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## Ukraine

Country Profile

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## UKRAINE

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**HISTORY:** Ukraine has been struggling for its independence from several countries that have tried to consume it and minimize its boundaries. The Bolshevik Revolution prompted the Russian Ukrainians to establish a new republic in 1917 while the Austrian Ukraine waited until a year later to establish their connection with the Russian Ukraine. Ukraine was excluded from much of the decision making during the closing of World War I and Poland was given the land they wished for, Galicia, in 1919. This single act sparked war once again. The war continued as the country itself was thrown into internal turmoil and change and the Ukrainian Communists split into the another faction, the Ukrainian SSR, who later joined with the Soviet Union. Ukrainian nationalism grew as the struggle for independence persisted and the fight for a Greater Ukraine fanned the flame of war. In December 1991, Ukraine separated from the Soviet Union, founded its own constitution and began to rebuild its nationalism and independence once more.

**LANDMINE AND UXO OVERVIEW:** Official reports state that over 1 million landmines are buried deep within Ukraine's soil, although the exact numbers vary. Since 1945, over 3

million landmines and UXO have already been removed, but many still remain uncharted or simply uncleared. The most affected areas are thought to be rural woods and fields, namely two World War II battle sites fought between Russia and Germany, but many people are still being harmed by these mines. In 1995, authorities reported that since 1945 over 1,500 innocent people have been killed or maimed by landmines while another 130 deminers have been killed while trying to clear the land. Ukrainian government states that since their independence in 1991, they have not produced and do not plan on producing any landmines. The continuous struggle to save lives and establish a safe environment plagues many countries like Ukraine.

**VICTIMS AND THE MEDICAL FACILITIES:** From 1945 to 1995, over 1,500 civilians and over 130 deminers have been killed by the plague of landmines with Ukraine. Many landmine victims are faced not only with the never-ending trauma of their encounter with landmines or UXO, but also with the reality that most of the nearby hospitals and other facilities are not the best care these victims could receive. These victims are not only scared from the explosion and the consequences of an encounter with landmines, but they are usually permanently disfigured or even paralyzed. Stepping on a landmine can alter a person's entire life in the blink of



an eye. Unfortunately, there are limited doctors and even fewer pharmacists. One organization is still helping. The Social Rehabilitation Center in Kiev provides artificial limbs to those who have encountered landmines. There have been several helpful laws enacted to help keep the disabled working and surviving:

- Discounts on electricity and gas
- Free city transportation
- Free medical treatment
- Free dental appliances

These laws have established a place for the disabled within Ukrainian societies all throughout the country. Despite these laws, the effort to find better facilities, better doctors and a way to better help patients still continues today.

**DEMINEING:** In March 1998, the Ukrainian government disposed of roughly 101,028 PFM-1 landmines. The government has cleared over 3 million landmines, but over 1 million are left to be cleared. The most heavily mined areas throughout the country are

Vinnitsa, Kiev, Odessa, Ternopol, Kerch and Zhitomir. The Ministry of Defense does most of the demining. There are special teams that have been created for the sole purpose of destroying landmines. Two of the most important teams are the Police Demining Teams (SPDT) and the Bombs Disposal Division. SPDT was created in 1995 by former military and militia personnel. This group works mainly in densely populated areas while the Ministry of Defense handles the rest of the mined lands. These teams handle most of the heavy work while the Ukrainian Secret Service and National Guard help with anything that needs extensive service. There are hundreds of ways to demine huge tracts of land whether it is through human effort, machinery or "free-running" dogs. Many different organizations use dogs, which seems to be one of the most effective methods of demining. The main impetus behind the clearing of the landmines in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which splits into hundreds of teams to help find as many landmines as possible.

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