November 2006

The Rise of ERW as a Threat to Civilians

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Recommended Citation
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mine-action managers find themselves faced with today. In the simplest of all strategy formulas, we ask “Where are we? Where do we want to go? How do we get there?” If we do not know where we want to go, no effective strategy can be planned, and we will surely never reach our goal.

Many signatories have emphasized their position at each of the seven Convention Review Conferences that “impact free” just does not measure up to the specific requirements of Article 5. However, the European Community’s “policy” is to drastically reduce the lingering threat and impact of landmine action program is set out in Bob Kealey’s article, “Are We Setting the Wrong Targets?”

The mine-action train can be efficient and effective with better cooperation and confluence within the community. Just as we have had to build mine action through coordinated and sometimes informal actions in the past, we will have to achieve consensus in the future. Selecting, combining, designing and engineering the way ahead will be difficult—and probably painful. The goal is to stay calm, stay focused, and continue on the path that will operate efficiently and powerfully in dealing with one of the greatest threats of the 21st century: post-conflict demining.

Whither the Mine-Action Express?

Never before in the short history of mine action there have been so many emerging ideas and opportunities for improvements and enhancements to mine action. But neither have there been so many distractions and competing ideas. There is no authoritative monolithic position for us. Just as we have had to build mine action through coordinated and sometimes informal actions in the past, we will have to achieve consensus in the future. Selecting, combining, designing and engineering the way ahead will be difficult—and probably painful. The goal is to stay calm, stay focused, and continue on the path that will operate efficiently and powerfully in dealing with one of the greatest threats of the 21st century: post-conflict demining.

Ours is a complicated situation in which children and other innocent civilians increasingly have to deal with a large quantity of unexploded debris (munitions, shells, rockets, bombs, engines) right in their own communities and homes. This new environment of the battlefields contributes to worsening significantly the living situation for civilians—buildings and bridges are destroyed; many fires spread due to the presence of incendiary ammunition and explosives; fragmented iron and glass limit communities, people suffer a loss of electricity due to the destruction of electric power installations, etc.

Consequently, civilian protection during a conflict nowadays should be the most important activity in the mine-action process. Otherwise, the more bombastic or unoriginal a strategy is utilized or killed simply because they find themselves near military targets during air strikes, and later because of the potentially huge and unfortunate ERW risks that will be difficult to overcome for the better part of the conflict.

The two World Wars gave landmines an important tactical role. The combination of tank and air strikes was a crucial strategic principle for success during these wars. At the same time, the tank’s ability to protect itself from air strikes became a fundamental principle of tank warfare.

The methods used in warfare have changed over the years. Several new threats to civilians, such as these missiles (missiles, shells, rockets, bombs, engines) right in their own communities and homes. This new environment of the battlefields contributes to worsening significantly the living situation for civilians—buildings and bridges are destroyed; many fires spread due to the presence of incendiary ammunition and explosives; broken iron and glass limit communities, people suffer a loss of electricity due to the destruction of electric power installations, etc.

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by both sides across the border along with an Israeli ground invasion into Lebanon. In particular, Israel dropped or fired over a million submunitions from cluster munitions into Lebanon land.1

The destruction was systematic, leading to an environment at the end of the war that is not only very unkempt but also continues to be critically dangerous to civilians due to the massive quantity of bombs, bomblets, shells and rockets that remain everywhere in southern Lebanon.

To the outside world, it seems during Israel’s air strikes there was little difference established between the military objectives and civilian targets. Bridges, roads and airports were destroyed so strategically critical enemy forces; yet this also made the delivery of humanitarian aid not only hard but nearly impossible.

**Suggestions for Protecting Civilians**

Many measures can be taken to ensure increased threats they face in modern warfare. In the Middle East and other regions at risk of conflict, it is important to protect civilians by providing the poorest countries with bunkers and other protective installations in the main cities during peaceful periods, with a particular focus on schools and hospitals.

Additionally, international law should strictly enforce the convention against killing civilians and destroying civilian areas during conflict, prosecuting under criminal law those who do not follow this convention. The United Nations Security Council should also be given the power—and be willing to use it—to stop any war in which genocide is observed.

Finally, in mine action, activities need to focus on updating awareness campaigns that are informed by the changing reality of recent conflicts to ensure that children and other vulnerable people are protected.2

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1. LTC Mohamed Ould Nema
2. www.geneva.call/mai
3. See Endnotes, page 109

**Conference on Women in Armed Groups, Human Rights**

In November 2005, Geneva Call and the Program for the Study of International Organization(s) from the Geneva-based Graduate Institute of International Studies held a workshop in Ethiopia entitled “Women in Armed Opposition Groups in Africa and the Promotion of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights.”

The workshop sought ways to strengthen international humanitarian and human-rights law within African armed groups and their political groups. Thirty-nine female leaders from armed opposition groups and civil society from countries currently involved in conflict or recently involved in the post-conflict recovery process came together for the conference. The workshop also sought to increase the international community’s understanding of and ability to work with African armed groups.

Four topics were discussed in working groups during the workshop:

1. Humanitarian law
2. Human-rights law
3. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
4. Transition into governance roles

The final report from the conference, which presents information and analyses that came out of these four thematic working groups, is available in English and will soon be available in French. The report can be downloaded at http://www.geneva.call/mai. If you would like a printed copy of the report, e-mail info@geneva.call.

**News Brief**

The vast majority of mine action is paid for with donor funds, but are these funds always utilized for the optimum benefit of the affected population? Any money spent on bureaucracy lowers what is available for reducing the physical, social, psychological and economic effects of conflict. Many argue, with some justification, that attempting to impose international mine-action standards (or even International Organization for Standardization [ISO] standards) on populations clearly uninformed to these methods can, without appropriate managerial training and support, jeopardize lives for the sake of attaining a standard they may not be capable of achieving. Any increase in safety and quality requirements must be measured against productivity in other words, any funds used to pay for stringently high safety and quality standards must be measured against the lives lost and injuries inflicted by the consequent reduction in clearance activities.

The intentional creation of standards such as the International Mine Action Standards was that they should form a baseline by which pragmatic implementation of a foundation of “standards” would take into account the particular situation in each affected country. However, recent interpretations of the text illustrate that the IMAS have now become a vehicle for those who wish to impose standards. The cost of some projects has been dramatically increased by those using IMAS as a quality-assurance/quality-control tool to increase demands on or delay the work, whether through a lack of understanding, a difference in interpretation of the text or by design. In some cases, the IMAS documents seem to confuse rather than clarify unclear text and a plethora of paperwork. In one specific area—assessment and survey—the IMAS appear to have lost direction. The aims and objectives of these standards (and the number of other documents and references) made throughout the IMAS are the subject of this article.

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**Closing the Circle**

The authors present a critique of the International Mine Action Standards currently in use. After highlighting gaps in IMAS related to assessment and survey, an improved aspect of mine-action planning methodology is presented, which includes a prioritization component using a socioeconomic approach. The result is LIRA: landmine impact combined with a new measurement of risk assessment. This updated model can contribute to improved safety, quality and productivity of landmine action through more effective strategic planning tools.

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**Socio-Economic Approaches to Landmine Impact Reduction**

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**Getting the Right Premise**

The various documents referred to above all make the right noises. However, the aim of mine action is to strive for effectiveness and efficiency, there is still much work to be done. If another aim is national ownership of clearance programs, more work is needed here also.

First, we need to reduce duplication and simplify documentation. In addition, we need to understand that in order to create a “standards mentality,” documents must be in national languages. There is also a need to ensure donations are measured for their cost of removing mines and other protected areas. In one specific example, the number of donors and other involved in national programs will understand the effort, time and cost of obtaining accurate translations and maintaining such a library (to ISO standards). Having produced a multitude of documents, it appears that there is a need to review the very premise for some of these documents.

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**Reviewing the Present Policy, Standards and Documents**

While we acknowledge the IMAS have created a sound foundation, they have also created a mountain of documentation. For example, in IMAS 08.20-General Mine Action Assessment and 08.20-Technical Survey,1 references are made to other documents such as the Technical Notes for Mine Action series.2 In addition, guideline documents such as the Socio-Economic Approaches to Mine Action3 and other illustrative and other documents available on the web just on this subject, all providing a snapshot and additional text but none of them providing a complete answer. Indeed, if one collates all the relevant IMAS information and the associated documents, it amounts to a small library. Added to these are the organizational documents such as standard operating procedures, safety handbooks, documents for training courses and related lesson plans. All these documents also need to be translated into the national language, so the quantity of and anyone involved in national programs will understand the effort, time and cost of obtaining accurate translations and maintaining such a library (to ISO standards). Having produced a multitude of documents, it appears that there is a need to review the very premise for some of these documents.

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**Recent Developments in Mine Action**

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**Feature**

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