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Editorial

Joe Lokey
HDIC

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We all know the numbers. The challenge of humanitarian demining around the globe is overwhelming, heartbreaking, and seemingly hopeless. The effort nearly always requires more. When experienced people talk of demining shortfalls, you would expect that funding tops the list. No surprise—it does. But always near the top consistently, is good, reliable information. This should not surprise us.

In its short history, the demining community has been small, expertise scarce, and funding elusive. The challenging dynamic of the last three to five years is that with more resources (manpower, money, material, public awareness, and technology) becoming available, the challenge has become more complex and difficult to manage. Few organizations and activities have much experience managing and executing landmine removal (demining) programs on the scale now necessary, and even less in dealing with other relevant organizations.

Many groups are wanting to get involved. Some are attracted by the cause itself, others by the increased funding. Though often loathe to admit it, they need each other. But once committed to a common goal, the mechanics of structuring a demining program then reveals glaring bubbles, burps and gaps in the various information bases. Those of us with a logistics support background have seen it over and over again. Inadequate mission planning can bring a wonderful idea to a halt with devastating results. The adage of "know before you go" is something that successful mission planners and support personnel consider critical. The results of ignoring this advice -- often induced by the need to do something quickly, even if important information is lacking -- may be to frustration, disappointment, and even failure.

The simple idea behind the Humanitarian Demining Information Center (HDIC) at James Madison University is an information "hub" designed to allow all members of the demining family to come to a "switchboard" which will help them to plan and execute their activities better. The inevitable synthesis of diverse organizations depends, in part, on the sharing of information and the provision of that information in understandable, usable

formats.

This goal is not just for engineers and technologists. It applies to the entire spectrum of "demining" to include awareness, clearing, logistics support, mapping, minefield management, victim assistance, rehabilitation and other related fields.

The HDIC will generally not be the source of humanitarian demining information. It will, however, receive, organize, transmit, index and otherwise make that information accessible and usable. It will get the user to the information source faster and with a greater sense of reliability. The focus is on helping people find answers.