Several countries in North Africa are affected by mines and ERW as a result of the North African Campaign of World War II, also known as the Desert War, which fought between 1940 and 1943. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia are dealing with the contamination that has resulted from internal and regional conflicts over the past 60 years in addition to the Desert War contamination.

Algeria

Algeria is affected by ERW as a result of World War II, the Algerian War of Independence and ongoing conflicts with terrorist groups. There is no distinction between landmine and ERW estimates, and the contamination of each affected area is different depending on which conflicts occurred there. The contaminated areas in the east and west, known as the Merzouga and Chahli lines, are mostly affected by mines, as are the strategic areas in the north that the Algerian Army secured with mines in its ongoing fight with terrorist groups. The other affected areas of the country are mostly ERW-affected due to battles fought during WWII. Algeria estimates there were 500,000 mines and ERW affected during and after the independence war—2,000,000 hectares (22 square miles)—3.064,180 mines and ERW affecting 5,676 hectares (22 square miles) of land for grazing.

ERW have not blocked access to community resources such as health centres, schools or religious sites. An Algerian Ministry of Defence official stated that ERW affected the implementation of development projects in the affected areas, such as road and railway projects. The Ministry did not give any details, stating that they do not have such information.

Outlook

Algeria became a State Party to the Ottawa Convention 1 April 2002. Algeria created a national committee in 2003 that is responsible for implementing the Convention and to deal with the mine/ERW issue. Clearance began in November 2004, but it is progressing very slowly. The committee is in the process of finalising agreements to do the assessments and planning with the United Nations Development Programme and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining.

Egypt

Egypt is affected by ERW in two main areas. The first area is in the west and includes many localities from Borg Al-Arab, which is 60 kilometers (37 miles) west of Alexandria, to the Egyptian-Libyan border, with a 30-kilometre (19-mile) distance from the Mediterranean Sea, which is affected as a result of World War II battles in North Africa during 1942 and 1943. The second area is in the east and includes all of the Sinai Peninsula, the western coast of the Red Sea and the Suez Canal as a result of Egyptian-Israeli wars (1956, 1973, 1979). In addition to these areas in the Sinai Peninsula, there are 7,000 mines/ERW victims registered either with the Ministry of National Solidarity or the Ministry of Mujahideen. However, it is difficult to have exact statistics on both mines and ERW.

Humanitarian impact

In 1999, Egypt declared there had been 8,313 mine and ERW victims in the previous 20 years. It is very difficult to know how many of these were ERW victims since specific records were not kept. However, by extrapolating the data, we find the ERW victims can be estimated between 1,662 and 2,078.

Information on victims since 1999—in addition to the ratio of mines/ERW in Egypt—shows that the 500,000 people living in the Sinai and the 600,000 people living in the Suez are more affected by ERW than mines. Being a mine or ERW victim in one of the affected regions in Egypt is a complicated health issue because of the limited health services in those areas.

All of the victims are found in three groups of people—those who work on the development and repair of infrastructure, Boduosi, or farmers, which means that they lose their main income once injured. The social system in Egypt does not give any assistance for mine/ERW victims; they might get a one-time payment of up to US$80 after a long process of filing out paperwork to prove their injury. This amount is the same given to people affected in natural disasters. Every adult victim is responsible for a family, which, on average, consists of four persons, and the injury affects the family's future. Some of the families have had to take their children out of school to begin working to help the family survive after the main breadwinner in the family was injured. The illegal job market exists for mine/ERW victims in Egypt, and this increases the victims' suffering in other ways.

Economic impact

Irrigation projects, which are an essential facet of development projects in desert areas, have experienced delays and increased costs because of the need to clean mines and ERW from prospective sites and routes. This happened with both the El Hamamas Canal in the western area and the El Salam Canal in the eastern area, with a total of 883,000 Saldins (864,454 metric tons) needed to be cleared before the irrigation and follow-on agriculture projects could begin. Mines and ERW are also a serious impediment to the development of traditional and nontraditional sectors of the power-supply industry in Egypt. The need to remove ERW delayed large-scale “green farm” projects in the western area and increased the costs of 500kv power-cable connecting Alexandria (the main port for Egypt) and the second largest city) with the existing electrical network, scheduled to be connected through the western area to the North Africa network, then maybe to the European Union.

The petroleum sector, which plays a leading role in Egypt's national income, is also affected by mines and ERW. Egypt estimates there are 4.8 billion barrels of oil and 13.4 trillion cubic metres of gas in the western area, and all petroleum areas (except for those in the sea) are in mine/ERW-contaminated or suspected areas. Any petroleum/gas project must budget for mine/ERW clearance before beginning production; this amount varies from area to area.

In 1998, a German tourist was seriously injured due to an accident involving unexploded ordnance in Elain Elshokhna on the Red Sea coast. In 1999 four tourists, two German and two Swiss, were injured after their car hit an unidentified object that looked like another kind of ERW in the western area. In addition, all tourist sites in Sinai and on the coast of the Red Sea are in close proximity to mines/ERW. These two accidents have not affected tourism large scale; a victim could have a serious impact on tourism, which is Egypt's second largest source of revenue.

Mines/ERW affect accessibility to schools in the western area. In the governorate of North Sinai, all schools are not accessible for children because of the need to build more schools to make them easily and safely accessible for children. Mines/ERW affect the infrastructure and development of the new port and the attached free industrial zone of Elain Elshokhna on the Red Sea, which is on track to become the largest port in the Middle East by 2010. The Egyptian Army cleared this area for infrastructure, but some mine/ERW incidents occurred subsequently, requiring the area to be demined again. Today, three million accidents made workers feel unsafe and delayed the project completion.

In addition, Egypt has a very ambitious plan to move large numbers of its population to the western area in the next 20 years and there is a national committee in charge of the development of the northern coast. This will be a result of the need to develop infrastructure, irrigation, agriculture, oil/gas exploration and tourism projects. While the Egyptian Army is the only authority that deals with demining, the 20-year development plan for the northern area includes eliminating locations affected by mines/ERW.

Libya

Libya is affected by ERW in different areas in the northern part of the country because of the World War II campaign in North Africa, in the northeastern area at the Egyptian-Libyan borders because of the Egyptian-Libyan conflict in 1977, and in the southern area, including the Libyan-Egyptian border area. Libya has a very ambitious plan to move large numbers of the population to the western area in the next two decades and there is a national committee in charge of development of the northern coast. This will be a result of the need to develop infrastructure, irrigation, agriculture, oil/gas exploration and tourism projects. Libya is an example of a country that has demined its territory, but its military and security men still deal with incidents affecting people who work in the traditional and nontraditional sectors of the power-supply industry.
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of the total income loss from not using affected hectares if very important source of income for people living is important for this industry. In 1976, protected lands at 18,897,760 Libyan Dinars in 1992.7 Consequently, mine/ERW affected lands returned in 1992. ERW/landmine victims suffer from the shortage of rehabilitation and psychological care. Economic impact. Mines/ERW affect the agricultural sector in Libya. It is estimated that approximately 295,059 hectares (1,139 square miles) in Libya cannot be used for agriculture because of mines/ERW. In 1972, the Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation published an estimate of the total income loss from not using affected lands at 18,897,760 Libyan Dinars (US$14,475,728). Raising livestock is a very important source of income for people in Libya, and having adequate land for grazing is critical to this industry. In 1976, the Libyan authorities estimated 1,452,077 hectares (5,607 square miles) of affected land could not be used for grazing. In addition, 75,000 camels, 48,750 sheep and 1,250 cows were lost because of mines/ERW incidents. Due to rising population rates and the slow process of demining, these statistics have not seen much improvement over the past 30 years.

Many ports in Libya were affected by sea mines/ERW and cleaning them was very expensive. These included Benghazi, Derna, Tobruk and Tripoli ports. Mines/ERW have affected the infrastructure of the transportation network in Libya, causing delays in road reconnaissance. The oil sector is also affected by mines/ERW; they increase the costs of any petroleum project due to the need for demining before drilling can begin. The Great Man-Made River that brings water from underground in the south to the populated areas took much longer and cost significantly more than was originally expected to complete because of mines/ERW clearance.

Outlook. After decades of sanctions and with Libya's new strategy for trade and modernization with the world, many projects are planned to take place in different parts of the country, including for tourism. This will bring more people to the affected areas, which will both humanize and economic impact. Libya established a National Program for Demining and Land Reclamation in 2005. However, the country still does not have a future plan for national mine action.

Morocco
Morocco is not affected by ERW and mines except for the territories it controls in Western Sahara. Between 1975 and 1991, Western Sahara territories witnessed a sovereignty conflict among Morocco, Frente Popular de Liberación de Saguía el Hamra y Río de Oro (The Polisario Front)—a Sahrawi nationalist organization—and Mauritania, before its withdrawal from the conflict in 1979. This conflict came after the withdrawal of the Spanish colonial forces from the territories. All parties to the conflict used a variety of weapons and munitions throughout their fighting.

Tunisia
Tunisia is affected by an unknown number of ERW and mines because of World War II conflicts in North Africa and anti-tank and anti-personnel mines is emplaced to secure its borders with Algeria and Libya. During its conflict with Libya from 1970 to 1980, Tunisia planted 1,530 anti-tank mines (including the Egyptian Mk7 and Mk4, the American M6A2 and the Yugoslavian TM3A/TM4A) in nine minefields along its border with Algeria and Libya. ERW-affected areas in Tunisia include Mareth, Marmata and El Hamma regions in the south, Kasserine and Tatah regions in the center, La Cap-Ber and the northern region of the country. Minefields planned by Tunisia include several buoy-bags that are attached to some of the anti-tank mines to prevent removal. However, the exact number of buoy-bags is unknown.

Humanitarian impact. The humanitarian impact of mines in Tunisia is very minor although the humanitarian impacts of ERW from World War II are more significant, although it remains relatively small by international standards. Most of the minefields and ERW-affected areas are located in remote desert areas with limited local population. From 1995 to 2005, there were nine ERW victims. These were killed because of World War II ERW; one in 1995, one in 1995 and one in 1996. In 2001, one child was injured by ERW while he was working as a shepherd. In 2002, four children were injured in two different accidents by ERW in the same manner.

Economic impact. ERW economic impact is limited due to the location of ERW in remote areas, except in some areas that are used for grazing. Any large-scale construction or engineering projects in Tunisia require prior clearance of all ERW by the engineering/hidrate of the armed forces. Outlook. Tunisia has a national commitment responsible for implementing the Mine Ban Convention and currently the Tunisian Army is the only authority that conducts demining. Tunisia began demining in late 2004 and is nearing clearance completion. The plan has been made yet for ERW clearance. The Tunisian government intends to construct new roads throughout the country, including a road between Tunis and Tripoli. It also plans to build up a gas pipeline that will cross the Tunisian/Libyan border. To begin this project, clearance of the mines/ERW on the border area is needed.

ERW in North Africa and Security Concerns
Beyond the basic economic and humanitarian impacts these North African countries face due to the presence of mines/ERW, these weapons create a security risk for civilians as well. Incidents involving the use of ERW and mines in criminal and terrorist activities have occurred in many of the affected areas in North Africa. Removal of ERW is important for the security of the region. ERW can be used for criminal activities such as smuggling, illegal immigration, illegal fishing and disrupting political and security stability in affected communities. ERW can also be used in terrorism activities because it offers a significant amount of activity by using explosives.

Colombia Destroys Stockpile
The Colombian Congress recently created the Colombian Mine Action Centre and the organisation is already making headway toward alleviating the threat of landmines and explosive remnants of war.

With the help of funds from the European Union, CMAC will begin a Landmine Impact Survey in 2007. Work on the LIS will be difficult because domestic conflict continues to hamper humanitarians efforts, and the conditions for a regular LIS are not present. LIS coordinators must prepare to reduce the excessive risks posed by active domestic conflict before beginning survey operations.

The Colombian Military has agreed to train three more demining platoons to increase the national demining capacity. Currently only one platoon is dedicated to humanitarian demining efforts. It has been difficult for military leaders to gain support for this activity because training for demining removes soldiers from combat zones.

The Colombian Air Force recently destroyed its remaining stockpile of training landmines (totaling about 100 mines), and the destruction of the remaining 786 landmines is planned for completion by the end of 2007.