Both sides in Tajikistan’s five-year civil war in the 1990s used anti-personnel mines and many of these weapons remain in place in the country’s central area. Uzbek forces laid APMs along their border with Tajikistan and some remain in disputed territory. Minefields also exist along the border with Afghanistan in land recently handed over to Tajik sovereignty by Russian forces. Nearly 10 years after the end of the civil war, landmines continue to create obstacles for accessing grazing and agricultural land in Tajikistan and cause economic hardship for its people. The problem of landmines and explosive remnants of war contributes to human suffering and economic losses.

The landmine issue continues to be a source of concern for the government of Tajikistan and demining remains vitally important to national development plans. Foreign-manufactured landmines kill, maim and threaten Tajiks who are living in the poorer areas of their own country. Landmines were placed by the Soviet Union, Russian forces (following Tajik independence), the Tajiks themselves, and Uzbek forces along Uzbek-Tajik borders. Areas on the Afghan and Uzbek borders and former battlefields in the central region continue to present a hazard to the rural poor who have to live with the threat of explosive remnants of war as part of their daily lives.

The Tajikistan national government has adopted a long-term strategic plan, one that is linked to its anti-mine action goals and national development plans. The government’s commitment to mine-action initiatives is viable and increasing. Tajikistan has been a State Party to the Ottawa Convention since 1 April 2000, and the government is also a signatory to the Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Conventional Weapons.2

Humanitarian Impact of AP Mines and UXO

Landmines and items of unexploded ordnance appeared in the central part of Tajikistan during the civil war years when both sides of the conflict used anti-personnel mines and other munitions along the Tajik-Uzbek and Tajik-Afghan borders. The central region incorporates the Tajvildara region and the Rasht Valley, as well as parts of the Gorno-Badakhshan region. Landmines, UXO and other remnants of war continue to be a hazard for the people in this region.

Along some parts of the Tajik border with Afghanistan, Russian forces and border troopers laid and maintained mines to counter cross-border infiltration and for self-protection. In 2005, Russian forces completed the hand-over process to Tajik colleagues. Mine records were also provided. Uzbek forces laid APMs along the border with Tajikistan, and the first deaths and injuries involving civilians in this border area were reported in August 1999. Seventy-two deaths and 85 injuries have occurred in these communities, and in excess of 2,000 head of livestock have been lost. Since 1992, 239 people have been injured and 258 killed as the result of mine accidents in Tajikistan. Children account for 20 percent of these casualties.

The problem of mine contamination seriously affects the civilian population who are engaged in farming, herding, livestock trading, gardening and activities related to normal rural life. Landmines also adversely affect agricultural development, the environment and the economy of the country. Almost all the inhabitants within at-risk communities have received mine-risk education and awareness training. Still, economic imperatives drive local populations to continue visiting hazardous areas, which often results in death and injury.

Tajikistan Mine Action Centre

On 20 June 2003, the Tajik government signed an agreement with the United Nations Development Programme called “Support to the Tajikistan National Mine Action Programme,” and the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre was established. The Centre is a governmental structure and is responsible for all mine-action-related issues in Tajikistan. It is also the executive authority of the national Commission on Implementation of International Humanitarian Law. Planning, Monitoring and Coordinating TMAC develops mine-action plans (strategic and annual), national standards and other strategic documents related to mine action and submits them to the Commission on the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law for approval. The implementation of the Tajik Mine Action Programme is in accordance with the Mine Action Strategic Five-Year Plan for 2004–08 and the Annual Plan, which CHIL approved on 13 April 2004. TMAC is responsible for coordinating and monitoring mine-action activities in Tajikistan. Within this framework, TMAC updates the national mine-action plan and undertakes the development, priority selection, planning and coordination of operations. It also prioritizes new tasks, confirms completion of tasks and gives certificates of cleared sites to local authorities. TMAC provides its UN partners with information on mined areas and operations obtained from the Information Management System for Mine Action, as well as on mine incidents and mine survivors.

TMAC’s quality-assurance officers confirm that demining management methods and procedures are in accordance with national and international standards. TMAC’s major partners are the UNDP, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, UNICEF, the Tajikistan Red Crescent, representatives of the donor countries in Tajikistan, Federation Suisse de Démineurs, the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, Ministries of Security, Justice, Interior, Foreign Affairs, Education, Labour and Social Protection, Defence, Health, and Emergency Situations, the State Committee for Protection of the State Border and local executive authorities.

Mine Clearance

In accordance with Article 5 of the Ottawa Convention, each State Party undertakes to destroy or ensure the destruction of all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than 10 years after the entry into force of this, for Tajikistan this deadline is 1 April 2010. As a signatory to the Convention, Tajikistan committed destruction of its stockpiles (3,029 AP mines) on 31 March 2004. The Ministry of Defence, supported by Fundación Síntesis y Proyectos de Desminación, undertook the destruction.

On 20 June 2003, the government signed an agreement with the UNDP and FSD. Funding is channelled through the UNDP and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and FSD is now the national survey and mine-clearance partner in Tajikistan, with four survey teams and four mine-clearance teams. More than 100 mined areas have been identified so far as a result of survey operations. In 2004, three mined areas were cleared and handed over to local authorities for future use. Since the Technical Survey of 2004, the mine clearance started in July 2004, more than 180,000 square metres (44 acres) and more than 2,000 mines and items of UXO have been cleared.

To speed the process of mine clearance, TMAC plans to establish four mine-detecting dog teams. TMAC thinks this issue is very important for the programme. The Centre is looking for donors to fund the project.

Mine-risk Education

The Red Crescent Society of Tajikistan, supported by the ICRC and UNICEF, is undertaking MRE in 14 districts of the country (border areas of the Sugd region, the Rasht valley and Van), and the Doruz region of the Gorno-Badakhshan region). In August 2005, UNICEF started a small pilot project in collaboration with the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan. RCST and UNICEF volunteers conduct complementary activities to educate the local population about mine hazards and how to live with landmines.

More than 3,200 large mine-hazard warning signs have been manufactured. More than 2,200 were placed in border areas in the Sugd region. The remainder will be erected in the southern part of the country. In addition, to provide more information on MRE activities, the U. N. booklet “Guideline to families” was translated and 6,000 copies in Tajik and 3,000 copies in Uzbek languages were distributed. More than 22,000 leaflets were issued with appropriate guidelines for distribution by the programme’s volunteers, military personnel, local authorities, teachers and active advocates of the programme.

Assistance to Survivors

A project called Assistance to Landmine Survivors, implemented within the framework of cooperation among the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Tajikistan, ICRC, UNDP and RCST, assists disabled persons, including landmine survivors, by providing prostheses and medical assistance in the national Orthopaedic Centre, Dushanbe. An income-generation project implemented by RCST in 2005 delivered breeding pairs of goats or sheep to 72 landmine survivors in three mines-affected districts of the Sugd region and three mine-affected districts of the Gorno-Badakhshan region. The project was able to establish small-scale livestock enterprises, each returning one offspring to the CRST to redistribute and expand the project. There is a need to extend this project in the future to provide for all mine survivors.
by Anki Sjöberg [ Geneva Call ]

The official delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan took part in the First Review Conference in Nairobi and made a presentation about the process of implementing the Ottawa Convention. TMAC and other governmental representatives continue to take an active role in international conferences and meetings on the banning of anti-personnel mines. TMAC conducts ongoing training, meetings, liaison and other activities as part of the process of implementation of the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme.

Conclusion
In accordance with Article 7 of the Ottawa Convention, the Republic of Tajikistan submits its annual reports to the U.N. Secretary-General on the country’s mine-contamination status and on the completion process to comply with the Convention.

The report records global occurrences of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mine planting by NSAs during 2003–2005, whether activated by victims, vehicles or at a distance using command detonation.

News Brief
Rigged Mine Blast Kills 64, Injures More
A powerful landmine blast ripped through a passenger bus loaded with commuters and schoolchildren in northern Sri Lanka in early June. The attack, attributed to the terrorist group Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (popularly known as the Tamil Tigers), killed more than 64 people and injured dozens more. Officials said many of the injured were bystanders not on the bus.

The explosion tore through the packed bus in a crowded part of Kathintippele, a town about 200 kilometers (125 miles) north of the capital, Colombo. Military officials said the blast came from two landmines hanging from a tree and triggered when signaled from a remote position. Ripping mines above ground on trees and other structures is a common Tiger tactic to reduce blast shielding provided by the ground. The Tigers strongly denied responsibility for the attack after government officials assigned blame to the group. The bus bombing was the most violent act since a tentative ceasefire in 2002 and brings the divided country even closer to total war.

The Sri Lankan Air Force responded later by bombing several rebel-held areas in other parts of the country. The Tigers are a separatist terrorist group seeking independence of certain areas from Sri Lanka and have been classified as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State.
mines may be an alternative, and hence, a total ban on AP mines may be possible. There is currently a trend in many conflicts towards increased use of command-detoned mines. However, although command-detonation is clearly preferable from a humanitarian point of view to victim and vehicle activation, this does not constitute a guarantee that civilians and humanitarian actors will not be victimized, as became evident in the Keraco terrorist incident in Nepal’s Chitwan district in June 2005.\footnote{2005}

**Widespread Production and Use of IEDs**

Among 40 groups globally produced and used improvised explosive devices between 2003 and 2005.\footnote{2003} This indicates that a strategy that solely targets access to factory-made landmines and explosives is not sufficient. Easy access to materials necessary to manufacture IEDs, as well as knowledge and technology transfer among NSAs, has undermined the protection of civilians as an alternative, and hence, a total ban on AP mines may be possible. There is currently a trend in many conflicts towards increased use of command-detoned mines. However, although command-detonation is clearly preferable from a humanitarian point of view to victim and vehicle activation, this does not constitute a guarantee that civilians and humanitarian actors will not be victimized, as became evident in the Keraco terrorist incident in Nepal’s Chitwan district in June 2005.\footnote{2005}

**Type of Impact**

The impact of NSA mine use is in many respects a negative impact on human security. When an AP mine is exploded, the blast wave can cause serious injury or death to civilians, non-combatants, and enemy combatants alike. This is a serious issue as AP mines are often used in areas where civilians are likely to be present, such as in urban areas, transportation hubs, and areas near schools and hospitals. Additionally, AP mines can contaminate large areas and make it difficult for people to return to their homes or use the land for agriculture or other activities.

**Cost of Mine Action**

The cost of mine action is high, both in terms of human lives and resources. The Global Report estimated that the cost of mine clearance and assistance to landmine victims in 2005 was approximately $800 million.

**Success of Mine Action**

Despite the challenges of mine action, there have been some success stories. The ICRC has worked with governments and communities in many countries to successfully clear landmine fields and help landmine victims. However, the challenges of mine action are ongoing, and much work remains to be done.

**Conclusion**

The Global Report clearly demonstrates the need to tackle the mine issue with non-state actors. Many NSAs (as well as states) lack the long-term perspective to deal with the mine issue, and it is therefore crucial for the international community to find channels of communication with NSAs on the AP mine issue. Parties to conflict often use accusations of AP mine use to discredit the other party. In the case of child soldiers, for example, the use of AP mines can be used as a tactic to intimidate and control the population. In order to address this, there is a need for a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders, including states, NGOs, and international organizations.

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For more information on the Global Report, visit the website of the Geneva Call at http://www.genevacall.org. Hard copies can be obtained by writing to info@genevacall.org. See Endnotes, page 112.