Jordan's Military in Mine Action

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Appendix: Anaesthesia in the Field During the GERMED-12 Mission

During the GERMED-12 Mission anaesthesia was started in the field. According to the recommendations of the UN Peacekeeping Mission, the paramedics are the basic-level medical support. An ambulance car was at hand at this level of primary care. The treatment included cardiopulmonary resuscitation, haemorrhage control, fracture immobilisation, wound dressing, casualty transport and evacuation. There was the possibility of communication and reporting by radio, so the paramedic had to report the emergency situation to the doctor on duty at the operations centre. The medical treatment was coordinated on the advice of the emergency physician.

For treatment and evacuation of casualties the tactical operation, casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) was started. Especially under the conditions of the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), a Forward Medical Team (FMT) was sent to provide short-term medical support in the field. The FMT was transported by helicopter as ambulance car to the emergency scene. Both were equipped with modern emergency equipment and medicines.

The task was to perform emergency resuscitation procedures, maintenance of airway, breathing, and circulation and advanced life support, haemorrhage control, and limb-saving emergency procedures. Especially in GERMED-12 the physicians were trained to use Ketamine in combination with intubation and ventilation. Ketamine could be used in most wounded patients without problems. It proved to be very safe and had only a few side effects:

- Hyper ventilation: APRiN is necessary
- Hyperventilation: Divert or mask was given to prevent these
- Increased blood pressure: Preferred medicine for hypovolaemic patients

The transportation time was sometimes over one hour (see Table 3 on previous page) before arriving at the Level-One medical support facilities.

In our field hospital, it was possible to do surgery under general anaesthesia. We used an apparatus from the Dräger Company. We have administered general anaesthesia with nitrous oxide and oxygen in combination with Ketamine. One physician was the anaesthesiologist and two nurses were on duty daily.

At this level, we could perform limb and life-saving surgery. It includes laparotomy, thoracotomy, wound exploration, and debridement, fracture fixation and amputations.

For post-operative monitoring on our ward, we have used emergency medical equipment like mobile ECG and transportable respirators. A nurse or paramedic did the post-operative observation.

Literature


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Key to abbreviations of primary medical support provided by the different UN medical teams provided in the UN level one hospital in the former UNIKOM headquarters near Umm Quass.

The lessons learned have been used to establish the World Association for Disaster and Emergency Medicine (WADEM) Landmine Task Force to formulate an update of WADEM’s 1997 declaration on the mine-based situation of the world at the beginning of the new millennium (preliminary URL: www.dismed-staff.de). Further work has to be done to learn more about the outcome and the rehabilitation of the surviving victims. For this purpose, contracts have been established to the training: ICRC’s Superfluous Injury or Unnecessary Suffering (SULS) Project Team from Geneva, the UN Portfolio of Mine Action Projects Team in the Jordanian Active and surrounding institutions. We are hoping that these contacts will help to improve the living conditions of the survivors of landmines.

References

2. Website: www.un.org/dep/administration/landmines/index.html

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by Kristen Frabler, MAIC

M JORDAN'S
Military in Mine Action

Jordan is a country rich in history and beauty. Throughout the years, with the increase of tensions in the Middle East, Jordan has been forced to protect its borders. As a result, Jordan has become a major actor in the mine action community and has taken a different approach by promoting the use of its military for demining and its non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for rehabilitation and mine awareness.

History

The first mines were laid in Jordan in 1948 during a war with Israel. Later, during the Six-Day Arab-Israeli War in 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank and developed a new ceasefire line, Jordan began planting more mines along its western border. In the 1970s, Jordan experienced a Syrian threat, and numerous internal problems led to more mine planting. Thus, Jordan quickly moved from a mine-free country to a kingdom burdened with minesfields along its western and northern borders.

Over 15,000 acres of land, bountiful in natural resources and sacred sites, quickly became consumed with mines. The total number of landmines stretched beyond 300,000, of which over 225,000 were laid by the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) and over 70,000 by Israel.2

Before his death, His Majesty King Hussein called for the clearance of all minesfields by the year 2000. In March 1993, the Jordanian government implemented its first phase in a three-phase demining plan. In 1998, Jordan signed and ratified the Ottawa Treaty. Today, the government continues to support numerous mine action conventions and conferences, and submits updates on the status of its stockpiling destruction program.4

King Abdullah commissioned the National Demining and Rehabilitation Committee (NDRC) in March of 2000. This committee participates in various demining aspects from mine risk education (MRE) to mine clearance. New associations continue to emerge in Jordan, such as the Hashemite Society for Soldiers with Special Needs, Landmine Survivors Network, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and the Al Hussein Foundation for the Habilitation and Rehabilitation of the Disabled, and Queen Noor still plays an active role in demining. However, the Jordanian army’s Royal Engineers Corps (REC) remains the key force in demining.

Through the REC’s success in Jordan, the army has begun to stretch its boundaries. Currently, the REC is working in Afghanistan in an effort to demine the country and return the land back to the Afghan people. Aiding Afghanistan in its move to rebuild a country torn apart by the Taliban is not only noble, but it will also provide the REC with more experience in battling its problem at home.
Interview With a Jordan Military Mine Specialist

Q: What skills does the military bring to humanitarian demining that humanitarian organizations might lack?
A: The role of deminers in Jordan is the military's Royal Engineer Corps (REC). The military deminers are skilled, professional, highly trained and equipped to deal with international demining standards. REC has led to the removal of mines from rehabilitated and agricultural areas, thus lowering the number of casualties. Though these operations REC's knowledge has increased in humanitarian aspects of demining, and they have exchanged important information with concerned parties.

Q: How do you feel the military approach to mine action is different from the humanitarian approach?
A: The military approach is different in that demining is only a small part of their professional goal. Their main goal is to serve their country without concern for extraordinary remuneration. They never hesitate to do their duty, while trying to do their best in preserving their countrymen's lives and their equipment.

Q: Has the role of the Jordan militarychanged in humanitarian demining? The methods used by the army...
A: Jordan's demining project has had its own challenges, which has led to adopting special methods and strategies. These can only be achieved by the military through proper training, promotion and infrastructure. This has been evident in the Jordan Engineering Corps deminers deploying to Afghanistan. December 2002 marked Jordan's first effort in participating in an international mine clearance operation.

Q: Why is Jordan important to the Middle East? What role do Jordanian deminers play in the region?
A: The Jordanian military is important to the Middle East because of its good reputation and its readiness to send its personnel to international humanitarian projects or to international humanitarian projects in Jordan.

Q: What role does Jordan hope to play in the region?
A: Jordan is beginning to play a leading role in humanitarian demining and the role of the Jordanian army is to participate in the international projects.

Q: Have you experienced difficulties in Afghanistan, such as ethnic, religious and language differences with other countries?
A: Every job comes with its difficulties. The REC found that cases of UXO brought the most difficulty as they are very dangerous because they are in different types.

Q: What are the differences in success rates in Afghanistan and Jordan?
A: We cannot answer that question. We do say that an unsafe environment is a reason to give the job to the military, so they can protect themselves.

Q: How do you coordinate efforts with NGOs?
A: Presently, the National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation handles the coordination; however, originally REC was responsible for coordinating such projects in demining sectors.

Q: Are there any other successes so far achieved in Jordan so far?
A: The REC is the only force in Jordan and we are an NGO that is based in Jordan. However, this will require no less than 150 million dollars in coordination with the donors.

Current REC Efforts

The new estimated completion date for the three-phase demining plan in Jordan is the year 2009. To date, the REC has assessed its current success and is progressing well, as it has cleared nearly 100,000 AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines. General Foreys Al-Dawari, Commander of the REC, told the Landmine Monitor Report that Jordan's first goal is to concentrate on clearing land that will help improve Jordan's economy through development, even though this land can be the most difficult to reclaim.

Jordan is one of the many landmine-infested countries in the Middle East. Thus, the REC's superior knowledge in demining and Jordan's efforts to promote a mine-safe world were the main reasons the international community was delighted to have 13 Royal Jordanian Air Force engineers deployed to Afghanistan. December 2002 marked Jordan's first effort in participating in an international mine clearance operation.

Afghanistan Efforts

The Jordanian military, along with numerous coalition forces, is also taking part in Operation Enduring Freedom by sending soldiers to Afghanistan in an effort to rebuild the country. After numerous battles and especially the Russian occupation in the 1980s, it is estimated that over 10 million mines exist in Afghanistan, which continue to severely hinder and the international reconstruction efforts.

Baghara Airbase

The first deployment of REC deminers was stationed at the Baghara Airbase. By using the Aardvark chain rail system that is designed to destroy AP and AT mines while cutting through vegetation, over 23,100 sq m have been cleared by Jordanian REC deminers. The Aardvark has been highly successful, detonating 95 percent of the AP mines and 89 percent of the AT mines.

With the expertise and skills gained in Jordan, the REC demining team provided invaluable knowledge to the demining operations in Baghara. This 13-member team consisted of mechanics, drivers, guides and maintenance men. Although the Jordanians have experienced great difficulty in demining their own country, Afghanistan has proven to be even more challenging to the REC's team.

Clearance campaign has not yet taken great effect around the world. NGOs retain the number one demining agents. Fortunately, Jordan continues to assist its campaigns by sending its experienced teams to mine-infested regions such as Afghanistan and other parts of the world.

* Photo c/o AP.

References


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