April 2008

Mine Action Support Group Update

CISR JOURNAL

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Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol11/iss2/28

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therefore, the ANAMA team would like to share some critical safety guidelines obtained from its explosive ordnance disposal team’s experience. Up to the end of 2008 there were approximately 15,000 pieces of human-produced WP UXO found during ANAMA operations. The demolition of these UXO items entails filling the WP compound within the vacuum chambers. Therefore, when it is exposed to oxygen, it instantaneously combusts and emits toxic smoke, and it is very difficult to stop the burning if appropriate measures are not taken beforehand. Because the WP compound left on subsurface fragments will cause serious burns if it comes into contact with human skin, it is extremely harmful and should be handled with extreme care while dealing with this type of UXO.

To prevent any negative effects to humans while handling the devices containing WP, personal protective equipment should include leather gloves of a special design, fireproof overalls, hard hats, respirators and glasses. In case of an emergency, an on-site medical support team should have a compounded solution of sodium carbonate and copper sulfate available to smother over affected areas. Another innovation to protect the team consists of a water-filled, metal tub installed at the site. As soon as the subsurface fragments with the WP are recovered, they are immediately placed into the tub to prevent burning. If the tub is too far from the operation point, then ordinary metal buckets of water may be utilized for collecting the fragments. A team of four or five people should be able to move the tubs to the demolition area safely.

During the demolition preparation the WP UXO projectiles can be mined with the other types of munitions, because usually the thickness of their casing is greater and there are no other explosives inside. This process requires a larger donor charge to disrupt and vaporize these items—for example, TNT to destroy WP-free projectiles. Also, explosives used during the demolition operations of WP ammunition should be placed underneath the stockpile in order to provide the maximum possible height of explosion, as this will prevent scattering and provide full neutralization of the WP substance. This article has provided a general overview of the ANAMA team’s operations in the field as part of the Sahlyfa Project. Hopefully, this account of the team’s work has given the international demining community useful insights into dealing with the unique hazards of UXO containing white phosphorous.

See Endnote, page 112

EOD Training Underway for Afghan Soldiers and Policemen

Nearly 40 soldiers and policemen from the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police have completed the first of five phases in training to be explosive ordnance disposal technicians. The Explosive Ordnance Disposal School, ANA’s first branch training facility outside Kabul, is located at Camp Shahwar.

The facility is adjacent to a 72 square kilometer (28 square mile) demining zone that will figure prominently in the remaining four training phases. The training is being conducted by 20 Afghan and international instructors from RONCO Consulting Company in the hopes of speeding the denning of Afghanistan, one of the world’s most heavily mined countries. Denning efforts in the country are more than two decades old, but total clearance of the millions of mines could take decades.

RONCO based the training program on a successful endeavor in Az Zubair, Iraq, which trained Iraqis for three years in country-specific threats. The 22-week program, designed to be challenging, addresses issues specific to Afghan EOD efforts and safety.

Ronald Azizov served as Training and Quality Assurance Officer with the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action from 2003 to 2007. During that time he contributed to the United Nations Development Programme and the Azerbaijan Joint Project overseeing the training and quality assurance for the team in the field, and establishing a learning organization’s operations. Azizov recently began working for Halliburton. In the fall of 2005, he completed the United Nations Development Programme’s Senior Managers Course through James Madison University’s Mine Action Information Center.

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ANAMA Project, the ANAMA team provided a general overview of the ANAMA team’s operations in the field as part of the Sahlyfa Project. Hopefully, this account of the team’s work has given the international demining community useful insights into dealing with the unique hazards of UXO containing white phosphorous.
Some of the land is in the most intensive building/development areas. This means that NPA/NCDR has returned over seven million square meters of land to the inhabitants. The National Humanitarian Demining Programme for Development, which has been conducted by the Norwegian People’s Aid, and the UN, has placed on hold while national assets have been diverted to undertake clearances in southern Lebanon and the Nahar Al-Bared camp. Development of a transition between a national/UNMAS program and mine action by local NGOs was completed in 2006. The Armenian Armed Forces have been placed on increased operational stress due to the security situation in Lebanon and the 2007 crisis in northern Lebanon. Funding for mine clearance outside of southern Lebanon remains low, and the key challenge in Lebanon is to take clearances in southern Lebanon and the Nahal Al-Bared camp. A two-year U.N. joint project between UNDP and the World Health Organization in Jordan is being implemented in northern Iraq. Funded by the Ministry of Environment, it was signed in 2006 due to lack of funding. Key achievements in Jordan include:

- The Wadi Araba project in the southern third of the country is completing its clearances and allowing agricultural activities to continue.
- The National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation set new standards for interaction with Norwegian People’s Aid.
- The region was declared free of mines as of 1 February 2008. This means that NPA/NCDR has returned over seven million square meters of land to the inhabitants.
- The area is free of hazardous areas in two areas. Some of the land is in the most intensive building/development areas in the country, with over US$1 billion in investments going into separate projects.
- Clearance along the last major remaining minefield running over 100 kilometers (62 mile) along the northern border began in October 2007.
- With technical assistance from UNICEF and funding from the United Nations, a targeted MRE program is now running in the border area of Mafraq.
- Final work in the Beqaa Valley began on January 2008.
- Final Wadi Arba by November 2007.
- Successfully support the Eighth Meeting of the States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty, including bringing in more representation from the region.

Key challenges in Jordan include:

- Northern Border Project: The complexity of the border and the fact that a replacement fence will need to be built in tandem with the actual demining.
- The project will be completed in 2012.
- Funding from the United States for the Jordanian MRE project.
- The technical survey/EOD/clearance operations were completed in 36 hazardous areas.
- Lebanon: Key achievements in Lebanon were as follows:

  - More than 126,000 cluster munition bomblets have been cleared since the cessation of hostilities in 2006. To date, 90 percent of the clearance has been achieved through national assets and the remainder through UNMAS or bilateral agreements. In addition, the United Arab Emirates provided the funding necessary to clear by the end of 2007 the remaining Israeli landmines in southern Lebanon left after the withdrawal of Israeli forces in 2000.

  - Through MRE and clearance, postwar mine victims were reduced by more than 15-fold over six months. It is estimated that the initial multimedia campaign after the conflict, conducted with the support of the National Steering Committee for MRE and UNICEF, reached over one million people. Lebanon Mine Action Center will coordinate MRE for the Nahar Al-Bared crisis.

- An assessment of the Lebanon Mine Action Center has decided to take full national ownership of mine action management. The handover process was completed in 2007.

- The key objectives for Lebanon are clearance by December 2008 of all areas affected by the 2006 conflict and development of a nationally-executed program by 2008 with a focus on management capability and planning and including a phased exit strategy for the United Nations and national operations center for mine clearance.

- Key challenges in Lebanon include:

  - Mine action in Mount Lebanon and northern Lebanon has been halted. The project will also need to take clearances in southern Lebanon and the Nahar Al-Bared camp.

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