The Killer Toy

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The National Police noted that 1,461 previously denuded power towers in Huancavelica, Ica and Lima were still considered dangerous. As a symptom of the OAMCA Program’s most recent strategy of targeted destruction of the landmines, several areas that were previously considered safe had turned into an additional threat, particularly in the city of Lima.

There were cases like the one of Freddy Mundaca, who, at the age of nine, had his right arm torn off a high tension tower in the department of Junín and saw a shiny object he believed to be a radio on the ground. His curiosity and naivety led him to take the artifact in his hands and throw it, causing it to explode. He found himself unconscious and thought he was dead. The boy would only move again almost 15 hours later, when he was found by a hospital. Mundaca lost three fingers on his right hand, two from his left, and became permanently blind from the explosion, he still suffers from injuries and pains from time to time. Today he lives in a poor neighborhood on the outskirts of Lima in a wooden house with neither water nor electricity. He depends on financial support for medical care from the International Committee of the Red Cross and on his 12-year-old sister to help him sell candy on buses.

According to the 2005 Landmine Monitor Report, approximately 60,000 landmines were removed from areas surrounding the 1,711 towers from June 2002 to February 2004. Until February 2005, however, only 50 of those power transmission towers had had quality-assurance procedures done. In June 2005, the OAMCA Program reported that 34 towers remained unreconstructed.

The dismantling of a power transmission tower was considered a relatively simple process, taking between two and three hours. However, each tower was a new challenge, and the number of towers that needed to be dismantled increased as the operation spread out. The process of dismantling a power transmission tower involved a team of four to five workers, including a man with a jackhammer, a man with a high-pressure washer, and two others who would help with the actual dismantling. The process took several hours, depending on the complexity of the tower and the amount of work required. The workers would wear protective gear, including helmets, gloves, and earplugs, to protect themselves from the noise and potential hazards of the job.

The dismantling of the power transmission towers was a significant achievement for the OAMCA Program and its partners, as it helped to reduce the risk of accidents and injuries for those who worked near or lived in areas affected by landmines. However, the process also highlighted the need for continued investment in the training and equipment of workers, as well as the importance of community outreach and education to raise awareness of the dangers of landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

The dismantling of the power transmission towers was also a symbol of the progress being made in Peru’s efforts to clear landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The country had made significant strides in recent years, with the successful completion of several important projects, including the clearance of the Vichayito minefield in Lima, which was one of the largest in the country, and the clearance of the Alto Cercado minefield in the province of Huancavelica. The success of these projects, as well as the ongoing efforts of the OAMCA Program, demonstrated Peru’s commitment to addressing the problem of landmines and other explosive remnants of war and to creating a safer environment for its citizens.