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Landmines in Latin America

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History

Chile's borders with Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru remain the most heavily mined areas in the country following external conflicts in the 1970s. According to the *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*, Chile's Defense Ministry estimates to have planted 1 million AP and AT mines on the country's borders with Argentina, Bolivia and Peru. During times of conflict, the military maintained strict authority under the rule of Gen. Augusto Pinochet. In the 1975 crisis with Peru, over 800 hectares of land were littered with landmines.

Landmine/UXO Overview

According to its Foreign Ministry, Chile has not produced or exported AP mines since 1985. In the past, Chile has produced six different types of AP mines, although the current size and composition of its AP mine stockpile is unclear. Unconfirmed reports from the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) estimate that Chile's stockpile retains 22,000 AP mines and would cost \$850,000 (U.S.) to destroy. In August 1999, the Chilean government announced plans to destroy its stockpile in upcoming months. On Nov. 6, 2000 destruction began with the detonation of the Navy's stock of M-16 mines.

Victims/Casualties

The Chilean chief of staff of the Corps of Engineers of the Army estimates that 26 civilian injuries and seven deaths occurred between 1976 and 1999 as a result of landmines. Fifty injuries to military personnel and five deaths also occurred during this time. Most of these injuries and fatalities are attributed to unmarked mine fields laid by guerilla forces. There are no specific health services offered to landmine victims by national health services, private health institutions, or NGOs operating in Chile. Although the Fondo Nacional de Discapacitados (National Fund for the Disabled) provides social assistance for the disabled, these services are not specifically designed for landmine victims.

Demining

On Nov. 25, 1999 the Chilean Army announced plans to launch an 11-year mine clearance program targeting 293 border mine fields that contain an estimated 250,000 mines. Following this announcement, the army began mine clearance along the Chilean-Bolivian border in December 1999. The total cost of clearance is estimated between \$300 and \$400 million.

Reality Check

In November 2000 Chile announced plans to launch a landmine awareness campaign to warn civilians of landmines/UXO. Although most Chilean mine fields are marked and guarded by military personnel, the campaign targets areas such as national parks that are risks to tourists and other visitors. The campaign educates visitors about the dangers of landmines and urges them to register with park wardens.

Profiles have been compiled from The Landmine Monitor Report, regional MACs, and wire and media reports.

