April 2010

Falkland-Malvinas Islands Update

Cory Kuklick
CISR

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal
Part of the Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Half of Nepali Minefields Cleared

Nepal has successfully cleared half of the minefields laid during a decade-long internal conflict. Media reports credit the United Nations and local agencies for supporting national demining efforts, which began two years ago. Government forces laid more than 50 minefields during the conflict, and contamination from other ordnance was extensive. Rebel forces were also responsible for contamination, and the lingering effects of explosive remnants of war are still felt.

Three demining units from the Nepali Army, with support from the United Nations, have cleared 26 fields and plan to clear remaining fields by the end of 2011. According to media reports, 52,617 pieces of ordnance have been disposed of since clearance began in 2007.

Conclusion

Mine action and demining processes in the Republic of Croatia are organized in such a way to reduce the mines and UXO danger to an acceptable risk level. The Law on Humanitarian Demining defines the complete clearance of worksites from all mines and UXO to the depth determined by the project, meaning the acceptable risk should be zero. However, it is very difficult to reach 100-percent worksite clearance in an efficient and cost-effective way.

In order to fulfill mine-action goals and completely eliminate the mine problem from the Republic of Croatia, as specified by the National Mine Action Strategy until 2019, CROMAC will focus its future efforts primarily on landmine and UXO removal to its Stated Acceptable Quality Level.

The introduction of AQL enables a demined area to contain certain indicators of nonconformity, such as individually measured depths of mechanically treated soil, remaining fragments detected by metal detectors, or the remaining traces of explosive substance with or without metal that are found by approved methods for detection of metal and explosives. Such cases can indicate the existence of nonconformities in demining and again create critical nonconformity, which requires rejection of the area.

Terms for acceptance or nonacceptance of all defect categories are defined by SOPs for sampling.

With CROMAC’s improved standards for humanitarian demining in place, the mine-action community in the Republic of Croatia hopes that the cost of demining operations will decrease as the effectiveness of demining increases.

Nikola Gembrodic, Ph.D., has worked at CROMAC since 1998. Prior to his current position as Assistant Director, which he has held since 2003, he was head of CROMAC’s Regional Offices in Knin and Karlovac. Gembrodic is an expert in production of explosives and pyrotechnics. He is currently working on promoting the use of technical regulations, competence testing and evaluation procedures for the manufacture, design and operation of humanistic demining operations. He coordinates the preparation of standard operating procedures and normative acts to develop Croatian standards relating to procedures in humanitarian demining.

Nikola Gembrodic, Ph.D.
Assistant Director
Croatian Mine Action Centre
A. Kovača 10
44000 Split, Croatia
Tel: +385 44 554 103
Fax: +385 44 554 111
E-mail: nikola.gembrodic@hcr.hr,
povratak@hcr.hr
Web site: http://www.hcr.hr

f

by Cory Kuklick (Center for International Stabilization and Recovery)

Falkland-Malvinas Islands Update

Since conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina ceased in 1982, the Falkland-Malvinas Islands have remained riddled with landmines. Under its obligation to the Ottawa Convention, the U.K. is removing the landmines from this territory. Despite concerns about clearance there, a successful pilot program has been conducted.

Following conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina in 1982, close to 20,000 landmines contaminated the Falkland-Malvinas Islands. Despite numerous concerns, including those relating to the environmental effects of clearance activities, the United Kingdom is fulfilling its obligation to Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention to remove all anti-personnel landmines from the Islands. A pilot program for landmine removal began in late 2009, conducted by Battle Area Clearance and Training Equipment Consultants International Ltd., with program direction and quality control oversight by the newly created Falkland Island Demining Programme Office. It is expected that the results of the pilot program will help inform future clearance activities.

Background

Argentina laid at least 20,000 landmines, forming approximately 120 minefields, in 1982. Following Argentina’s surrender to the United Kingdom, clearance began immediately but quickly ended after several British service members were injured. The locations of the minefields were thoroughly recorded and fenced off, and no civilians have been killed or injured since the conflict ended.

Clearance operations did not again become a reality until 1998, when the United Kingdom signed the Ottawa Convention, which requires parties to remove all landmines on their sovereign territory. Questions were raised as to whether immediate removal was necessary, as the landmines posed little risk to islanders who had grown accustomed to their presence. In addition, a 2007 feasibility study conducted jointly by the U.K. and Argentina showed that clearance could cause environmental harm. The U.K. was granted an extension to its clearance obligations under the Ottawa Convention until 2019. Demining operations began in October 2009 with the establishment of FIDPO and a contract with BACTEC taking full account of the related environmental issues.

According to Robin Swanson, FIDPO Programme Manager, there were concerns about the environment; permission from the Environmental Planning Department of the Falkland-Malvinas Islands was sought in advance of the demining operations. “We worked very closely with the Environmental Planning Department to reach a methodology and remediation plan that satisfied their needs and could be implemented by BACTEC,” he says.6

Current Activities

Clearance operations are focused on four suspect areas, each with different terrain types and with various mine and unexploded-ordnance threat levels: Fox Bay East, Goose Green and two areas near Stanley, the capital of the Falkland-Malvinas Islands. An additional area at Surf Bay was selected for demining because a main road bisected it and there were concerns about accidents in that area. It was also because it contained over 1,000 mines representing 5 percent of the overall mines remaining on the island. Current demining activities are scheduled for completion by the end of May 2010. Following the pilot phase, the United Kingdom will better understand the logistical, environmental and technical challenges and will be able to inform future remediation phases.

Kuklick: Falkland-Malvinas Islands Update

Falkland-Malvinas Islands Update

Following conflict between the United Kingdom and Argentina in 1982, close to 20,000 landmines contaminated the Falkland-Malvinas Islands. Despite numerous concerns, including those relating to the environmental effects of clearance activities, the United Kingdom is fulfilling its obligation to Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention to remove all anti-personnel landmines from the Islands. A pilot program for landmine removal began in late 2009, conducted by Battle Area Clearance and Training Equipment Consultants International Ltd., with program direction and quality control oversight by the newly created Falkland Island Demining Programme Office. It is expected that the results of the pilot program will help inform future clearance activities.

Background

Argentina laid at least 20,000 landmines, forming approximately 120 minefields, in 1982. Following Argentina’s surrender to the United Kingdom, clearance began immediately but quickly ended after several British service members were injured. The locations of the minefields were thoroughly recorded and fenced off, and no civilians have been killed or injured since the conflict ended.

Clearance operations did not again become a reality until 1998, when the United Kingdom signed the Ottawa Convention, which requires parties to remove all landmines on their sovereign territory. Questions were raised as to whether immediate removal was necessary, as the landmines posed little risk to islanders who had grown accustomed to their presence. In addition, a 2007 feasibility study conducted jointly by the U.K. and Argentina showed that clearance could cause environmental harm. The U.K. was granted an extension to its clearance obligations under the Ottawa Convention until 2019. Demining operations began in October 2009 with the establishment of FIDPO and a contract with BACTEC taking full account of the related environmental issues.

According to Robin Swanson, FIDPO Programme Manager, there were concerns about the environment; permission from the Environmental Planning Department of the Falkland-Malvinas Islands was sought in advance of the demining operations. “We worked very closely with the Environmental Planning Department to reach a methodology and remediation plan that satisfied their needs and could be implemented by BACTEC,” he says.6

Current Activities

Clearance operations are focused on four suspect areas, each with different terrain types and with various mine and unexploded-ordnance threat levels: Fox Bay East, Goose Green and two areas near Stanley, the capital of the Falkland-Malvinas Islands. An additional area at Surf Bay was selected for demining because a main road bisected it and there were concerns about accidents in that area. It was also because it contained over 1,000 mines representing 5 percent of the overall mines remaining on the island. Current demining activities are scheduled for completion by the end of May 2010. Following the pilot phase, the United Kingdom will better understand the logistical, environmental and technical challenges and will be able to inform future remediation phases.
Furthermore, in accordance with the aging study funded by the U.S. Department of State and being done at James Madison University’s Center for International Stabilization and Recovery, Colin King, an explosive ordinance specialist, is collecting mines to help augment the information collected during the study. As the landmines in the Falklands have been embedded in sand for over 20 years, they have been exposed to time and a shifting environment, possibly altering their effectiveness. The results of the study could help determine if current demining techniques are compatible with the status of the landmines and whether any changes need to be made. It will be interesting to discover the condition of the mines that are removed.

Clearance Techniques

While the minefields were meticulously documented following the conflict’s end, the mines themselves are very complex and sophisticated. Described by Roger Gagen, BACTEC Project Manager, as the “Ferraris of landmines,” the mines contain a very small amount of metal, making them very hard to detect.2 The majority of the minefields lie in Surf Bay and Sapper Hill. Surf Bay contains approximately 1,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines, manufactured in Italy.4,5 The mines are placed in panels of two or more rows. Deminers use a manual-excavation technique on each row, probing the ground to find and extract the mines for clearance and destruction. As of April 2010, a total of 1,039 of the mines had been destroyed.6 The Spanish mines on Sapper Hill have been the hardest to locate due to their low levels of metal content; however, all 190 mines have been removed. It took 77 days to completely remove the landmines, which culminated in a public demonstration and impromptu football game to show confidence that the land is now mine-free.

Conclusion

Three sites at Sapper Hill, Goose Green and Fox Bay have been completed, including the full quality-control sampling to International Mine Action Standards. The site at Surf Bay is almost complete pending location of the last mines buried deep in the sand dunes. “We believe that this has been a very successful pilot phase which will be able to inform future projects, not only on the technical and environmental challenges of clearing landmines in the Falkland-Malvinas Islands,” says Swanson, “but also about the logistic and support challenges of operating within a limited infrastructure some distance from the U.K.”7

See Endnotes, Page 83