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The Aftermath of War

The recent conflict between Hezbollah and Israel resulted in many civilian victims and though the fighting has ended, the problems are nowhere near over for the civilians of Lebanon whose country is littered with cluster bomblets. This article

explains the effects of the conflict on Lebanese civilians and describes how organizations are trying to eradicate the cluster-submunitions problem and provide aid to affected civilians.

by Katie FitzGerald [Mine Action Information Center]

After 34 days of fighting between Israel and the Hezbollah militia in southern Lebanon, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1701¹ on August 11, 2006, which was aimed at ending hostilities, and a ceasefire entered into force August 14. Despite only a month of fighting, the conflict greatly disrupted the normal lives of many Lebanese due to the damage to their homes and fields, and the remaining unexploded ordnance—mainly cluster submunitions—that littered the ground. The conflict killed over 1,500 people, many of whom were Lebanese civilians, and displaced approximately 900,000 Lebanese and 300,000 Israelis.²

The Victims

Many of the victims of this conflict were civilians in Lebanon and Israel. As artillery and missiles were fired by both Hezbollah and Israel, approximately one-quarter of the Israelis killed by Hezbollah and the majority of the Lebanese killed by Israeli forces are reported to have been civilians.³

Little information is available on UXO in Israel, but it is clear that the estimated 1,800 cluster bombs (containing over 1.2 million cluster bomblets) fired into Lebanon have devastated the local infrastructure.⁴ Along with houses and fields destroyed, hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, factories, airports and main seaports were also demolished. Particularly affected areas were southern Lebanon, Beirut and the Bekaa Valley. The northern part of Israel was most affected by Hezbollah attacks, which sometimes consisted of 150 rockets fired per day.⁵



At Al Najda Hospital in Nabatiye, southern Lebanon, Sobhi Abbas, top, comforts his son Abbas Abbas, 6 years old, who was injured while playing with a cluster bomb in Blida.
PHOTO COURTESY OF AP/MOHAMED ZAATARI

It has been reported Israel used cluster munitions primarily delivered by artillery projectiles, followed by Multiple Launch Rocket Systems and a lesser number of aerial cluster bombs.⁶ MLRS in particular are believed by many to be highly inaccurate.⁷ They are capable of firing a high volume of mostly unguided munitions. The rockets are designed to burst into submunitions at a planned altitude in order to blanket the enemy army and personnel on the ground with smaller explosive rounds. The cluster rounds that fail to detonate—believed by the United Nations to be up to 40 percent for some munitions fired by the Israeli Defense Forces in Lebanon—remain on the ground as unexploded submunitions.⁴ In addition to the cluster submunitions, an estimated 15,300 items of unexploded ordnance—including air-dropped bombs of 500 to 2,000 pounds (200 to 900 kilograms), ground- and naval-launched artillery rounds and air-delivered rockets—now litter the ground in southern Lebanon.⁸

In an August 30 *Reuters AlertNet* article, Stephane Jaquet, a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Lebanon, said the organization's top priority following the conflict was the safe return of the approximately one million Lebanese who fled the month-long war.¹¹ Though U.N., Lebanese Army and nongovernmental clearance teams immediately started removing bomblets and other UXO, the United Nations and the government of Lebanon have remained seriously concerned about the danger residents could encounter.⁹ At the time of writing, the United Nations Mine Action Coordination Centre of Southern Lebanon assessed approximately 85 percent of southern Lebanon for cluster-bomb strikes, and it is estimated that up to one million



GRAPHIC COURTESY OF MAIC

unexploded cluster submunitions may be on the ground.¹⁰ That, however, has not stopped many Lebanese from returning to their homes.

As soon as the ceasefire went into effect on August 14, slightly more than half of the 900,000 displaced Lebanese residents packed up their belongings and headed home to find access to both their houses and farming fields blocked by UXO, most frequently by bomblets scattered by cluster bombs.¹¹ According to Andy Gleeson, Program Manager in Lebanon for Mines Advisory Group, residents moved back to their villages for two reasons:

1. They wanted to assess the damage and protect what remained of their property, so they lived in their front yard if required (tents were supplied).
2. Hezbollah handed out US\$15,000 per lost house to pay for 12 months' rent, after which the government paid US\$35,000 per lost house.

"If you are not home, you miss out [on the payments]," said Gleeson.¹²

Children in Danger

As of October 8, 2006, 770 cluster-bomb-strike locations had been identified in the south,¹⁰ and according to Gleeson, there were 320 affected communities with each community having around 300 to 350 items of UXO recorded, although less in some areas and more in other areas.¹² As of October 15, 2006, there were 20 reported fatalities and 120 reported injuries from all types of unexploded ordnance in Lebanon. Children accounted for four of the fatalities and 42 of the injuries, according to Lebanon's National Demining Office.¹⁰

As families return home, UXO has posed a major problem to children, who sometimes mistake unexploded bomblets for toys. The United Nations Mine Action Service and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees have partnered to provide mine-awareness training for children from villages near Tyre, where they have encountered cluster bomblets on a daily basis. They were shown photos of the kinds of UXO scattered around Lebanon. "This training is crucial, especially for children who are innocent, who want to play and are totally unaware that small little items can be so harmful," says Dalya Farran, UNMACC-SL's Media and Clearance Officer.⁹

In addition to the dangers of UXO, upon return, children have faced the threat of disease from lack of water, and the release of chemicals and dust, which have badly polluted the air, causing serious health issues.

Who is Helping?

Since the conflict ended, the main goal of the United Nations and other international organizations is to work towards making southern Lebanon clear of cluster submunitions and to provide humanitarian assistance in reconstruction and recovery. UNMACC-SL and the National Demining Office are coordinating clearance efforts⁸ which have so far resulted in 45,000 cluster bomblets being cleared and destroyed. Clearance, explosive ordnance disposal and information-gathering are being carried out in part by the Lebanese Army, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, Mines Advisory Group, BACTEC and the Swedish Rescue Services Agency.⁸ Lebanon is also now food-secure and its commercial sector has rebounded sooner than expected.¹³

World Food Programme. WFP has reached more than 700,000 people since it started its emergency operation in July, targeting approximately 350,000 of the most affected people in Lebanon, the majority of them in southern Lebanon.¹³ In all, WFP has distributed more than 7,250 metric tons (7,991 U.S. tons) of food (an estimated 480,000 monthly rations) and helped the government of Lebanon import 12,300 metric tons (13,558 U.S. tons) of wheat during the blockade period.¹³ The WFP also assisted the United Nations in transporting relief supplies such as fuel, shelter materials, water, and hygiene and medical equipment.¹³

UNHCR/UNMAS. The partnership between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Mine Action Service has focused primarily on helping the residents return to a safe environment. It has provided tents, blankets, mattresses, plastic sheeting and cooking kits to the most heavily damaged villages.¹⁰ Since the end of the conflict, UNHCR supported UNMACC-SL with warehousing facilities and five 4x4 trucks for rapid deployment of the mine-action teams in Lebanon.¹⁰ UNHCR has also been working with the Lebanese government to find the best ways to repair houses.¹⁴

UNICEF. UNICEF has supported the National Demining Office's Mine Risk Education Steering Committee to implement a campaign on radio and television and in print media to increase civilian awareness—especially in children—about the dangers of UXO. UNICEF distributed 100,000 leaflets at army checkpoints as well.¹⁰ UNICEF has also provided over 300,800 liters (79,463 gallons) of bottled water to communities in southern Lebanon, 385 water kits containing collapsible containers, and purification tablets, vaccination

against measles to 16,500 children, vaccination against polio to more than 9,000, and vitamin-A capsules for more than 9,000.¹⁵

UNIFIL. The U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon has provided efforts to counter the shortage of clean water in the south with the Indian and Ghanaian battalions distributing 100,000 liters (26,417 gallons) to the villages of El Khiam, At Tayyabah, Kfar Kila, Tibnin and Haddathah.¹⁶ UNIFIL has also treated people in need of medical care, and the Indian battalion provided veterinary assistance to many animals.¹⁶ UNIFIL is working to clear unexploded ordnance, mainly cluster bomblets, and a demining team from its Chinese contingent disposed of over 1,260 pieces in one week.¹⁶

The Future

An estimated 12 to 15 months will be needed to clear the cluster bomblets from southern Lebanon,¹⁰ but it will take considerably longer for the residents of Lebanon to return to their normal lives. Despite the difficult circumstances in Lebanon, the United Nations and other international organizations working alongside the government of Lebanon are striving to clear the unexploded cluster munitions and provide the humanitarian assistance the Lebanese need.

Jan Egeland, Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, says, "The civilian population[s] in Lebanon and in northern Israel have been the biggest losers in this senseless cycle of violence. ... Civilians were supposed to be spared and in this conflict; they [were] not."¹⁷ ♦

For additional information on the use of cluster munitions in the recent Israel/Hezbollah conflict, see the MAIC fact sheet on page 113.

See Endnotes, page 110



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