Morocco and Western Sahara

By the time Spain abandoned its Western Sahara claims in 1979, Morocco had already started military operations in Western Sahara, but continues to indicate that from 2000 to 2006, mine-related casualties ranged anywhere from one death to one 12-month survey period to 51 deaths in another.1 The Swiss Foundation for Landmine Victims Aid has repeatedly found children age 18 and under to be the most likely population to be injured by landmines in Western Sahara. It is estimated that only 32 percent of disabled Moroccan children, ages 4 to 15, attend school. Of the 5 percent of Moroccans with a disability, 12 percent are employed.2

Mine Action

At the time Morocco and the Polisario agreed to discontinue their use of landmines in 1991, the United Nations established MINURSO, also known as Mission des Nations Unies pour l’Organisation de l’Armed Forces au Sahara Occidental. In order to maintain peace and improve the environment on both sides of the berm, many of MINURSO’s mission objectives involve mine action: marking mines and UXO, publishing maps for safe passage throughout the territory, destroying and de-mining landfills and promoting mine-risk education for locals and refugees.3

Though inconsistencies in recordkeeping make it difficult to determine MINURSO’s impact thus far in Western Sahara, one estimate finds that from 1999 to 2005 MINURSO marked 1,294 dangerous objects, marked 28,629 landmines, and destroyed or made safe 37,862 mines and pieces of UXO.4 Other parties involved in such activities include the Royal Moroccan Army, the Mauritanian government, and concerned nongovernmental organizations such as the UK-based Landmine Action. In 2006 Landmine Action taught an ordnance-disposal training program to 12 Moroccan engineers, all of whom have since graduated and begun destroying mines.5

Isolating and eliminating the mine threat is an important step toward helping restore territorial inhabitable and peaceful. One of the most noteworthy mine-clearance operations in Western Sahara took place in May 2001 when the REMA destroyed 3,000 anti-tank and 57,000 anti-personnel mines.6

In addition to suffering from continual suicide bomb attacks and other violent terrorist acts, residents of Pakistan must face the threat of landmines and other ordnance. The country has had problems with mines, UXO and terrorism since the Soviet invasion began in 1988.7

MINURSO has also been involved in several disputes with India since 1947.

A History of Violence

In 2002, in an attack on the Indian parliament, police fired at the suspected terrorists, killing 41 of them. They also began a two-year joint MAG/IR education project is expected to reach 70,000 people.8

Pakistan

Looking Ahead

The recent conflicts surrounding or involving Pakistan have left a large threat of terrorist attacks in the region. Pakistan’s government has continued to implement policies to make the country safer for both Pakistanis and its neighbors. The continuing instability in the region and Pakistan’s lack of the capability to enforce laws has allowed the situation there to compound itself. The use of mines in multiple conflicts and a lack of mine-action efforts between allies have led to multiple generations of mines and ERW. In addition, internal struggles and continued acceptance of the use of landmines has made current mine-action efforts difficult. The present mine and UXO situation ensures continued casualties in Pakistan, particularly in the areas closest to the LOC, such as the Balochistan and Jammu Tribes of Pakistan.

Future mine-action efforts will rely on the various NGOs operating in the country, help from the government seems unlikely but the potential of renewed use of mines seems probable. Until Pakistan commits itself to banning the use of landmines as an international ban on AP mines, the country has not yet stockpiled at least six million AP mines—Pakistan’s stockpiled at least six million AP mines—Pakistan’s current mine-action efforts difficult.

Pakistan’s government announced possible plans to mine the border with Afghanistan. Pakistani officials argued that the move would secure the border with Afghanistan and keep the Taliban from moving in and out of Afghanistan. After much speculation and international criticism, Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri announced a press conference in Germany that the government had decided against using landmines.9 Pakistan will instead rely on building fences and monitoring its border.

Survey, Marking and Clearance

At present, there is no central mine-action authority or center in Pakistan. All mine/UXO clearance and marking activities are conducted by the military. In May 2005, Response International conducted a mine impact survey in Pakistan. The results of the survey there are about 1,200 landmine victims living in Pakistan and a mine/UXO accident rate of up to 15 per month.10

Pakistan’s government is currently working on compiling a database of mine/UXO survivor information in Pakistan.11

Mine-risk Education

Nongovernmental organizations have been heavily involved in mine-risk education in Pakistan. Including the Pakistan Mine Action Center, the Bangladesh National Mine Action Organization, the United Nations Mine Action Authority or center in Pakistan. All organizations involved in online publications and education for locals and refugees. All organizations involved in online publications and education for locals and refugees.

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