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## The Journal of Humanitarian Demining

**From the Director's Desk**

### "Demining 2010"—A Challenge to the Demining Community

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We applaud the innovative and aggressive policy initiative designed to eliminate the threat to civilians posed by landmines, which was unveiled last Fall by Secretary of State Albright and Secretary of Defense Cohen. The four elements of "Demining 2010" and their component parts constitute an ambitious, and in some ways, revolutionary strategy that deserves serious analysis; it should engender reasoned and energetic responses from members of the humanitarian demining community.

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### The Goals of "Demining 2010"

Underpinning the enterprising and noble goal of eliminating landmines as a threat is a four-part organizational scheme that aims at more effective and coordinated global action. The President's initiative was set in motion by the nomination of Ambassador Karl "Rick" Inderfurth as the U.S. Special Representative of the President and Secretary of State for Global Humanitarian Demining and the Special Representative's goal is to coordinate and accelerate international demining efforts and to increase resources devoted to that task. Ambassador Inderfurth will rely on a panel of distinguished Americans who will provide advice and help mobilize support for the initiative.

Specific strategies were hammered out in a conference held in Washington D.C. on May 20 and 21, 1997. Participants represented a broad cross-section of the demining community and included public and private donors, mine action operators, recipient nations, non-governmental organizations, and technical experts. But none of these strategies will bear fruit without an increase in funding, and thus the U.S. effort will be highlighted by a commitment of close to \$80 million in 1998.

### The Cooperative Nature of "Demining 2010"

One of the most innovative aspects of the program is the commitment of

the U.S. to join with other nations and to integrate its efforts with work already being done by others. Secretary Cohen has spoken of using the U.S. initiative to invigorate international demining efforts. These words go beyond mere punditry; the President's 2010 Initiative aims at creating an effective international coordination mechanism to ensure that resources are directed to demining programs in an organized and rational manner.

The program boasts some very ambitious and specific goals:

1. to ensure that humanitarian demining becomes an international priority,
2. to *increase the pace and the effectiveness* of demining operations,
3. to bring global investment to \$1 *billion* a year,
4. to direct additional resources to *landmine survivor assistance*,
5. to develop mechanisms (especially creative public-private partnerships) for matching needs and resources,
6. to coordinate *research and development* initiatives and to share new demining *technologies and data bases*, and
7. to create *sustained assistance* to afflicted communities.

## **Specific Emphases and Policies**

The Humanitarian Demining Information Center (HDIC) at JMU was fortunate to have a representative of the State Department further elaborate further on "Demining 2010" during its Operators' Conference in December 1998. State Department Representative Colonel Cunningham provided an overview of the program (*for a full text of his remarks, please refer to the Operators' Conference Proceedings, posted on the JMU Web site*) by stating that, "We hope to make tangible commitments to substantially expand operational demining and related programs of assistance, to agree on mechanisms to enhance the exchange of demining information and technology, and to optimize the use of worldwide demining resources." He admitted the task would not be easy and suggested that we all look for ways to "break the ice."

Col. Cunningham stated that the U.S. government sees the creation of a national demining center (or mine action center) as a fundamental prerequisite for successful demining operations. He also outlined the U.S. government's commitment to re-examine the nature and the extent of the demining problem. Realizing that many types of organizations are involved in demining activities, he said that the time is ripe to re-document baseline figures and to recalculate estimates in order to arrive

at more accurate and dependable estimates. By documenting the impact of landmines on the development of infrastructure, by clarifying the distribution and characteristics of landmines, and by gauging the responses of demining organizations, he felt that a clearer and more useful picture of the demining continuum would emerge.

Col. Cunningham observed that the diverse nature and functions of demining organizations and programs mandate that the "business as usual" approach be scuttled in favor of more innovative partnerships. He suggested that humanitarian demining is a unique opportunity to bring the military in closer touch with the people of their countries and to do so in a positive way. He also said that we should move away from a fixation on numbers of mines or even the number of square kilometers cleared and focus on the idea of using demining activities as a way of ameliorating developmental problems and "freeing up" areas "where mines are *not*."

He concluded by proposing that "Demining 2010" should be seen as more than just an effort to bring more resources to the issue; rather, it should be used as an opportunity by demining organizations to "develop and showcase models of private and public partnership."

## **The Challenge of Demining 2010 to the Demining Community**

We at the HDIC think that Colonel Cunningham has it right. The U.S. government works with other countries, the interagency, potential donors, and deminers, to develop a resourcing mechanism for a global demining effort; however, it is up to organizations within the demining community to take a proactive role in participating in activities and supporting the spirit that pervades "Demining 2010"—a goodwill effort.

That does not mean following behind the U.S. or taking its lead. It merely suggests the common sense approach of recognizing a good set of initiatives that have as their essence a positive international approach to humanitarian demining, that identify the host nation and the demining victims as the core objectives of an effective demining program, and that attempt to solve problems through coordination efforts that maximize the comparative advantages or value of each participating organization.

## **The "2010" Challenge to the HDIC at JMU**

The HDIC has analyzed the President's 2010 Initiative and has identified areas where we can support and participate in the program. We accept Secretary Albright's assertion that coordination is one of the keys to making demining work and Secretary Cohen's position that the U.S. should play a major role in bringing such coordination about. Realizing

that leadership has been provided by the UN; and commitments made by nations such as Canada, Germany, Norway, South Africa, the United Kingdom; as well enormous efforts made by both non-governmental and for-profit organizations, we recommit ourselves to facilitating coordination efforts among and between demining organizations. We invite any organizations involved in demining to access the HDIC Web site, [\*The Journal of Humanitarian Demining\*](#), or contact us by telephone for help in developing plans, identifying partners, or to facilitate implementing operations. We have also recognized the wonderful partnering and networking opportunities afforded by the conferences that the HDIC has hosted. We suggest that the World Wide Demining Conference to be held at JMU in October 1998 would be an invaluable opportunity to bring together many demining organizations, leaders, and practitioners (see the [Conference list](#) on the HDIC web page for other such opportunities).

We also accept the challenge laid down by Colonel Cunningham to "enhance the exchange of demining information and demining technology" by using the assets of the HDIC (Internet index, web page, switchboard, electronic journal, hosting conferences, etc.) to process information. We see the need to capture reliable demining information of a global, regional, national, and local nature, and facilitate easy access to it by any demining organizations with a need or interest in it. We, acting as an international "hub" or clearinghouse, dedicate ourselves to finding the most pertinent and timely information and making it "user friendly" to any interested member of the community.

We agree that a credible explanation of the extent and the nature of the demining problem needs to be done. When the Department of State, the UN, or other organizations research this type of information or report, the HDIC will highlight that information, post it, or otherwise make it available to the members of the demining community. We also agree that the building, sharing, and refereeing of data bases needs to be of concern. As the need for creating, updating and coordinating these data bases becomes known, the HDIC will make every effort to link electronically to these and to make access and use of them as easy and as logical as possible.

Finally, we recognize that this U.S. effort is a new and cooperative venture that assumes goodwill, sharing, communications, and coordination among many and diverse organizations. This program deserves the total dedication of those U.S agencies that have spawned it and the positive attitude of those who may be affected by it. We believe that the cooperative and energetic spirit that motivated it can be the catalyst that makes it succeed.

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