outcome of less-than-ideal mine action.

There is substantial evidence to suggest many of the mines now being cleared are inert, degraded by the environment and thus pacifying mechanisms for mine action remain to be developed. The Nairobi Action Plan calls upon all of us in the mine action community to ensure that assistance in mine action is based on adequate surveys, needs analysis and cost-effective approaches. The purpose of this editorial is to bring an operator’s perspective to this commitment.

By Per Nergård [Norwegian People’s Aid]
Donors’ needs versus community’s needs. The locality model has proven popular among partners, and it has become an overriding objective of partners and donors in control of funds. However, MAG has experimented on the ground to ensure the most appropriate method of clearance is being used to a suspect area. MAG also knows the locality model will not always be the best solution. Immediately targeting funds on the locality model rather than seeking the solution best suited to the clearance task can certainly be detrimental to the community. In a situation in which the presence of suspect areas is harming development activities, much simpler “area reduction” techniques could be applied to get the job done. This is preferable to starting a lengthy process in setting up a locality demining programme, especially when MAG’s technical experts know manual demining is not necessarily what the community needs. These issues are being addressed as more donors are increasingly aware that it is not about what looks good on paper and much more about what the community’s needs are on the ground.

Limitations of skills. One major constraint is the comparatively inexperience of the locality deminers. Under normal circumstances, a MAT would handle various different tasks a relatively short distance from each other. For example, a development agency might be clearing sites for construction of water pumps, and this might require demining as well as some surface-area tasks. It is difficult for the locality deminers to split from the group and undertake other tasks due to the lack of additional skills that can be found in a more experienced multi-skilled deminer. Unofficial “village demining.” Development of skills for local people is generally seen as a positive step, but when the employment finishes, there are concerns villagers may be tempted to offer their services for sale elsewhere. In other industries, this might not be an issue, but when the work involves demining, the concern is significant. Agencies using a MAT model under the right safety operating procedures and the employee comes under close scrutiny and care. MAG also provides insurance and the safety measures ensure workers are not forced to carry out their work in confidence. Informal clearance does not provide this. As much as 60 percent of all land cleared is estimated to have been made so through informal clearance, so this model addresses the phenomenon derived from the regular income from a job with MAG. Village supervisors and mine action officers report a number of limitations of skills. Donors in control of funds. However, MAG has experts working together with MAG in these areas to ensure maximum benefit that is achievable and that targeted communities are involved in training. Bearing this in mind, the deployment of a locality team must be in an area with appropriate operational work plan should thereafter be balanced within the timeframe and resources available. We believe that this model of clearing mines areas. This process in setting up a locality demining programme, especially when MAG’s technical experts know manual demining is not necessarily what the community needs. These issues are being addressed as more donors are increasingly awareness that it is not about what looks good on paper and much more about what the community’s needs are on the ground.

Unofficial “village demining.” Development of skills for local people is generally seen as a positive step, but when the employment finishes, there are concerns villagers may be tempted to offer their services for sale elsewhere. In other industries, this might not be an issue, but when the work involves demining, the concern is significant. Agencies using a MAT model under the right safety operating procedures and the employee comes under close scrutiny and care. MAG also provides insurance and the safety measures ensure workers are not forced to carry out their work in confidence. Informal clearance does not provide this. As much as 60 percent of all land cleared is estimated to have been made so through informal clearance, so this model addresses the phenomenon derived from the regular income from a job with MAG. 

Villagers understand the benefits of working with a reputable organisation. Also, by having a team located as maintaining levels of safety.

Pre-conditions for Success

It is apparent that the locality model will not replace the MAT model. From programme experience over the last eight months on, MAG recognises the need to complement the locality teams with mobile MATs, Technical Survey Teams and other elements of more traditional clearance activities. This strategy may sound easy and fairly logical, but, practically speaking, it simply has not been done to the extent needed in order to claim victory in 2009. The mine action community needs the immediate attention of all States Parties to the Convention to fundamentally correct the environment in mine-affected areas until these mined areas can be easily altered. Deviation reports along the way are also common in response to what might be termed “localised” success. It is clear the locality demining model presents a number of clear advantages. Most notably, it helps communities address the problem of remnants of conflict in their own backyard. Also, it is no coincidence that staff attendance is high amongst locality deminers because the desire to work for a steady wage is strong. Also, unlike MATs, it is harder to break a locality team into smaller units to undertake tasks such as clearing areas for well-digging. The tasks must be appropriate; the site must be able to accommodate the whole group without splitting it into smaller groups (which may require further experienced supervision and medical coverage). In refining the model, it was agreed that, due to the investment in training new deminers, a period of around two years was seen as appropriate for the life of a team. A period of as short as four months, for example, would make the investment in terms of initial investment in training. Bearing this in mind, the deployment of a locality team must be in an area with multiple tasks to support a team over an estimated two years or more. Moreover, the area of operations must be within easy reach by local transport; for example, in Cambodia, the trip to work for villagers is often a 10-minute bicycle ride.

Opportunities

One of the main opportunities for expansion is the value of employment for the householders engaged in the locality teams. In the USA, $1 million and above. There is an opportunity to maximise the earnings potential of locality deminers by linking the demine programme to one which pays off the debt of the household and in turn the household pays back the loan at cost to the agency. In other words, the loan should be eliminated during 2009 so that normal so that wages paid can be concentrated on acquiring benefits for the householders of paying off clearing loans. This is an area for further work with development agencies and MAG in the future.

Conclusion

The locality model aims to provide more community- driven and cost-effective work with MAG’s overall mission to find solutions that not only pay people first but are appropriate. Importantly, MAG has found that it can train villagers in the core skills and, with supervision and good management, undergo demining as effectively as long-serving, multi-skilled and better-paid MAT deminers.

It is clear the locality demining model presents a number of clear advantages. Most notably, it helps communities address the problem of remnants of conflict in their own backyard. Also, it is no coincidence that staff attendance is high amongst locality deminers because the desire to work for a steady wage is strong. Also, unlike MATs, it is harder to break a locality team into smaller units to undertake tasks such as clearing areas for well-digging. The tasks must be appropriate; the site must be able to accommodate the whole group without splitting it into smaller groups (which may require further experienced supervision and medical coverage).

All permissions for using “locality demining” and/or “locality model” and/or any text from this article, whether in full or in part, must be granted by the copyright holder. © MAG 2005. Printed with permission. See “References and Endnotes,” page 104
Endnotes and References

Mine Free: Not Anytime Soon, Kidd [from page 4]

Endnotes

An Operator's Perspective on Ottawa's Article 5, Neggaard [from page 35]

Endnotes

Demining in Iran, Banks [from page 8]

Endnotes
1. EOD World Services is the service arm of E&I International. MAI is the E&I mine action company presently operating with several other E&I companies in the Islamic Republic of Iran.
2. Most work in Iraq is for a national client. International clients demand IMAs standards and international-quality assurance/quality control companies to respect work.
4. Embankments are to contain flood water. Banda are generally used to describe defensive positions, banks of earth and embankments.
5. Baskeen stand on the bands to watch for items of harmless material that may be dug up.

Assisting Landmine Accident Survivors in the Thai-Burma Border Region, Matthee [from page 11]

Endnotes
2. While only governments can sign the convention, non-state actors can sign the Deed of Commitment for Adherence to a Total Ban on Anti-Personnel Mines and for Cooperation in Mine Action through an organization called Geneva Call. Geneva Call engages NGOs to respect and adhere to humanitarian norms, starting with the anti-personnel mines ban.
4. Simple plough mechanism use a plough-line, which is a reference line guided by a string or rod weighted at the end with a large weight known as a plough-ball. It is used to create a reference line for creating vertical lines.

A Regional Approach: Mine and UXO Risk Reduction in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, Wells-Dang [from page 14]

Further Reading
8. UXO Laos Annual Report 2004. UXO Laos, PO Box 545, Vientiane, Laos PDR. Tel (961-21) 614596, Fax (961-21) 615176, E-mail:uxol@land.com.

Destroying the Mother of All Arsenals, Zaheczewsky [from page 18]

Endnotes

Hidden Killers in Afghanistan, Sharif [from page 20]

Endnotes
2. One square kilometer is approximately 3.86 square miles.

Observations on Recent Changes in Northwest Cambodia’s Mine/UXO Situation, Simmonds, et al. [from page 24]

Endnotes
1. LLS is an abbreviation for Local Land Survey that is commonly used in Cambodia. This is not to be confused with LSI (Landmine Impact Survey), which is in common use in most other parts of the world.