Southeast Asia Air Combat Data

Tom Smith

Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Office of Humanitarian Demining

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Anticipated Mine Clearance Procedures:

- Use of water sprinklers to uncover mines.
- Insertion of 15-meter-long plastic pipes filled with dynamite and detonators into suspected areas (for mines up to 10 cm underground).
- Use of excavators and bulldozers to remove plants and dig up earth (for mines 20 to 30 cm underground).
- Final inspections by soldiers to ensure the removal of all mines.

More Help on the Way!

Although mine clearance and mine identification efforts in both near areas and the DMZ have thus far been limited to the military and civic groups, in January the South's Sungdo Construction Co. created the demining firm Specialist Demining Engineering (SDE) to aid the Korean and other mine-affected nations in clearance efforts. The firm's vice president, Koo Jae-bo, recently said the SDE has formed a "technical assistance agreement" with the UK's Specialist Gurkha Services (SGS)—one of the world's top-10 mine and UXO clearance companies. Koo expressed to the Herald's desire to aid the Korean governments' demining efforts, saying that private firms are at an advantage over militaries when it comes to investing operations, gaining funding, and securing the most advanced equipment.

To date, no formal agreement between the private firm and the Korean governments has yet to be announced. However, JCS Battle Coordination Division official Lee Kang-soo, head of mine affairs in the division, recently told the Herald the situation is under discussion.

Greatly enhancing the safety of deminers.

Another method reported to be under consideration by the South's Defense Ministry was a "scorched earth policy." This method would involve spraying fuel along the South Korean portion of the DMZ between the Imjin River and the Changdang in Munsan and then burning the fuel.

The Defense Security Cooperation Agency's Tom Smith details the United States' efforts to create an informational and relational database for mine/UXO identification in Southeast Asia and its importance in targeting landmines.

by Tom Smith, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, Office of Humanitarian Demining

One of the greatest challenges in the global effort to remove the deadly debris of war and conflict is the collection of records kept by the combatants from either side in the conflict. In that regard, the United States has realized the importance of, and is making available, data from a variety of sources to assist with the survey and clearance work in Southeast Asia.

Since 1994, the humanitarian demining offices in the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) and U.S. Pacific Command, in conjunction with the Federal Resources Corporation and MRJ Technology Solutions, have been developing an informational/relation database derived from the separate declassified tapes of allied air combat and combat support operational activities conducted during the war in Indochina. The output of this analysis will provide nations in the region with accurate target and ordnance data so that host countries can set priorities for UXO clearance operations and assess the probability of UXO contamination in areas identified for economic development.

These combat missions were conducted in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam from 1965 to 1975. The original data system was developed by IBM in the early 1960s and captured daily air combat information on the Vietnam coalition in the National Combat Command Information Processing System (NIPS). The data (classified Top Secret) was maintained by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and in 1975 declassified and delivered to the National Archives for safekeeping.

Four major databases are being reviewed for information that will assist host nations in determining the scope and scale of air bombardment, helping to prioritize bomb and mine clearance operations:

- Files Accessed & Data Period
  - Combat Activities File (CCTA) October 1965 - December 1970
  - Southeast Asia Database (SEADAB) January 1970 - June 1975
  - Strategic Air Command's Combat Activities report (SACOAC) June 1965 - August 1973
  - Herbicide Data File (HERBS) July 1965 - February 1971

Other databases to be reviewed include the Combat Naval Combat Files, Mining Activity Files, and other files relating to friendly and opposing force base camp and artillery data.

Data in the air combat files includes specific mission numbers, type and number of aircraft, location of target, latitude/longitude coordinates, ordnance type, number of ordnance dropped, and additional information on downed aircraft.

The goal of this combined effort is to provide host nation mine action offices with geospatial information (maps, digital, and other data) to support humanitarian demining surveys, setting priorities for demining operations, training, and assessment of the mine and UXO threat to economic-development activities. The recovered data are being incorporated into geospatial databases for analysis by the host nation mine action centers using Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Information for Laos has been retrieved, incorporated into a relational database, and installed at the headquarters of the Lao National Unexploded Ordnance Program (UXO LAO) in the capital city of Vientiane. The air combat information is displayed with vector or raster geospatial data and used to plan UXO clearance operations and to assess the probable impact of UXO on economic development projects. Herbicide data has also
been incorporated into the GIS at UXO Lao. Herbicide mission data was obtained from the U.S. Armed Services Center for Research of Unit Records (CRUR) that is also the source for substantiation of veteran’s claims of herbicide exposure. Data includes the original HERBS tapes plus man-portable, truck, and helicopter missions that were conducted during the conflict.

The partnership between the DSCA and its contractors is also in the process of developing a user-friendly interface to the database and look-up tables to better assist the end user in planning for and prioritizing bomb clearance missions in specific areas of the country. A prototype internet-accessible version of the geospatial data is also in the development phase and will make it easier for host nations to access the data without a major investment in information technology equipment.

**Pakistan: The Landmine Problem in Federally Administered Tribal Areas**

After a decade of fighting, the effects of conflict beyond Pakistan’s border with Afghanistan are seen everyday in border regions. With little government aid available, agencies like HSD are taking the initiative in the country’s battle against mines.

By Fazl Muhammad Fayyaz, Executive Director, Human Survival & Development (HSD)

The ravages of the decade-long armed conflict in Afghanistan between the Soviets and anti-communist forces were not confined to Afghanistan. Rather, its ill effects spilled over to neighboring countries. One effected country of note was Pakistan, which was used as a base for war activities. Pakistan served as a home to arms depots and camps for training guerrillas, and as a passage for logistic supplies and other activities for the coordination of the war effort. In addition, thousands of refugees crossed the Afghan-Pakistan border in search of safe harbor, rendering the border weaker and weaker throughout the war.

One of the most detrimental effects of the Afghan war on Pakistan was the thousands of landmines left behind in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Soviet troops dropped mines and bombs in FATA border towns in order to intimidate the local population and prevent any support of anti-communist forces. Although the Afghan war broke out in December 1979, it wasn’t until the early-1980s that the landmine problem surfaced in the FATA. Of the seven tribal Agencies of the FATA, Bajaur and Kurram were the most effected, counting an alarming number of casualties.

Bajaur and Kurram have witnessed some of the worst casualties, which affected not just soldiers but women and children as well. An entire disabled population now exists—a change that has affected the socioeconomic fabric of the area. While the FATA was socially undeveloped previous to the war, it has regressed further as a result of mines. The region’s inadequate health services must deal with a public health situation of tragic proportions. Agricultural land has been rendered un-productive. Once productive men responsible for earning livelihoods have not only been rendered unproductive, but have become liabilities. Children have been forced to perform hard labor and beg on the streets.

In order to assess the depth of Pakistan’s landmine problem, 1997 Nobel co-laureate Brigitte McGill, an authority on landmines, visited Human Survival and Development (HSD) in the summer of 2000 at the behest of the Swiss Federation for Mine Clearance and Swiss

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**Korea United**

South Koreans are considering cooperating with SDE in clearing the estimated 20,000 mines on Mt. Chongui.

**The End in Sight?**

When the Korean soil thaws in early spring and the demining effort is continued, the Koreans will be on route to clearing a path not just through the DMZ, but through years of silence and conflict. Though we may never know of advances in clearance operations and mine awareness on the northern side of the DMZ, the North’s pledged cooperation with the South is a huge step towards reconnecting the once united peninsula. Even the People’s Republic of China has pledged technical and personnel support to both Korea’s efforts, according to the August 23, 2000 Yonhap News. It could be said that the mine situation in Korea pales in comparison to such places as Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan. Perhaps this is true from a numerical standpoint. But when one considers a country divided in two by a guarded, man-made boundary and by stark ideological differences, there are few, if any, situations to rival that of the Koreans. If, in fact, the drive to clear a path for railroad and highway construction is successful in September 2001, the joint efforts of enemies will be responsible for partially reversing in about one year what took over 50 years of animosity to create.

**References**

The Korea Herald 1-12, 3-ga, Hoehyon-dong, Chung-gu, Seoul
C.P.O. Box 6479 (Postal Code: 100-771) Tel: 82-2-727-0281-3 Fax: 82-2-727-0325 Website: www.koreaherald.co.kr/
Yonhap News Agency 85-1, Soosong-dong, Chongro-ku, Seoul, Korea Website: www.yonhapnews.co.kr/services/2000090900.html