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TMAC, in cooperation with the MLSPP, ICRC, UNDP, and RCS, organized a summer camp for 32 mine survivors in Romit valley of the Vahdat district in July 2005. The camp provided the survivors an opportunity for psychological rehabilitation and social integration.

Advocacy

A regional conference, "Progress towards the Ottawa Convention's Aims in Central Asia," was held 15–16 April 2004, in Dushanbe. The conference was organized by the UNDP with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. Official representatives of central Asian countries and Afghanistan, the UNDP, the OCSE, the GICHD, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the ICRC, representatives of diplomatic corps and international organizations registered in Tajikistan, governmental authorities and NGO representatives took part in the conference. Participants discussed the implementation process of the Ottawa Convention in the region on the eve of the First Review Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference adopted a statement that stressed the necessity of support for the process of the Ottawa Convention and the need for the central Asian countries to accede to the Convention. It pleased officials that Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan took part in the conference.

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.

Reporting

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.

Conclusion

The Civil War of the 1990s created a mine/UXO problem for Tajikistan that is still threatening the daily lives of its citizens a decade later. The Tajikistan Mine Action Centre is remedying the devastating effects this problem has had on the country. TMAC, with international support, has started and will continue to make huge strides in mine/UXO clearance, mine-risk education and victim assistance.

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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 Kabithigollewa, 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 rigged to detonate when signaled from a remote position. Rigging 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.

Armed Non-state Actors: The Main Users of the "Poor Man's Weapon"

PHOTO COURTESY OF GENEVA CALL, ©2003

Sudan People's Liberation Army combatant in South Sudan.

This report, which builds on the 2004 Geneva Call initial analysis,[1] provides a comprehensive mapping of the use, acquisition, production, transfer and stockpiling of landmines by armed non-state actors through a presentation of individual group profiles and a global analysis. 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.

by Anki Sjöberg [Geneva Call]

Non-state actors often have more limited military resources than the states against which they fight and, therefore, use landmines, "the poor man's weapon," more frequently. As a consequence, the number of NSAs using landmines significantly exceeds the number of states deploying this weapon.

Around 60 NSAs have emplaced landmines in 24 countries across five geographic regions: sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East/North Africa.[2] In addition to these NSAs, armed groups, which are difficult to identify as belonging to a certain category of ideology or organizational form, have also made frequent use of landmines in a few other countries. Two-thirds of these groups have deployed some type of victim-activated devices. These devices were both factory-made and handmade, indicating NSA involvement in both the transfer and the production of mines.

Armed Non-State Actors and Landmines. Volume I: A Global Report Profiling NSAs and their Use, Acquisition, Production, Transfer and Stockpiling of Landmines[2] confirmed earlier findings of important regional disparities, not the least of which was the comparatively higher concentration of mine use by NSAs in Asia, especially of improvised explosive devices (aka handmade mines).[3] The second most affected region is Africa.

A greater proportion of NSA mine use occurs in Ottawa Convention[4] non-signatory countries: 60 percent of the NSAs identified as mine users operate in these countries.[2] Given that 151 of the world's approximately 200 states have adhered to this international agreement, it appears that non-signatories are more exposed to NSA mine use than are States Parties. This is not to say, however, that being a party to the Ottawa Convention protects a country from NSA mine deployment. Indeed, two very frequent mine users, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, operate in Colombia, a State Party.

Frequency of Mine Use

Keeping in mind the differences in mine use among NSAs is crucial in choosing the most appropriate strategy for engaging them in a mine ban. It is clear there are significant disparities between NSAs, not only in terms of the reasons that motivate their mine use and the types of mines they choose to employ, but also in respect to the frequency of use.[5] For some NSAs, landmines constitute one of their weapons of choice. Examples of such groups include FARC and ELN in Colombia, several Burmese and Kashmiri groups, and the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist. Other groups deploy mines when they have access to, or a particular "need" for, mines. Instances of this are the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines and the Rahanwein Resistance Army in Somalia. Some groups, such as the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People–National Liberation Forces in Burundi and the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru, are sporadic users.

Logic Behind NSA Mine Use

Although deemed by many as lacking decisive military utility and despite their disastrous humanitarian consequences, landmines clearly serve different purposes for each NSA that employs them.[1] Knowing why and how NSAs use these weapons could contribute to

developing a successful strategy for engaging these groups in the landmine ban. Four reasons for mine use were identified as the purpose of the report:

1. Offensive
2. Defensive
3. Economic gain
4. So-called "nuisance mining"

Many NSAs use landmines in an offensive manner; for example, the CPN-M in Nepal, the Kurdistan People's Congress/*Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan* (Kongra-Gel/PKK) in Turkey, the Communist Party of India–Maoist in India, and the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, offensive use is probably significantly over-reported since it is more visible.

NSAs often confirm not only offensive but also defensive mine uses. Indeed, according to a majority of NSAs, landmines are mainly utilized for defensive purposes. The Burmese Rohingya Solidarity Organization has admitted to using mines to defend its camps and bases as well as to protect its members from robbery or from the Bangladeshi Army. The Chin National Front (Burma/Myanmar) has also admitted to using mines for self-defense, apparently to protect its camps.

Landmine use for economic purposes is not frequently reported, although this is probably due to underreporting rather than the insignificance of this kind of use. For example, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* allegedly utilizes landmines for the protection of coca plantations, whereas the Movement of the Democratic Forces of Casamance in Senegal is thought to plant landmines to hinder the local population from benefiting from economically profitable land.

As for nuisance mining, the most cited example is probably that of the Lord's Resistance Army. Nuisance mining is the use of mines that serve no direct military or economic purpose. This includes using mines to interfere with strategic infrastructure, such as communications and railways, or to affect civilians. Other examples are groups in Colombia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. FARC allegedly placed mines at the entrances of a town and in houses and vehicles before the army took over the area.[3]

Command-detonation

NSAs frequently use landmines offensively, targeting state security forces or other individuals linked to the state. In many cases, NSAs are present at the time and place of the landmine attacks. This suggests that for these NSAs, command-detonated landmines 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-detonated 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 tragic incident in Nepal's Chitwan district in June 2005.[6]

Widespread Production and Use of IEDs

Around 40 groups globally produced and used improvised explosive devices between 2003 and 2005.[2] 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 transfers among NSAs, has undoubtedly contributed to spreading the landmine problem. Nevertheless, IEDs do not always constitute indiscriminate weapons as this depends on how they are put to use.

> "There is currently a trend in many conflicts towards increased use of command-detonated mines."

Sources of Factory-made Mines

Factory-made landmines are accessible to NSAs through at least three sources:

1. Minefields or stocks
2. Certain state sponsors
3. Other NSAs or the black market

One of the main sources of factory-made landmines for NSAs is the very state against which they are fighting. Incidents of NSAs managing to loot or capture landmines from the state are reported regularly. Such has repeatedly been the case in the Philippines and Burma/Myanmar. NSAs have also reported that soldiers from state armies have offered to sell them landmines. Furthermore, foreign state sponsors are thought to supply NSAs with factory-made mines.

Large areas of the world are not under the effective control of any state, a fact facilitating the trafficking of arms and IED-making material among NSAs. Nevertheless, it should be noted that in some post-conflict situations there is no need for NSAs or individuals to look for sources of mines since weapons, including mines, are plentiful and easily available, as in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia.

Different NSAs have allegedly transferred to each other not only arms and explosives but also the knowledge and technology on how to manufacture landmines, as in Burma/Myanmar, India and the Philippines. There are also allegations that some transfers are of a more permanent character and include the joint running of camps. Indeed, it has been asserted on more than one occasion that there have been intense contacts between the Nepalese CPN-M and some Indian Maoists (CPI–M), including joint training.[7]

Impact of NSA Mine Use

The impact of NSA mine use is in many respects similar to the impact of state mine use. However, it appears that NSA mines are more widely dispersed than state mines and non-state actors are usually less prone to mark or map their mines.

The humanitarian impact of NSA mine use is difficult to measure, since it takes place in a conflict situation, in areas where little or no mine action is taking place and where civilians may fear reporting mine incidents. In addition, the humanitarian impact of NSA mine use is difficult to distinguish from that of the conflict itself until the conflict has ended and information becomes available through mine-action efforts. The impact of former mine use by NSAs (anti-personnel and anti-vehicle) can be seen in Angola, South Sudan and Sri Lanka.

> "The humanitarian impact of NSA mine use is difficult to measure, since it takes place in a conflict situation, in areas where little or no mine action is taking place and where civilians may fear reporting mine incidents."

NSAs all over the world are victimized by their own mines, as well as those deployed by governments, paramilitaries and other NSAs. The fact that their own combatants are also victimized could be used in negotiations for a mine ban with NSAs. Access to victim assistance for combatants who have suffered mine incidents could also be used as a carrot in negotiations.

Effects of AV Mine Use

Some 30 NSAs used AV mines between 2003 and 2005.[2] As is shown in numerous studies, AV mines triggered by vehicles are also indiscriminate weapons. However, since NSAs in many conflicts largely depend on these weapons, it appears unlikely that many of them would agree to a total ban on AV mines. Nevertheless, some NSAs have expressed an interest in also banning these weapons.

Need for Prioritization

When engaging NSAs, priorities must be set as to when and where to allocate scarce resources: If humanitarian actors target a group that is a frequent user and manage to involve it in the mine ban, the benefits for the population are greater; yet a sporadic user or non-user may be more open to renouncing the use of mines since mines are not a crucial part of its military strategy.

The Global Report, by explaining specific characteristics of the NSAs and their mine use, intends to provide a background tool for humanitarian actors to strategize regarding which non-state actors to target and what the appropriate approaches might be. For instance, one way of conducting advocacy is through direct contact with a group's leadership. Another way is by disseminating mine-ban information within civil society in order to create a bottom-up pressure on the group. In addition, understanding regional patterns is essential, since these may have important consequences for the engagement and implementation of strategies for a mine ban. This may be particularly true in cases where regional dynamics appear to fuel the landmine problem or provide possibilities for its solution.

NSA Involvement in Mine Action

Considering the disastrous effects of landmine use, there is a requirement for national and international agencies to undertake mine action in areas where NSAs operate and/or are in control, as encouraged in Action 46 of the Nairobi Action Plan.[8] Given the benefits of mine action to affected populations, it is indefensible for the concerned governments to allow such actions.

Indeed, NSAs are contributing to mine action in different areas around the world, notably in Sudan, Sri Lanka and Iraqi Kurdistan. In order to map the benefits and challenges related to the involvement of non-state actors in humanitarian demining and to encourage other NSAs to ban anti-personnel mines and get involved in mine action, there is a need to further investigate current mine-action efforts undertaken by these actors in conflict and post-conflict situations. Geneva Call is currently working on such a report about NSA mine action. In fact, the *Global Report* is part of a bigger project that studies the negative and positive implications of NSAs in the landmine problem. This project grew out of the realization that only by understanding NSA- and region-specific dynamics is it possible to address the current and future landmine problem as it relates to NSAs.

Conclusion

The *Global Report* clearly demonstrates a need to discuss the mine issue with non-state actors. Many NSAs (as well as states) lack the long-term perspective of the consequences of mine use, 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 because of the stigmatization of such arms following the Ottawa process, but also because of the natural "perception of landmines as an illegitimate type of weapon."[9] NSAs, as well as states, are thus reluctant to admit they are using a victim-activated weapon. This suggests an inclusive approach—involving advocacy based on accurate information—could be the key to success for spreading a mine ban among NSAs.

This article is drawn from a report produced by Geneva Call, Armed Non-State Actors and Landmines, Volume I: A Global Report Profiling NSAs and their Use, Acquisition, Production, Transfer and Stockpiling of Landmines,[2] *which was published in November 2005. The report can be downloaded from Geneva Call's Web site at http://www.genevacall.org. Hard copies can be obtained by writing to info@genevacall.org.*

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