
Book Review

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International Committee of the Red Cross
Mine Action Sector
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http://snipurl.com/41x41
80.00 CHF (US $72.50)


Reviewed by Suzanne Fiederlein, Ph.D. [Mine Action Information Center]

"Book I: Planning, Implementing and Monitoring Activities" addresses some of the finer points that must be considered when formulating operational plans for reducing the impact of weapon contamination, recognizing that different approaches work best in different contexts (such as during armed conflict, post-conflict environments and in a peace-time setting). Book II walks through elements of information collection and needs assessment so critical to understanding context as well as the process of developing strategies for action and program monitoring.

"Book III: Reference Material" contains a manual of highly useful resources that can be easily accessed as needed, including legal documents such as the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction and the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate, Harmful, or Environmental Effects, Amended Protocol II and Protocol V. The book includes reference materials one would expect in a manual of this sort—glossaries and a list of sources of additional information. It also contains information on "dealing with human remains in contaminated areas," and has an excellent section on data gathering and analysis as well as a concise overview of the basic elements of a risk education program.

The hard copy version of the manual comes in a binder with the three books bound separ-ately in soft cover. Copies can also be downloaded separately in PDF format from the ICRC Web site. CD and hard copy formats can be or-dered there as well as http://snipurl.com/4txsl.

Unexploded Ordnance Cleanup Costs: Implications of Alternative Protocols
(by Jacqueline MacDonald and Carmen Martinez)

RAND Corporation, 2005
ISBN 0-8330-3774-9
US$20.00

Reviewed by Matthew Vegelie [Mine Action Information Center]

Unexploded ordnance contamination is a problem American military base occupants, veterans and their families deal with every day. After the closing of several United States military bases due to downsizing, it became apparent that uncorrected UXO remained on these properties where personnel were trained to use various weapons. To prevent unwarranted accidents, the military must now remove the underestimated bomblets, grenades, rockets and other explosive testing on these bases before transferring or selling the land to civilians.

Considering there is no set U.S. protocol on what UXO cleanup processes should entail in any given scenario, it’s not surprising that there are disagreements among military and various governmental agencies on what measures are required to protect local envir-o-nments and populations. Consequently, the Department of Defense is not able to provide Congress with an accurate estimate of overall costs of clearing these lands. A long, expen-sive process is required for federal and state offi-cials to agree on clearance requirements at each site.

In Unexploded Ordnance Cleanup Costs: Implications of Alternative Protocols, authors Jacqueline MacDonald and Carmen Martinez of the RAND Corporation provide a short, detailed analysis on how the costs of UXO excavation correlate with varying standards or levels for UXO cleanup. They discuss the specific processes used to clear a particular site and the protocols that influence the steps taken. Such protocols may not strictly follow the military’s standard cost-estimation method and site-specific costs have skewed past estimates for UXO re-moval compiled by the DoD. The authors also enlighten readers about the clash between the Environmental Protection Agency and the DoD over UXO cleanup standards and how limitations of metal-detector technology have only made things worse. By asking, “How clean is clean?” they are able to highlight how and why the two parties have developed conflicting UXO-removal protocols, which inevitably lead to inflated cost analyses.

To validate their study, the authors provide an evaluation of the cost-estimation tool that is most widely used by the DoD to approximate environmental cleanup costs, a software program known as “Remedial Action Cost Engineering Requirements” or RACER. Authors MacDonald and Martinez conduct a “sensitivity analysis” of the software to discover how well the program is able to account for vari-ability in cost factors that can affect an overall estimate. They then investigate which vari-ables the program indicates are the most in-fluential on UXO cleanup costs. The case studies examine how certain types of cleanup contracts work and show various charts and diagrams, the authors are able to display the results of their study in an easy-to-understand way so that even the reader, even those with no mine-action background, can understand the information. The authors prove in a fact-based way that even the most insignificant UXO contamination found on U.S. federal government land can be considered a problem on how to: 1. Improve cost-estimation tools like RACER 2. Create structural guidelines and pro-tocols for UXO cleanup

3. Establish a database of all UXO incidents that have taken place in this manner. A glossary of terms is included that help readers understand what is being discussed. The various charts and graphs help present information in an easy-to-understand manner. Lengthy explanations of background information allow readers to absorb the con-tent of the text and put it into context. The RAND Corporation’s study into UXO cleanup costs is impresses and informative.