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Building a Safer World “The Philly Way”

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is based on the U.S. Navy Explosive Ord­
ament School (NASCOLEO) curriculum. However, unlike the EOD curriculum, ours is specifically oriented to the commercial clearance of UXO, not the military EOD mission, as the two are not the same. With instructors from the military EOD and the civilian UXO communities, students are taught the knowledge and skills required to safely perform in the UXO industry.

Historically, only graduates of the NASCOLEO were allowed to work as UXO technicians within the borders of the United States. Internationally, personnel from many different nations perform this work. The majority of this workforce consists of people with training in bomb disposal or engineering. However, personnel with backgrounds in other military occupational fields from a variety of nations can be found working on UXO or demining sites. The training received by these personnel while in their respective country's service was most often out­

standing. However, this training focused on the bomb disposal or de­

minating missions at hand. A civilian UXO clearance mission dif­

fers greatly from the military mission in tools, equipment, procedures, manage­

ment and technical as well as logistical support. In essence, there are more dis­

similarities than similarities when considering the civilian and military mission re­

quirements of a UXO cleanup. Furthermore, the U.S. military does not provide any technical support, research, training, equipment or equip­

ment development to the UXO industry. Without military support of this kind, it is impossible for a civilian UXO company to operate in the same manner as a mili­
tary organization would, given the same task. This program is the first within a major university system to provide compre­

hensive practical and classroom training specifically designed for UXO technicians and managers.

**Conclusion**

The need for an in­depth UXO training program designed to address the shortage of entry­level UXO technicians is real. As long as there are pieces of UXO threatening human lives, the IUTP will continue to provide this training to qualified personnel. Currently, there is a shortage of Level 1 UXO Technicians industry wide. With another round of military base closures in the United States about to begin, this shortage is bound to increase.

**Biography**

Mr. Gunstek is the program coordinator for the UXO Training Program. A 30­year Marine Corps veteran, he served in 5 U.S. Marine Gunnery Moun­
tain Units (ANG/UCO) before transferring to EOD. As an EOD officer and technician, he served in a variety of billets in both air and ground units.

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**Building a Safer World “The Philly Way”**

With the creation of the Philadelphia area Adopt A­Minefield program, many community members have offered their time and effort to raise money and awareness for the landmine problem in Mozambique. With new goals at hand, Philadelphians can expect to see the campaign continue, focusing on Afghanistan and the rest of the world.

by Mike Felker

**Introduction**

In late 1999, members of the Phila­
delphia chapter of the United Nations Association (UNA) and Veterans for Peace began a UNA­USA Adopt­A­Minefield campaign to raise money to demine a minefield in Mozambique. Over the next two years, in conjunction with the UNA chapter in Washington, D.C., $31,300 (U.S.) was raised to demine an 11,811 square­meter minefield in Ressano Garcia, located in the Maputo province in the southern section of Mozambique. This particular minefield is in an agricultural area. Despite the large signs warning of the minefield, local inhabitants go in and out of the minefield, carrying firewood and other necessities rather than making a long detour around the minefield, this shortcut has resulted in deaths and injuries. With the $31,300, demining efforts, consisting primarily of dogs and manual methods, started earlier this year. In anticipation of the cleared field, people are building houses around the minefield. Once the field is demined, these people will raise maize, peanuts and mantos in the fertile soil, and the shortcut for carrying firewood will no longer be deadly.

**The Philadelphia Adopt A­Minefield Campaign**

The Philadelphia­area Mozambique Adopt­A­Minefield campaign was created by Greater Philadelphia UNA board member Joan Bevich and myself—a Veterans for Peace member. Joan, a grand­
mother of 12, had long been troubled by the use of AP landmines. She saw the Adopt­A­Minefield Campaign as a con­
crete way of mobilizing the community to take action against landmine use and help ameliorate the damage caused by mines. Joan states, “The more I learned, the more deeply I began to care about this issue. Like most people, I know a bit about landmines because of the public­ity Princess Diana brought to the issue, but I had no idea how many millions of these obscene weapons were still in place and the scale of the damage they do to individual lives and the development of nations. The more I learned, the more shocked I became. And the more angry I felt that our country had not signed the 1997 Landmine Ban Treaty. Spreading the word, involving others, and helping individuals and groups become part of the solution seemed the least I could do.**

**Spreading the Word**

The main thrust of the Philadelphia­
area Mozambique Adopt­A­Minefield campaign has been presentations to reli­
gious groups; community organizations; elementary, high school, and college stu­
dents; and gatherings in restaurants and private homes. These presentations, last­
ing from a half­hour to two hours, were typically organized by Joan Bevich and myself, often with other UNA and VFP mem­
ers. In general, they consisted of an overview of the landmine crisis includ­
ing a video, personal accounts of my experiences in Vietnam, suggestions to the audience from Joan for raising money for the Adopt­A­Minefield Campaign and entreaties from Joan to contact their government representatives to support the United States signing the Mine Ban Treaty. Over 50 presentations were made and the Mozambique campaign passed a hearing presentation, one congregation of a suburban church raised $2,000 for the Campaign. Joan and I have made presentations to approximately 300 Pen­
nsylvania ministers and lay­leaders. In turn, the Presbytery of Philadelphia passed a “Resolution On Landmines,” which includes: “[making] landmines an on going priority, [appealing] for imme­

diate ratification of the International Landmine Ban Treaty, and [encouraging] congregations to incorporate the UNA­Adopt­A­Minefield campaign in their Mission Outreach.”

We have also raised money by send­

ing holiday gift cards to friends and family members of contributors who made a donation in their loved one’s name—last December, over $2,000 was donated through the gift cards. As another method...
to raise money for the campaign, for the past several years I have run in the 10-kilometer Philadelphia Vietnam Veterans Memorial Run, taking pledges, mainly through the Internet, for the campaign. This year, more than $1,500 was raised in pledges.

In conjunction with the U.S. Campaign to Ban Landmines, we’re working to have the United States join the Landmine Ban Treaty—we have visited the offices of Pennsylvania’s senators and representatives, organized an e-mail advocacy shut network, distributed thousands of brochures, written articles and letters to the editor, and participated in radio programs.

A New Goal

The Philadelphia-area Mozambique: Adopt-A-Minefield campaign ended last December. Given the state of the “war on terrorism” and the suffering the Afghan people had been through—suffering exacerbated by the five to seven million landmines in the country—it was felt that money should now be raised for demining efforts in Afghanistan. The following passage from the book Landmines: A Resource Brief by Ray McGovern, solidified that resolve: “A small boy, about nine years old, was following his goats as they grazed in the mountains. His name is not known. He was probably playing a little, throwing stones maybe, or he would have noticed the small green mine that blew his foot off at the ankle. From what we know of how people react, from the memories of those who have survived, the little shop­pen boy probably hopped or dragged himself to where his foot lay—it would have been quite close to him. He would have tried to put his foot back on the bleeding stump of his ankle. He would have cried or maybe just sat lonely and quiet and helpless and slipped into unconsciousness. His goats must have stayed until he died, probably until wild dogs arrived at the scene. We have no way of knowing exactly what happened, the dogs found him days before we did.”

Conclusion

Our new campaign will continue to focus on presentations to make people aware of the landmine crisis in Afghanistan and the world. But we also hope to get children involved with a foster context and fundraising. Placing ads in local newspapers is another possibility. Folks involved in the Philadelphia-area Adopt-A-Minefield campaign besides Joan and myself include UNA-GP President Dave Eldredge, Joy Harrison, Suzanne Mihlsw, Richard Ludgerslag, World War II veteran Carl Dalgliesh, Temple University student Dan Tate, Barbara Harris and the Philadelphia Presbyterian Peacemaking Resource Team, and several hundred individual contributors. All are united in the belief that when we use our resources to remove landmines, we are working to remove suffering, fear and impoverishment. We are working against the horrors of war and towards building a safer world for all citizens.

Biographical Information

MikeFelker is an employee at the University of Pennsylvania. While in the U.S. military in the late 1960s, he was sent to Vietnam to replace a medic killed by a landmine in December 1969. As a medic with the First Marine Division in Viet­nam, Mike saw American and Vietnamese ca­nulars of landmines. Most of the injuries were incapacitated caused by "popcorners." Mike's mem­ories of treating these casualties—sitting a tray­er around the remains of the leg, wrapping a bable dressing over the stump, looking for a wire in the victim's arm at war—annihilated him still. By relating his experiences in Vietnam as part of the presentations, the Landmine Campaign has pro­vided a way to use these memories positively.

All photos courtesy of the author.

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The Mine Action Information Center and The State Department’s Humanitarian Demining Fellowship: Molding the Future of the Landmine Community

James Madison University (JMU) is host to the State Department’s Mine Action Information Center (MAIC). The MAIC has given many students the opportunity, whether through local employment or the State Department’s Humanitarian Demining Fellowship, to learn and experience mine action. Today, many of JMU’s former students are players in the global landmine community.

by David Hartley, MAIC

Kurt Chesko recognized that employment in the mine action community would be an opportunity in a global, multi-faceted humanitarian industry. He knew that working in the landmine community would provide valuable socio-political experience that could be applied to many non-landmine related jobs. Kurt did not anticipate, however, that his fellowship with the U.S. State Department would eventually lead him to war-torn Afghanistan as a deminer.

Kurt, 23, holds a degree in both International Affairs and French from James Madison University (JMU). Before graduating in December of 2000, he applied to the State Department’s Future-Kneuss-Drew Humanitarian Demining Fellowship program through JMU’s MAIC. In January 2001, the State Department assigned Chesko to work in New York on a multi-media CD-ROM entitled “Landmines: Clearing the Way.” The CD-ROM highlighted all aspects of mine action and mine awareness and was produced by Huntington Associates with funds from the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Department of Defense and the Rockefeller Foundation.

As a State Department Fellow, Kurt worked as the production assistant on this project. This experience, which included profiling mine-affected countries and collecting first-hand information from deminers throughout the world, gave him a thorough and comprehensive understanding of mine action. He used this experience to gain a position at HALO USA, the American arm of the British charity HALO Trust. His primary tasks are to raise the organization’s profile and investigate new sources of funding.

Chesko’s job as Program Coordinator of HALO USA ultimately afforded him the opportunity to remove landmines in Afghanistan. All of HALO Trust’s employees are given the chance to do field work, and he took full advantage. Taking a UN flight into Kabul, Kurt spent about a month training and demining, as well as experiencing the full spectrum of Afghanistan’s devastation. The work deeply affected him, and in the future he plans on pursuing a permanent field position with HALO Trust.

Both the JMU Fellowship with the State Department and the MAIC’s publication, the Journal of Mine Action, have given JMU graduates the opportunity to pursue long term employment in the global field of landmine awareness and clear-