A Rose by Any Other Name: The Interrelationship of Landmines and Other Explosive Remnants of War

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A Rose by Any Other Name: The Interrelationship of Landmines and Other Explosive Remnants of War

The author explores the vast diversification in landmine etymology, condemning efforts that sought to provide more information but only complicated an already difficult process. Dugger continues with a historical perspective on the progression of language and processes used to address problems posed by landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

In examining how these threats have become commingled and coexist, we need further investigation in each of the affected areas. There is no single or simple answer. The threats are varied, but time is often the enabling issue. If we take Afghanistan as an example, American troops ventured into Afghanistan, a host of other military and paramilitary operations had come and gone. The Russian occupation lasted a decade and their technology was on par with the American technology at the time. Local militant groups also injected their own creativeness and we ended up with a cacophony of legacy threats commingled and coexisting in one location. That story has been repeated numerous times and in many countries, so time is the enabling mechanism for the interrelationship between landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

Knowing that the threats are commingled and coexist but is the start of the solution. People are going to find the proper solution set for each affected area.

To mitigate population impact, many of the humanitarian-oriented world organizations have implemented various assessment programs with the goals to determine the following with some degree of scientific accuracy:

- The areas impacted by landmines and other ERE
- The physical properties of the contamination
- The concentration of contamination
- The impact on population masses exposed to the threat

There are many names and sponsors, but they are primarily information- and data-gathering programs. One of the most daunting challenges assessment programs face is compiling the actual data supporting whether or not an actual threat from landmines and ERE exists. There are many reasons for this difficulty. For one, the threats are not always going to be obvious since most of them will be buried or otherwisemasked. The techniques generally employed for these assessments involve gathering data and information from all readily available sources including military, civilian, government personnel, United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and others conducting similar assessments. Without question, the world’s military organizations are the primary catalysts for change, but they are followed in rapid succession by a host of others including, but not limited to, religious groups, activist groups, international organizations, militaries, family groups and terrorists. There are immense variations in personnel, technology and application methodological within these groups, but we know each will use whatever technology and methodology available in an attempt to achieve its goals—taking what they have and making the very best use of it. It is at this point that there is a relationship between the threats and other ERE that they become commingled.

The threats are commingled, coexist and cause problems in many countries throughout the world.

The earlier description of a pressure-operated landmine comes from the German military physician H. Friederich von Flemming, who described a shrapnel (a flying mine) in his 1726 book. He wrote, ‘It consisted of a ceramic container with glass and metal fragments embedded in the clay containing 0.90 kilos (2 lb) of gunpowder, buried at a shallow depth in the glass of a fortress and attacked by someone stepping on or moving a low granite wall.”

The same basic low-cost, low-technology method is being used quite effectively today. In quantity, anti-personnel landmines can be procured for less than US$3 each. They can be rapidly deployed by minimally trained personnel and provide a significant anti-intrusion capability even for the most advanced military opponents. Generally, they are manufactured by a group of Second-World countries and are deployed by many Third-World countries that are pressed to make do with what they can afford.

Of course, few of these facilitators recognize the threat of a single landmine, especially when accounting for the tremendous human cost. Locating and detonating a single hidden or buried landmine land can cost upwards of US$1,000, but even that cost pale when you consider the unnecessary and dreadful cost of injuring a child or other civilian.

Ordinance and other ERE are quite different from landmines. Ordinance predates landmines by over 400 years and is principally fixed, but can be air-dropped or launched in more current periods; this term is used as opposed to “other remnants of war” for discussion simplicity.

Ordinance evolution may be divided into three segments. The earliest segment includes that period during which stone dug was employed; guns during the period 1513 to 1520 were mostly wrought-iron with a few early examples of more expensive cast-bronze guns that have been documented. The second segment was that extending from 1520 to 1854, during which cast-iron round shot was routinely employed. In this segment, cast-bronze and cast-iron ordnance was actually used, but technology advanced limited from the first period. The increase in power of the ordnance systems during this period was due primarily to the use of copper and brass cannon. One piece weapon possessed some small technological increase due to better technical design of the guns toward the end of this period. The third or current segment started in 1854 with the innovation of elongated projectiles and rifled gun barreled. Rapid progress has been made since then. Ordinance items are manufactured by most countries today, and they are deployed by virtually every country.

Ordinance is generally more powerful than landmines and the damage to men and material can be significantly more devastating. The moral effect of guns would be considered more or less constant today, as people all over the world are aware of artillery, bombs and the noise and destruction they can cause. However, the ordinance threat produces a moral effect quite different from landmines, mainly because of the detonations and visible destruction, but also because of the ever-present fear that one’s final moment will arrive without giving any advance notice.

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” and the “sweetness” of landmines and ERE may be somewhat evident to facilitators who employ the threat.

Typical older and modern landmines
Abatement, which utilizes country assessments. As an enhancement to the standard assessment process, the WBA program seeks to develop concurrent plans, in coordination with the various country-born, to assist using a fast-track approach so that serious threats can be addressed much more expeditiously than with other methods. Under this methodology, as country assessments reveal threats, the information is shared with the host country and discussions include possible solutions to the threats. As the assessments continue, the solution sets are fine-tuned, and it quickly becomes obvious which option is best to mitigate the specific threats. Once the solution is mutually agreed upon by the Department of State and the host country, the same teams that are conducting the assessments can be expanded to handle the implementation. The benefits of this improved approach are numerous but include faster response to identified threats, a cost-effective mitigation of threats, a fast-tracked timetable (the same teams expand to handle the solution; there is a minimal learning curve for personnel) for response, and ongoing host-country buy-in to the solution. The Department of State has done an admirable job in constructing a highly efficient, responsive, accurate and timely program for weapons removal and abatement.

In conclusion, there is an irrefutable relationship between landmines and other remnants of war. Their origins are completely independent; their technology and cost components are quite different; their general manufacturing and deployment sources are different; but both excel as weapons since the effectiveness of any weapon depends upon two factors:
1. Its ability to damage or destroy men and material.
2. The morbid effect of its use, or threat thereof, upon the enemy.

Both of these threats have many names, and I am certain someone somewhere is thinking up a new name for landmines and other explosive remnants of war. Regardless of the new tortured phrases we will be forced to endure, let us not forget that “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet,” but these threats are the thorns of the rose.

See Endnotes, page 110

The cluster munitions campaign, following the precedent of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, is beginning to make an impact on state views of banning or restricting cluster munitions. This article examines the history behind the fight to ban or restrict cluster munitions and its ties to the ICBL. The author also discusses the most recent developments in the process to ban or restrict cluster bombs.

by Robin Collins [World Federalist Movement–Canada]

The Cluster Munition Coalition, formed in late 2003, has approximately 170 members. Many of the ICBL’s members and leadership, however, are seasoned campaigners. Familiar to ICBL-watchers are Handicap International, Human Rights Watch, Landmine Action (UK), Mines Action Canada and Pax Christi, who are among those sitting on CMIC’s 10-member steering committee.

The ICBL and its dynamic partnership with like-minded APM ban states (the Ottawa Process) was an innovative and collaborative way of quickly moving the ban agenda forward. Disappointment with the existing Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons’ (CCW) convoluted rule (where a single realistic state can dilute or block Convention provisions supported by the majority) led to the new parallel process.

The parties to the Ottawa Process focused on the idea that humanitarian impact can trump military utility. This idea was not new because international humanitarian law and an array of treaties from the mid-1800s onwards already referred to obligations towards civilians during conflict, containing such ideas as proportionality, discrimination, and humanitarian treatment. The CMC effort has followed the precedent of the ICBL, struggling through the slow CCW process and challenging the stragglers. If cluster-munition campaigners were unprepared for the inadequacy of the prevention measures of the Convention’s Protocol V that were agreed to by governments, they have sober expectations about their

The end of the Cold War has a lot to do with the greater attention the world now gives to humanitarian grievances. Unprecedented ordnance impact data has been accumulating, but without the precedent of the anti-personnel mine campaign and the Ottawa Convention, the Belgians would probably never have considered banning cluster munitions in 2006. Most of the ICBL’s 1,400 members have limited themselves to APM eradication, victim assistance and other Convention goals, but have not yet rallied in similar numbers to the cluster munitions effort.

News Brief

Targeting Landmines Focuses on Latin America

Targeting Landmines is a project created by Vinicius Souza and Maria Eugênia Sá of MediaQuatro designed to begin a global discussion on and generate governmental support for mine awareness, mine clearance and victim assistance initiatives. The group presented its first exhibit for the Targeting Landmines project in January 2006 in Caracas, Venezuela. The exhibition took place as part of the World Social Forum.

The body of work uses photos, articles and documentary materials to disseminate information and spark interest for the Latin American landmine problem. Partial funding for the project has been provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross, but more support will be necessary soon for the project to fulfill its goals. Through extensive work with several humanitarian organizations operating in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, MediaQuatro will continue to document the breadth of the landmine issue in Latin America.

To learn more about Targeting Landmines, view some of the riveting images, and contact the artists, visit: http://mediaquatro.sites.uol.com.br/minas-eng.html

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