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## Cambodian Children Killed in Rocket Explosion

News Brief

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## Cambodian Children Killed in Rocket Explosion

Three children were killed 9 September 2012 in the Oddar Meanchey province, Cambodia after attempting to salvage scrap metal from a suspected B-40 rocket.<sup>1</sup> According to local police chief Keo Than, the three boys, between eight and nine years old, were walking home through a forest where they herd cows when they picked up a rocket and tried to open it.<sup>2</sup> The ordnance detonated and two of the three boys died on the scene from the resulting explosion while the third boy died *en route* to the hospital.

Selling unexploded ordnance scrap metal is illegal in Cambodia, but in poor areas densely littered with UXO, the need to make an income often outweighs the risks. Despite efforts to educate and warn the public of UXO dangers, these incidents still occur.<sup>1</sup>

Cambodia is extensively mined and continues to have widespread mine and explosive remnants of war contamination, concentrated in 21 northwestern districts along the border with Thailand in an area known as the K-5 Mine Belt. The site of the incident was once a battlefield between government forces and the Khmer Rouge.<sup>1</sup> Other areas of Cambodia are contaminated as well. In the 1980s the Vietnamese government emplaced landmines



Map of Cambodia.

along the 1,046 km (650 mi) Vietnamese-Cambodian border to stop insurgents from crossing into Vietnam. In addition, the United States dropped around 26 million explosive submunitions on Cambodia during the Vietnam War (1954–1975), leaving between 1.9 million and 5.8 million unexploded cluster munition remnants scattered across the country.<sup>3,4</sup>

Map courtesy of CIA World Factbook.

Oddar Meanchey province is a high-risk area for landmines and ERW according to the Cambodian Mine Victim Information Service. It has the second highest rate of ERW and landmine incidents in Cambodia. In 2012, 47 of the total 114 recorded casualties in the first seven months of the year occurred within the Oddar Meanchey province.<sup>1</sup> In the previous year, landmines and ERW killed 43 people and left 168 injured in Cambodia.<sup>5</sup>

~Paige Ober, CISR staff

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## Endnotes

1. Will, Rachel and Yuthana, Kim. "Three Boys Dead After Rocket Explodes." *The Phnom Penh Post*, 10 September 2012. <http://www.phnompenhpost.com/index.php/2012091058614/National-news/three-boys-dead-after-rocket-explodes.html>. Accessed 13 September 2012.
2. "Three boys killed by old Cambodian rocket: police." *tuoitrenews.vn*, 10 September 2012. <http://www.tuoitrenews.vn/cmlink/tuoitrenews/international/three-boys-killed-by-old-cambodian-rocket-police-1.85697>. Accessed 13 September 2012.
3. In Vietnam, this war is called the American War.
4. "Cambodia." *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*. [http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region\\_profiles/print\\_profile/442](http://www.the-monitor.org/custom/index.php/region_profiles/print_profile/442). Accessed 13 September 2012.
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