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## Secession Leads to Demining Challenges in Sudan

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## Secession Leads to Demining Challenges in Sudan



*In the months following South Sudan’s July 2011 electoral secession from the former Sudan, the South’s ability to successfully maintain a demining program has become heavily dependent on its economic and post-conflict recovery. At this point in time, however, much of the South’s sustainability is ultimately reliant on its relationship with the North and, more significantly, the international community, thereby rendering its demining program into an uncertain future.*

Though Sudan and South Sudan were split ideologically, racially and religiously since the 1950s, geographical lines were not drawn until the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005. Prior to this time, the Northern and Southern parts of former Sudan fought two intense civil wars with little hope of reconciliation. The first of these wars lasted from 1955 until 1972, when the Addis Ababa Agreement put a stop to the conflict. This agreement proved only temporary, and the Second Civil War began in 1983. Considered Africa’s bloodiest and most prolonged conflict, the war lasted until 2005, when both sides agreed to a peace process that would tentatively allow the South to become an independent nation from the rest of Sudan. On 9 January 2011, the South voted to separate from the North, and it fully seceded 9 July 2011.

The CPA, which was signed, in part, through international support from the United Nations and the United States, required certain provisions in the six-year period between the CPA’s signing and the referendum in January 2011. Among these provisions was the establishment of mine-action programs in the North and South. As

a result, mine-action programs began to actively eliminate the problem of unexploded ordnance and explosive remnants of war in 19 of former Sudan’s 25 contaminated states.<sup>1</sup>

### Rationale for Demining Need

Most of the ERW contamination within former Sudan is a result of the civil wars; however, border wars with surrounding countries have further littered former Sudan’s perimeters with landmines and ERW. Sudan has contamination along its borders with Ethiopia and Eritrea, while South Sudan is contaminated along the Uganda and Democratic Republic of the Congo borders. The conflict in Darfur, Sudan’s westernmost region, with surrounding



A wide view of the historic Independence Ceremony of the Republic of South Sudan.

Photo courtesy of U.N. /Eskinder Debebe.

countries such as with Chad in 2007, has created an immense need for removal of ERW, but the Government of Sudan has stated there are no landmines in Darfur.<sup>2</sup> Since the conflict surrounding Darfur is ongoing, clearance and assessments are ongoing within the same areas to reevaluate for new ERW. The contamination from the border wars caused roadway closure, especially in South Sudan, for fear of detonating a landmine or other ERW. Demining is therefore necessary to provide the Sudanese with a safe place to live and work.

Representatives from Sudan and South Sudan<sup>3,4</sup> believe that in order to continue collaborating after the secession, substantial assistance is needed from nongovernmental organizations and the U.N. to continue training and development in the mine-action sector. A substantial amount of land was cleared since the establishment of the National Mine Action Centre in 2005, but the 35 percent increase in ERW victims in 2010 shows that much work

remains.<sup>5</sup>

From November 2010 to mid-May 2011, 16 reported mine-related incidents in Southern Sudan resulted in injury or death. These incidents include a 17-year-old boy who lost his legs stepping on an anti-personnel mine while looking for his cattle, two women who stepped on an AP mine while collecting firewood and five children who were killed when they picked up a hand grenade.<sup>6,7</sup> According to the U.N. Mine Action Office, this brings the total number to at least 1,651 casualties, including 493 killed.<sup>8</sup>

Landmines will continue suppressing prosperity in South Sudan. Some estimates indicate that landmines and unexploded ordnance contaminate more than half of South Sudan.<sup>6</sup> According to the *Landmine & Cluster Munitions Monitor*, 82 percent of both (North) Sudan and South Sudan need ERW clearance.<sup>2</sup> Although the demining process is expensive and tedious, once the land is cleared, South Sudan will begin to see its economy flourish. Many analysts predict a decreased reliance on oil profits, if South Sudan can clear the landmines and UXO to develop its agricultural sector.

## Demining

The North's demining program, the National Mine Action Authority, and the South's, Southern Sudan Demining Authority, were created by two separate presidential decrees after an agreement with the U.N. agency for Mine Action Capacity Building and Programme Development in Sudan.<sup>9</sup> Both organizations, with funding from outside organizations such as the United Nations Mine Action Office and the United Nations Development Programme, have made significant gains to remove landmines and UXO during the six years of relative calm and peace following the civil war.



Engineers from ArmorGroup use MineWolf demining machines to clear AP landmines under a program coordinated by the UNMAO in consultation with the Government of Southern Sudan and other national and international actors. Approximately 2,000 AP mines

Former Sudan placed most emphasis on opening primary and secondary roads and demining the nation as a whole. Some of former Sudan's roads have not been used in more than 20 years because of the fear of mines.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, more than a million individuals received ERW education, 2,800 received victim assistance and more than 45,000 kilometers (27,962 miles) of roads were reopened between 2005 and 2010.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, both of these programs largely subsist on outside funding, rather than internal or governmental support. Especially with regards to UNDP, SSDA and the NMAA have required more than US\$70 million to operate annually. The U.N. has maintained a presence in Sudan since the 1950s. This presence includes all training, hardware, software, vehicles and facilities required to successfully implement these programs.<sup>10</sup>

Originally, the U.N. set a tentative date of June 2011 to hand over



have been destroyed to date.  
*Photo courtesy of U.N. /Tim McKulka.*

operations to the respective governments; however, after the Secretary-General requested a three-month extension, the Government of Sudan decided to terminate the presence of the

United Nations Mission in Sudan.<sup>11</sup> Instability on the North/South border will only further each respective government's inability to successfully implement demining programs. Each government would rather focus on placing demining resources into re-arming and preparing for new conflict.

Economically, the North is more stable than the South, and as such, should be willing to place more funds into demining programs. However, the South, with its fledgling economy, will be in dire straits as it begins to develop independently of Sudan. Questions of whether the South can effectively maintain a mine-action program on its own (which is very expensive) are warranted, since South Sudan will most likely find it difficult to allocate resources into demining. However, apportioning these resources to demining will help their economy flourish in the long run. Once South Sudan is cleared, it will be able to establish new farmlands, build infrastructure and create jobs. Therefore, a well-funded demining program is essential to stabilizing the South.

### Post-secession Concerns

After South Sudan's independence in July, the issue of citizenship has become a high-priority concern for the citizens of Sudan and South Sudan.<sup>12</sup> The population requests answers to a variety of questions:

- Will every person have to return to his or her home country, or will citizenship be awarded on a case-by-case basis?
- What about children with a mother from the South and a father from the North, or vice versa? Where do the children belong?
- Does one parent have to move? How long will it take for the citizenship processes to be established?

Since July 2008, investigations into the practices of Omar al-Bashir, President of Sudan, are ongoing. Allegations of war crimes and genocidal practices stemming from the continuing conflict in Darfur were filed in 2003.<sup>13</sup> However, until al-Bashir no longer holds the office of President, he will continue to avoid arrest. As long as al-Bashir is President and other countries receive him,<sup>13</sup> his governing style may not change, leaving Sudan's relationship with the South increasingly uncertain. If violence breaks out again, funding will diminish, leaving the future of SSSA in jeopardy.

### Conclusion

UNDP has found an urgent need to assist in developing South Sudan's government and governance structures. The NMAC (based in Khartoum) and SSSA (based in Juba) staff members attend training courses in various mine-action fields and continue developing their skills in operations, quality assurance, mine-risk education, victim assistance, monitoring and evaluation, administration, finance and public relations. UNDP will use these skill-sets to help South Sudan create "... capacity development plans to gradually take on full management of all mine action activities." In addition to helping national authorities handle the effects of landmines and explosive remnants of war on development, these plans will also include a gender perspective to their programs and projects.<sup>9</sup> Taking these steps, UNDP believes South Sudan can successfully execute "core functions of governance, including management of public resources and functioning rule of law institutions."<sup>14</sup>

South Sudan's demining program, however, ultimately relies on funding. The United Nations Mine Action Service and Norwegian People's Aid have previously provided support for Sudan's mine-



Three ArmorGroup demining staff members inspect mine-clearance activities in South Sudan.  
*Photo courtesy of U.N. /Tim McKulka.*

action initiatives and plan to help SSDA with funding for its transition.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the future is still uncertain. With outside support, SSDA can move forward and take the necessary steps to clear the country of landmines and other ERW. However, if violence breaks out or that support dwindles, South Sudan will continue suffering from instability. ↴

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