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U.S. Humanitarian Demining in the Middle East

U.S. Humanitarian Demining in the Middle East

Through generous contributions of money and personnel, the U.S. has enabled five Middle-Eastern nations to institute and maintain national demining programs.

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Mission

The United States seeks to relieve human suffering caused by landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) while promoting U.S. foreign policy interests. U.S. objectives are to reduce civilian casualties, create conditions for the safe return of refugees and displaced persons to their homes, and reinforce an affected country's stability. The U.S. seeks to accomplish these objectives by helping to establish and support sustainable indigenous mine action capabilities in mine-affected nations, where appropriate. Since fiscal year 1993, the United States has committed almost \$500 million (U.S.) to global mine action initiatives, including research and development and survivor assistance. Nearly \$90 million more will be provided in fiscal year 2002.

U.S. Involvement in the Middle East

The U.S. government (the Department of State's Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs (HDP) and the Department of Defense's Office of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance) provides mine action assistance to five of 11 Middle Eastern countries reporting landmine and/or UXO contamination. U.S.-assisted countries include Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen. These countries are estimated to contain approximately 22 million

landmines and UXO left over from internal conflicts between warring factions and external conflicts with neighboring countries. Although approximately 147,623 landmines/UXO have been destroyed, allowing over 14.4 million sq. m of land to be returned to productive use, the threat of landmines remains.

Egypt

The government of Egypt estimates there are 5-5.75 million landmines and 15-15.25 million pieces of UXO in its territory. The largest landmine/UXO contamination sites exist in the northern part of the Western Desert, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and between the Nile Delta and the Libyan border. Within these sites, the most heavily mined areas are Alexandria, El Alamein, Ras-Al-Hekma, Marsa Matruth, Sidi Barrani and Salloum. Post-World War II mines and UXO exist in the east, in the Suez Canal area, along the western coast of the Red Sea and in the Sinai Peninsula. These landmines and UXO affect 2,800 sq. km of Egyptian land, 2,539 sq. km in the west and 261 sq. km in the east. According to the Egyptian Army, landmines and UXO have killed 696 people (including 418 civilians) and injured another 7,617 (4,599 civilians) since the end of World War II.

Jordan

According to the Jordanian Armed Forces (JAF) Royal Corps of Engineers, there are 222,637

landmines in Jordan affecting an area of approximately 100 sq. km. Most of the mines were placed in the ground during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, with the majority located in two discrete areas in the northwest region of the Jordan River Valley. One area is toward the northern end of the Valley on the Syrian border, near Lake Tiberias, while the other is farther south, near the northern end of the Dead Sea. Israeli-laid mine fields are located mainly in the southwest part of the country in the Araba Valley in areas restored to Jordan after Israeli occupation. UXO is not a serious problem in Jordan. The JAF Medical Services reports that 636 Jordanians, including 370 civilians, have become landmine victims since 1967. Ninety-two victims died from their injuries. The majority of civilian casualties were farmers, shepherds, hunters and children. In 2000, landmines injured nine military personnel and three civilians.

Lebanon

The French Mandate period (1923-1943), the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), and the time during which Israel occupied south Lebanon (1978-2000) have left Lebanon with an estimated 130,000 mines and UXO in the former occupied zone and 150,000 mines and UXO in the rest of the country. The UN Intervention Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) claims that 50,644 AP landmines are located in 108 mine fields along the Lebanon-Israel border, 7,730 APL and AT mines in an additional 48 mine field clusters, and 107,200 APL elsewhere in the country. As of July 2000, landmines and UXO had killed 1,168 Lebanese and wounded 1,546 more; 15 of the fatalities and 99 of the injuries occurred between May 2000 and May 2001. More than 40 percent

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of victims suffered their injuries while engaged in agricultural activities, the major source of income for Lebanese villagers. In South Lebanon and West Bekaa, there has been a noticeable decrease in agricultural production because of the presence of landmines.

several of the mines to migrate from their original positions. According to the government of Oman, landmines and UXO have killed 12 people and wounded 84 since the end of the Dhofar rebellion. Almost 50 head of livestock have become landmine casualties. In March 2001, there were two UXO incidents, resulting in serious injuries.

Yemen

Landmines have been used in Yemen during three main periods: 1962-1969, 1970-1983, and in 1994. Unconfirmed reports indicate that approximately 100,000 landmines litter the Yemeni landscape as a result of these conflicts. A Level One Survey, based on victim data, has identified 592 mine-affected communities in 95 districts in 18 of Yemen's 19 governorates. Approximately 828,000 people, about six percent of the population, live in these communities. Of the almost 1,100 identified contaminated areas, there are mines in 859 of them, affecting 799 sq. km, and UXO in 200, covering an area of 200 sq. km. Combatants laid these landmines in an arbitrary and haphazard fashion, in sand dunes and fields and along roads, without marking their location. The mines block access to grazing land and to water for drinking and irrigation. For that reason, herders and children who do not attend school are the most vulnerable to landmine injuries. According to the Level One Survey, in 1999 and 2000, landmines and UXO killed at least 57 people and wounded 121 more; all but two of the victims were civilians. Estimates for landmine and UXO casualties prior to 1999 are more than 2,500 killed and over 2,200 injured.

Mine Action

Since 1998, the United States has provided approximately \$21,632,146 in humanitarian

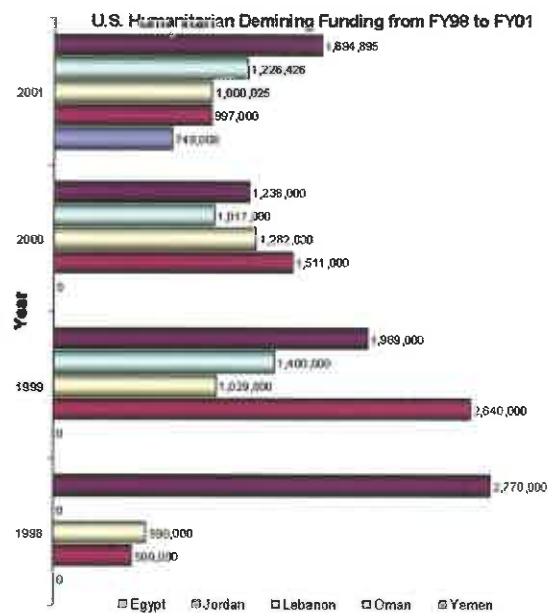
assistance to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen (see chart). This allocation of funding has supported mine action initiatives such as mine detection, deminer training, mine clearance, mine awareness and survivor assistance in each of the five countries.

Mine Awareness

Mine awareness initiatives are sponsored in most of the Middle Eastern countries. In Yemen, mine awareness teams began educating the local populace on demining efforts in 1999. In addition, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) sponsors a mine awareness program in Lebanon with the support of community-based organizations and NGOs.

Mine Detection

Surveys, intended to gather information on the nature and extent of the landmine problem, have been carried out in three of the five U.S.-assisted Middle Eastern countries. Currently, Jordan is conducting Level Two Surveys along the Syrian border to assist in further developing demining strategies. Additionally, a survey conducted by Lebanon's Landmines Resource Center in 1998 and 1999 confirmed that mine fields and suspected mine field locations include agricultural areas, former battlefields and cities and villages located along old demarcation lines. Although some mine fields are marked and fenced off, many others remain unmarked. In 2000, the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA) conducted a Level One Survey in Yemen. The survey identified 592 mine-affected communities in 18 of Yemen's 19 governorates. The results of the survey proved to be effective in determining demining priorities.



Oman

Oman has a small landmine and UXO problem. The vast majority of the landmines are found in the Dhofar region in the south. They are the result of the 1964-1975 internal conflict between the government of Oman and the separatist group, the communist Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Gulf (PFLOG). The Royal Omani Army (ROA) and its allies (Jordan, Iran, and the United Kingdom) used landmines to protect defensive positions and to inhibit the movements of separatists, while the PFLOG used landmines to ambush ROA and allied units. The ROA states that it mapped, marked and then cleared some of its mine fields at the conclusion of the rebellion. The PFLOG did not map, mark or clear their mine fields. Heavy seasonal rains, terrain and soil conditions have caused

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Deminer Training and Mine Clearance

Egypt
In April 2000, the government of Egypt signed a decree officially establishing a civilian-led National Demining Committee. From May 17 through August 15, 2001, the Department of Defense's train-the-trainer program in Egypt focused on mine detection and disposal, survey and information management. Training also included a leadership and operations seminar for battalion and company commanders. Mine clearance operations are continuing in the Red Sea area at Hurghada.

Jordan

Training conducted by the U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) has improved the capabilities of Jordan's Royal Corps of Engineers in mine detection and disposal, survey and information management. There are currently 100 deminers in the field on a daily basis. In addition, Jordan and Israel are now discussing a strategy to remove remaining landmines after initiating a joint effort to clear 10 Israeli-laid mine fields in the Araba Valley. As of February 2000, Jordan's Royal Corps of Engineers had cleared 83,823 mines from more than 200 mine fields, restoring more than 3,000 acres of land to safe use.

Lebanon

The United States has supported a demining program in Lebanon since 1998 and has contributed a total of almost \$4 million to the program. The U.S. military assisted in establishing a National Demining Office and supported further development through training and provision of equipment. The U.S. military also conducted a train-the-trainer program to provide an indigenous company of deminers capable of sustaining operations.

Oman

In 2000, U.S. funds enabled the government of Oman to develop a survey and information management capability to define mined areas effectively and to archive mine field data efficiently; to enhance the curriculum at the engineer school, which will enable it to train deminers to international standards in demining survey, marking and clearance operations; to purchase modern detection and protective equipment; to develop a mine awareness capability to support demining units at the regional and local levels; and to train ROA medical cadre to improve initial response, medical and trauma capabilities.

Yemen

U.S. assistance has funded a national demining program infrastructure and a train-the-trainer program, conducted by U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF) soldiers. In December 1998, the first 150 Yemeni deminers graduated from the Humanitarian Demining Training Facility in Aden. Demining and UXO removal operations began in 1999 with the fielding of two U.S.-trained Yemeni demining companies.

Survivor Assistance

Through the World Rehabilitation Fund, USAID implements programs aimed at preventing landmine-related accidents and improving the physical, social and economic conditions of people suffering from landmine-related injuries. One of these programs established in Lebanon will create a mine victim rehabilitation center in Jezzine, the site of the highest concentration of landmine survivors.

Accomplishments

Since 1993, humanitarian efforts by the United States have led to an increase in the area of land restored for productive use and in the number of landmines/UXO destroyed during demining operations. With over 600 U.S.-trained deminers, an estimated 14.4 million sq. m of land have been cleared in the Middle East and approximately 147,623 landmines/UXO have been destroyed. The table below indicates this significant reduction in the threat of landmines/UXO in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen.

Country	Landmines/UXO Destroyed	Land Cleared (sq. m)
Egypt	Demining training underway	N/a
Jordan	83,823	12,500,000
Lebanon	2,500	Not reported
Oman	Demining training underway	N/a
Yemen	61,300	1,920,000
TOTAL	147,623	14,420,000

Future Initiatives

In 2001, the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program will have allocated over \$5,667,346 (U.S.) to support mine action initiatives in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman and Yemen. With continued assistance from the U.S. government and other international donors, the goal of achieving a qualified, trained and equipped country program capable of sustaining its own mine action initiatives is attainable. ■

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