What Ever Happened to...?

Paddy Blagden

International Mine Action
Conclusion
The organizers followed a very strict testing procedure in accordance with international testing standards, which contributed to the overall results being regarded as representative under testing conditions. In these conditions, there was an astonishing difference between the flail and the tiller. It became apparent in the case of the flail that under dry conditions the operations are heavily affected by limited visibility due to dust. Whether the machines were remote-controlled or manned, lack of visibility affected the performance of the operators because they couldn’t see where to “drive” the machine.

The two Bozena flail machines both adequately cleared the test lanes, although the Bozena-4 was the slowest, clearing to an average depth of 25.06 centimeters (9.87 inches). The Bozena-5 flail cleared its lane to an average depth of 25.06 centimeters (9.87 inches).

The Mini Wolf and Mini MineWolf tillers demonstrated superior results under these test conditions, the use of a flail is sometimes preferred in certain circumstances, for example, shallow top soil over bedrock. For this reason the MiniWolf machines may also be fitted with a flail, according to the manufacturer.

“Humanitarian Demining 2007—Mechanical Demining” was a well-organized and important symposium for the international mine action community. In just one week, participants from 35 countries learned the value of various demining technologies and had the opportunity to witness several demining machines in action. Several people commented that the controlled nature of the testing made it very easy to follow and compare. Each participant of the symposium will take this experience back to his or her country to continue making progress in the field of humanitarian demining.

The author would like to express a special thanks to Senja Vatheke and Nikola Pancevski of HCR CTOBO and Carl Finger of MineWolf Systems for their assistance in clarifying details of the demonstration.
From an operational point of view, the clearance was fairly straightforward, although the majority of the area was thinly covered with trees, bushes and tall grass. There were rocky outcrops and steep slopes that made manual clearance very difficult. The area was divided into blocks, and each block was cleared in accordance with priorities determined by the INP. One of these blocks surrounded an old reservoir, dating from the same period as the temple, with an earthen dam at one end.

The clearance was initially managed by van Zyl, and later supervised by Yutaka Koike, aided by Raantage Leadership, Tripp/Trimalakka, and Commander Rabiah Manserri. They had a team of 24 deminers and five surveyors. Introduced to integrated demining by van Zyl at Sadok Kok Tom, the JAHDS team made extensive use of handheld geosensors, a Heligon vegetation cutter and a Boeing 415.1 In addition to their clearance duties, JAHDS staff carried out mine-risk education in local schools and communities, which was effective, and soon the MRD was passed to the locals by deminers from their own communities.

The area cleared was 668,000 square meters (165 acres) and, although there were some delays due to the delay of UXO demolition, the work proceeded on schedule. Quality Assurance was carried out by the Thailand Mine Action Centre, but the INP was confident enough with the clearance that redevelopment of each site began as soon as JAHDS left the site. It was heartening to see how quickly previously-mine-affected areas were developed for civilian purposes.

JAHDS also funded the building of a perimeter-safety barrier beside a walkway near the cliff edge. The view over the reservoir is a great place to relax and enjoy the surrounding mountains.

In Summary

In 2004, the United Nations Mine Action Centre (UNMAC) established the Albanian Mine Action Executive (AME) to assist Albania in achieving the goals set by the Albanian Mine Action Completion Plan. The AME is responsible for overseeing the mine clearance projects in Albania and ensuring that the work is carried out in accordance with international standards and best practices. The AME is also responsible for coordinating with local authorities and NGOs to provide support and assistance to mine victims and affected communities.

Future Plans

Although JAHDS' NGO operations have ceased, it is expected that the mine-clearance capacity will continue as NGOs continue their work. A Thai civilian NGO called the Peace Road Organization will continue the project. The JAHDS Board donated all funds and equipment to the new NGO in November 2006, allowing the group to carry out further clearance for the development of this important sector of DNP lands. A greater need to help with the economy of the area, especially in skilled fields such as tourism, will be needed. The JAHDS will continue to work with the organisations that have previously conducted clearance operations in Albania and will continue to support the development of the local area.

The Albanian Mine Action Executive (AME) expects to have cleared all suspected hazardous areas by 2009, a significant achievement for the region. The AME has worked to ensure that the clearance is carried out in a safe and efficient manner, with the goal of fully incorporated into Albania's national educational system by 2009.

A Hopeful Future

The future of Albania looks positive, with plans to continue the clearance of mine-affected areas and invest in mine-risk education. The AME and its partners are committed to ensuring that the people of Albania are protected from the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance. The AME is working with the United Nations Mine Action Centre and other international organisations to support the clearance of mine-affected areas and to raise awareness of the risks of landmines.

In conclusion, the clearance of mines in Albania has been a significant achievement, and the AME and its partners are committed to ensuring that the people of Albania are protected from the dangers of landmines and unexploded ordnance. The AME is working with the United Nations Mine Action Centre and other international organisations to support the clearance of mine-affected areas and to raise awareness of the risks of landmines.