

GEORGIA



HISTORY : Following the April 9, 1991, independence from the former Soviet Union, Georgia was beset by ethnic and civil strife. The continuing argument over the political status of Abkhazia resulted in war. In September 1993, Georgian forces withdrew from the Abkhazia region. Although Georgia stabilized, South Ossetia and Abkhazia remain elusive. The conflict in South Ossetia has been dormant since spring 1994, but sporadic violence continues between Abkhaz forces and Georgian partisans in western Georgia. Of their estimated population of 5,000,000, Georgia still has about 250,000 internally displaced people as a result of these conflicts. After adopting a new constitution in October 1995, Georgia has focused on economic reform and governmental stability.

LANDMINE AND UXO

OVERVIEW : The U.N. Security Council has condemned the continued laying of mines, including mines of a more sophisticated type, and has called upon parties to take all measures to prevent mine laying. Mines exploded in the town of Ochamchire and later during the November 1996 elections in Abkhazia. Abkhazia is heavily mined and these mines prevent the repatriation of ethnic Georgian refugees. The Inguri River is the front line of the



conflict and the riverbanks on the Abkhaz side are mined. Major and secondary roads are mined. The Gali area of Abkhazia is especially affected by mines. There are an estimated 150,00 AT and AP mines in Georgia. The mines are predominantly along the Inguri River, the coastline of Gali Province, which contain an estimated 15,000 mines, and in the Ochamchira and Tkvarcheli regions, which contain an estimated 27,000. There are maps documenting the mine fields, but many of the mines are unmarked, some maps are incorrect and access to the true maps is limited.

VICTIMS AND CASUALTIES :

School children have been blown up taking shortcuts and civilians and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Peacekeepers have been killed and wounded, but there has been a recent reduction in casualties because

a large number of people have left the mined territories. According to information from the Head of Science and Technical Research, Department of Georgian Army General Staff, about 70 percent of casualties during the war were landmine victims.

DEMINING : Georgia has no national capacity for demining, mine awareness programs or survivor assistance. It lacks funds, proper equipment and trained deminers to conduct mine clearance operations. The government has expressed an interest in U.N. demining assistance, but none can be provided without similar approval from the Abkhaz side. The non-governmental organization HALO Trust is conducting humanitarian mine clearance in Abkhazia. The CIS Peacekeeping Forces in the Gali area refused to carry out further mine clearance in 1996 because of the security situation.

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