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Mine Action Training in Argentina

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Mine Action in Argentina

Background

Argentina has always relied on its military with respect to demining. At the same time, the government has continually taken an active role in promoting the use of military mine clearance throughout the international community. For instance, in 1993, three officers and one non-commissioned officer (NCO) were sent as a team, supervised by the Organisation of American States (OAS), to Nicaragua. There they took the role of training the Nicaraguan army in different mine clearance techniques.

A few years later in June 1997, a senior officer was appointed United Nations Program Manager of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (UNHCHR) Support Program for Mine Action in Angola. In coordination with the White Helmets, a small group of eight officers and three NCOs were later appointed to various Angolan provincial demining brigades until 1998. In January 1999, coordinator with the White Helmets, two senior officers along with one junior officer and one NCO were appointed to be part of a demining team in Central America. Later in July, three officers and one NCO released them. At the completion of the year, all team members returned to Argentina.

Humanitarian Demining Training Center—Argentina

Considering the increasing participation of Argentinean military personnel in international demining activities, the army began training its personnel on mine clearance techniques and procedures. These became known as explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) courses, which focused mainly on the safety of operators. This change in direction made a substantial difference from former military procedures related to mine breaches.

On April 12, 2000, the Chief of the General Staff of the army ordered the Humanitarian Demining Training Center (HDTC) to be created in the Engineer Battalion 601 in Campo de Mayo, Buenos Aires. Later in September of 2000, the first course on humanitarian demining was held, continuing on through 2001. Military units throughout the countrysent their engineer personnel to attend.

Since its creation, the HDTC has assumed the responsibility of training its own and foreign personnel in coordination with Joint Peacekeeping Operations Training Center in Argentina (CADECOAPAZ). However, the financial difficulties faced by the country during 2002 and 2003 made training of foreigners impossible; thus, the courses were limited to Argentinean personnel.

The U.S. Southern Command, between April and June 2002, organized a course for instructors about mine clearance program management in accordance with the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) multilateral agreement. They also contributed invaluable equipment for use at CADECOAPAZ.

Current Situation

In 2004, there will be the following two courses on Humanitarian Demining:

1. Humanitarian Demining Basic Course: The aim of this course is to train personnel on the necessary techniques to carry on humanitarian demining operations.

2. Humanitarian Demining Advanced Course: The aim of this course is to train officers in the preparation needed for planning humanitarian demining operations.

The HDTC plans to continue exchanging instructors with U.S. training centers in Fort Leonard Wood and especially in Fort Belvoir, which holds a wealth of information pertaining to mine detection dogs. The HDTC has also requested personnel to be assigned to the Engineer Brigade in order to conduct specific research.

Argentina Marine Corps

Amphibious Engineers Course

The Argentine Marine Corps has engineer personnel that participate in underwater demining. More notable is their amphibious engineer course, which takes pride in training the army specifically in amphibious demining operations. Currently, it also includes humanitarian demining training, but in the future this training will be carried out by the HDTC.

Future Plans

In the future, the activities currently planned for the 2004 seminars will most likely be included in regular courses organized by the HDTC for the three military forces. The HDTC will be closely related to the ICHGD. The HDTC will train its own personnel and any foreign personnel, to take part in ongoing activities related to mine activities.

The ultimate goal of the HDTC is contributing to the elimination of landmines all over the world.

The Joint Staff of the Armed Forces also plans to recognize its activities to comply with the following aims: gathering demining information, coordinating and monitoring the application of topics agreed upon by the member states' meetings, and implementing actions issued by the UNMAS and ICBL/LMR.

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