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The South East Asia Mine Action Cooperation and Technology Workshop

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The South East Asia Mine Action Cooperation and Technology Workshop

Bangkok, Thailand
4-8 March 2002

Executive Summary

The South East Asia Mine Action Cooperation and Technology Workshop was a five-day event co-sponsored by the US Departments of State and Defense, hosted by the Thailand Mine Action Center and organized by Mine Action Information Center of James Madison University. It was held March 4-8, 2002 in Bangkok, Pak Chong, and Aranyaprathet, Thailand.

The workshop goals were, 1) to bring together mine-afflicted Asian countries to share lessons learned and to facilitate closer cooperation, 2) to allow donor nations and organizations a chance to gain an appreciation for landmine challenges in the region, 3) to allow all participating countries to assess mine action roles, linkages, trends, and challenges within SE Asia, 4) to showcase emerging technologies which may be used to speed mine action progress in the region, and 5) to allow mine action non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to discuss best practices in the region.

Over 70 representatives from 15 countries participated in the conference, including representatives of 7 mine-affected nations of South East Asia. The conference agenda was organized so as to schedule presentations from the country representatives, NGOs, and donor country agencies. But key events in the workshop process were designed to allow the participants a chance to experience the operational environment at Ban Nong Ya Khao village, and to observe the Mine Dog Center at Pak Chong. The workshop concluded with a series of work groups, which provided feedback and suggested next steps for demining activities in South East Asia.

The country representatives from Laos, Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia provided a rich set of presentations that highlighted a diverse array of mine action activities, which they perform or are in the process of developing. The NGOs: MAG, HALO Trust, World Vision, and the Chatchai Foundation provided a very candid and insightful perspective, while representatives of CROMAC, the International Trust Fund, the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining, the

US State Department's Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs and the US Defense Department's Office of Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict presented a list of services which their organizations can provide. The integrated mine action program demonstrated at Ban Nong Ya Khao indelibly demonstrated the effectiveness of a mine action program made up of well coordinated and integrated component parts to include dogs, machines, and highly trained and motivated deminers.

Conducting the working groups later in the week allowed for participants to get to know each other well, so that open dialog and spirited discussions were possible. The consensus items and topics of concern framed the challenges, which remain for mine action practitioners in Asia.