Victim Assistance in Iraq

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Mine Awareness in Iraq

Following the U.S.-led war in Iraq, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are saving lives by doing what they can to raise awareness about the country's serious landmine/UXO problem.

by Kristina Davis, MAIC

Introduction

Due to the massive amounts of mines and UXO littering post-war Iraq, the country has arguably become one of the most dangerous places in the world. The main problem areas are around Iraq's borders and military bases, where unfortunately, many local villages are located as well. Many organizations are well aware of the landmine problems facing the Iraqi citizens and are currently implementing thorough mine education programs throughout the region.

Mine Awareness Programs

Handicap International (HI)

While it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of landmine victims, the HI team reports landmine and UXO accidents occur at the rate of "several times a day" in Baghdad and more than a dozen a day in the rest of the country.1 Hoping to spread awareness, HI has collaborated with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to print at least 200,000 leaflets as their first step in educating the Iraqi community about the dangers of landmines. In order to present the messages in a way that would be understandable by all, the images were tested on a sample of the Iraqi refugees currently in Jordan—coming from different regions of Iraq and Kurdistan and composed of men, women and children, both Muslim and Christian. Two main areas have been targeted for distribution thus far: northern Iraq, in collaboration with the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), and southern Iraq, in collaboration with UNICEF in Lamaka. Baghdad will also be targeted with 100,000 leaflets for distribution as certain areas of the city are also polluted with mines and UXO. HI will use the community network, including mosques, the Red Crescent Society and women's organizations, to disseminate their mine risk education (MRE) programs. Posters, seminar materials and radio and television messages will be used in coordination with the leaflets in order to successfully reach the largest number of people.

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)

The ICRC has been working in Iraq since the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980. The ICRC's mine awareness programs utilize the three pillars of the community-based awareness concept: information collection, community involvement and integration with other programs. In the Middle East, the ICRC is starting up an emergency program with five awareness delegations based in the countries surrounding Iraq. The main aim is to reach the civilian population as quickly as possible with safety messages in order to avoid any unnecessary accidents. Posters, printed material and radio spots will be individually designed for appropriate target groups.

The Data Coordination Unit (DCU) in MAG has a database that holds records of more than 3,782 minefields in the most heavily contaminated areas of Iraq. MAG's mine awareness program seeks to minimize the risk of mine encounters among local populations by implementing diverse programs suited to many different types of people. From 1997 to June 2003, MAG trained over 3,000 teachers and school supervisors and was the first NGO to implement "child-to-child" techniques to mine action, including MRE. In addition, MAG visited mosques and mudhalls to distribute information with messages from the Holy Koran in order to reach a broad spectrum of mine-affected persons.

The United Nations

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has managed the northern Iraq Mine Action Program (MIP) since 2002.

by Kimberly Kim, MAIC

Victim Assistance in Iraq

Large numbers of UXO and mines left behind from the continuing conflict in Iraq have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of victims. This article was written while the coalition forces were still engaged in conventional combat prior to the fall of Saddam Hussein.

Japan's medical assistance is providing medical supplies, water,
Socio-Economic Impact of Landmines in Iraq

Years of war and internal conflict have left Iraq littered with landmines, UXO and stockpiled munitions. Mr. Johan Van Der Merwe of the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and Colonel Lionel Dyck, MineTech chairman, describe the hazards Iraqis face that threaten normal activity and disrupt socio-economic redevelopment.

by Jennette Townsend, MAIC

Background

The socio-economic impact of landmines, UXO and stockpiled munitions extends across multiple areas, including:

- Accessing public areas
- Salvaging metal from mines/UXO
- Accessing land for agriculture
- Repairing infrastructure

The indirect impact of landmines includes叁个ondization/ privatization and the spread of infectious diseases, in part due to the inability to water purification systems and to provide public health services in regions isolated by mines and UXO. Mines and UXO are claiming lives, disabling future generations, creating insecurity and fear, and hindering the return to normalcy.

Accessing Public Areas

Johan Van Der Merwe, Technical Advisor with UNOPS, and Colonel Lionel Dyck, chairman of MineTech International, a leading mine clearance contractor, were recently in Iraq. Johan Van Der Merwe observed, "In the south, one of the biggest problems is stockpiled munitions. Wide ranges of munitions are stockpiled everywhere—in schools, hospitals, in defensive positions and in normal military installations. The munitions ranged from small arms to missiles and even human-made vehicles." Thousands of projectiles, unexploded bomb, cluster sub-munitions and other ordnance turn streets, mosques and even some homes into hazardous areas and restrict or endanger normal socio-cultural activities. For example, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) recently found a stockpile of approximately 500-700 AP mines stored in a mosque. The Area Mine Action Coordination Team

"Kids playing with propellant in small arm shells. They light the propellant used to fire mortar rounds, creating an instantaneous flame. Many sustain flash burns from being too close when they individualize the propellant." 4

In the streets of Baghdad, children are reportedly playing soccer among explosive remnants of war, tanks, grenades, stockpiles of ammunitions and even abandoned armored fighting vehicles. On April 27th, three children were killed while playing with a mortar shell. 5

An AMEDY International delegates saw children playing around landmines located immediately next to the homes of university staff. The staff told the delegates that they had asked for help in removing landmines, but no such assistance had been received. 6

Colonel Dyck met a young girl who lost an arm at the site of a dumping
FOCUS

Landmines in Europe & the Caucasus

Victim Assistance in Iraq

There were medical or mental assistance. Finally, they must train Iraqi specialists, medical workers, and civilians in their various areas to help treat the ultimate goal of any eventual Iraqi health care system. Despite these hurdles, the UN and NGOs are slowly making progress in their efforts to help the wounded in Iraq.

References

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5. UNICOPS and EMERGENCY information provided through email correspondence with Mr. Steven Hamm and Mr. Horst Bohle of UNICOPS, and "EMERGENCY in Iraq," April 2003.

Conclusion

As expected, the recent conflict brought 10 years of humanitarian concerns to the civilian population of Iraq. Large amounts of explosive remnants of war (ERW) such as artillery shells, grenades, mortar bombs, cluster bombs and other submunitions, rockets and missiles left in residential areas cause the number of victims to increase daily. Those dedicated to helping these victims must first create a means of keeping track of the number of victims and the nature of their injuries. Their second concern is finding a secure way in which to deliver or administer

Public of Tajikistan to establish a sustainable, National Mine Action Capacity, ensuring the transfer of knowledge at all levels, from explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operators to EOD managers. With continued support from the FSD and OSCE, Tajikistan is hoping to become mine-free in the near future.

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Contact Information

Ian Clarke
Director of Operations
Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSO)
36, Rue du 31 December
Switzerland
Tel: +41 (0)22 737 2043
Fax: +41 (0)22 737 2040
E-mail: ian.clarke@minaction.ch
Website: www.minaction.ch

Salla Kajhio
Political and Media Officer
OSCE, ECOMIR
Avenue 12, Zikrirollo Khojro Str
Dushanbe
Tajikistan
Tel: +999 372 21 40 63
+999 372 23 34 38
Fax: +999 372 21 91 59
E-mail: office@osce.tajikistan.com
Website: www.osce.org

Kevin Davisreese
MAC
E-mail: k Devil@jmu.edu

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Hierarchical Approach to Mine Action in Croatia

For successful demining operations to occur, detailed data collection, planning and assessment are the modus in order to meet the expectations of the many stakeholders involved in the demining process. This article discusses the hierarchical approach of priority assessment for demining, using a multicriteria analysis and geographic information system (GIS) support.

by Nadia Mladineo and Snejazza Knezevic, Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Split and Damir Goraeta, SEEIMAC

Introduction

The Republic of Croatia is one of the 10 most mine-contaminated countries in the world. There are almost 750,000 mines on 1,630 sq km of mine-suspected areas. About 170 sq km are actual minefields, while the rest of the area is contaminated with individual explosive ordnance. Mine-suspected areas have not been used for years, pose a huge economic problem and obstruct infrastructure development, reconstruction and return of displaced persons to their normal life. They also pose a significant safety problem. In particular, any activities carried out in mine-suspected areas significantly threaten human lives and material assets. It is estimated that removing all the mines in the Republic of Croatia would cost approximately $1.473 billion (U.S. and euros) and would require an enormous effort to achieve.

Recent experiences indicate that the demining process is a "complex, slow and expensive" job. Nevertheless, efforts have been aimed at increasing the efficacy of demining activities, while still avoiding human casualties. Even small demining time-reductions present big savings, in an absolute sense, and on numerous occasions, overall investment and economic methods were efficient. It is especially true in cases that were sufficiently mature to start research for new methodological approaches.

Background

As stated in a 2002 report, the existing system for developing the national mine action plan and for identifying priority areas in Croatia has evolved over time. In the immediate post-war period, mine clearance was seen as an integral part of the reconstruction effort and priorities for survey and clearance were determined by plans for reconstruction, the return of refugees and displaced persons and special projects to upgrade the national infrastructure (such as the Sava River). Mine clearance was seen as "demand-led" in its initial phases and, in general, the priorities were clear. However, the problem of identifying priorities became more complex as new and unexpected issues were addressed. The report states that: "To some outside observers, including donors, it was unclear how priorities were being established within each county, whether politicians in the different counties were setting priorities based on similar criteria or to an extent to which socio-economic factors were considered when setting priorities." Conflicts among human demining objectives occur often, and they usually involve outside objects conflicting with objectives generated within the system. The conflicts are then transferred to the criteria. This inconsistency of the criteria led to the implementation of a multicriteria analysis method because "classical" methods, including intuitive decision-making, cannot determine the optimal solutions for the humanitarian demining problems. Therefore, in 2001, CROMAC, in collaboration with the Faculty of Civil Engineering University of Split, developed a hierarchical approach for the demining problem in Croatia. Within the pilot project for Split-Dalmatia County, a multicriteria analysis method was applied in order to provide an objective approach