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Notes from United Nations Mine Action Service

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Monitoring Inter-agency and multi-sectoral assessment within the United Nations, and an landmine Threat Assessment and consultative and priority-setting mechanism development in close cooperation with principles of neutrality, impartiality and on which mine action is based, and to indigenous militaries, which establishes the partners in 1998 to clarify the key principles support of humanitarian and peacekeeping those involved in.

Program Initiation and Support

In keeping with the U.N. mine action policy, responsibility for supporting long-term integrated mine-action programs rests with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), where UNMAS remains involved in an advisory and monitoring capacity. In the context of humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations, the involvement of UNMAS is more critical and direct. It is responsible for the planning, coordination and guidance of deploying mine action operations, as well as their support. The Mission Specific Mine Action Standards, implemented under UNMAS auspices include Kosovo (PR), southern Lebanon, and the program in the Temporary Security Zone between Eritrea and Ethiopia. UNMAS is also responsible for supporting the effective integration of mine awareness and victim assistance activities with other mine-related activities.

Information Management

Given the scope of the landmine problem, the wide spectrum of factors to take into consideration and the number of actors involved, the development of an appropriate information management system has been identified as a priority to support proper monitoring, planning and efficient implementation. As a result, UNMAS has asked the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to develop the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). Thus far a "field module" has been developed and has been deployed in a growing number of countries, while the second phase—developing a "global module," as well as improving the existing version of the field module—continues.

Additional initiatives are also being continued with regard to information management issues, including development of improved electronic mediums for dealing with issues such as donor funding and stockpile destruction, as well as cooperation with other initiatives in areas such as conformity of mine action information databases.

Quality Management and Technology

UNMAS is responsible for the development, maintenance and promotion of technical and safety standards for mine action. As a part of this role, with the support of the GICHD, the International Standards for Mine Clearance Operations have been revised, updated and expanded to become the International Mine Action Standards. Guidelines for mine awareness education have also been formulated by UNICEF, while the public health aspect of victim assistance sees the World Health Organization (WHO) in the lead within the U.N. system to discuss requirements for additional standards with other actors such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). With regard to technology, UNMAS has been called upon to take a role within the international efforts to develop improved capabilities for decision-making related to mine action.

The Mine Detection Dog Study analyses existing problems related with mine detection dogs (MDDs) (e.g. training, deployment, etc.) and provides the U.N. mine action system with a safe and efficient usage of the very promising potential of these animals.

The GICHD provides a framework for measuring socioeconomic impact and value to help program managers to set priorities and to allocate resources most efficiently.

Advocacy and Consciousness-raising

Advocacy, public information and consciousness-raising activities are integral parts of the international effort to rid the world of landmines, and UNMAS is involved in stimulating the use of mine action and supporting a global ban on these weapons. With over 100 States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty, the emphasis is also shifting from advocacy to supporting treaty implementation, as more countries face the need to implement the obligations of ratification. UNMAS also cooperates with other international organizations using military organizations, both international and local, for all forms of humanitarian mine action. An appropriate integration of this potential could considerably enhance the available work force for mine action.

The Mine on the destruction of PFM-1 mines should show how best to destroy stockpiles of such mines, since their liquid explosive filling is both toxic and corrosive.

The GICHD provides specific operational support and assistance for ongoing mine action activities in the field. The Centre develops and disseminates the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) in cooperation with the U.N. Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and other partners. One of the key problems with the tool for action is information (e.g. location of mined areas, types of mines used, location of incidents). The Centre—in close cooperation with UNMAS, and supported by ETHZ Zurich—develops and disseminates IMSMA. IMSMA consists of:

The "Field Module," which provides a ready-to-use tool for mine action centres at the national and regional level, to cover their data collection and information management needs, and

The "Global Module," which refines and collates data from the field and provides a robust system to support by providing shore-term operational and technical assistance for newly established improved capabilities for decision-making related to mine action.

To date, IMSMA is being used in Kosovo, Azerbaijan, Yemen, Chad, Estonia, Somalia, United Nations, Thailand, and, on the regional level, in Cambodia.

The Centre provides operational support by providing short-term operational and technical assistance for newly established centers, and provides the framework needed for the annual UNMAS Geneva Conference, which assembles mine action practitioners in the field, as well as at the international and local level, and provides for a comprehensive exchange of information and experience.

The GICHD supports the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.
evidence collection and grave exhumations near mined areas. Safely neutralizing landmines around mass graves, without destroying evidence, is an important consideration for national and international law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation and prosecution of war crimes and crimes against humanity. SA Baker, a certified bomb technician and FBI Los Angeles' Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Coordinator, says that he will now develop a mine awareness and safety course for FBI employees based upon the instruction he received at HDTC.

"I have witnessed the mine clearance handbook of a number of foreign military personnel trained by U.S. forces that were, in turn, trained at HDTC, and based upon these experiences, I can attest to the exceptional quality, rigor and discipline of the HDTC program of instruction." — Pat F. Patierno

NGOs

In the interest of expanding the understanding of other organizations regarding Landmine Impact Survey, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation's (VVAF) Survey Action Center (SAC) invited HDTC to send two instructors to the first-ever Survey Training Symposium in August 1999. The intent of this invitation was to ensure that Special Operations Forces trained at HDTC leave with a clear understanding of the Landmine Impact Survey process they are likely to encounter in the field. These same teams visit most countries undergoing survey. New Zealand exchange Warrant Officer Fred Eatall, an Engineer officer, and HDTC civilian instructor David Corneli, a retired U.S. Army EOD technician, attended the course and provided valuable input.

HDTC reciprocated for the invitation to the Survey Training Symposium by inviting SAC to send staff members to the two-week HDTC course. The author was able to attend in July and August 2000.

While there, he provided a four-hour block of instruction regarding Landmine Impact Survey and mine action in Thailand and Yemen, as he had participated in SAC missions to those countries and was able to share extensive national mine action background with the students. The Special Forces team attending the course was preparing for their deployment to work with TMAC in Thailand, and the two U.S. Navy EOD technicians were preparing for a mission to Yemen. Incidentally, these two divers would be among the initial team to inspect the USS Cole following the terrorist attack in October 2000.

The benefits of this joint NGO/military training would become apparent several months later in Thailand.

While visiting the SAC and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) Survey in Thailand in December 2000, Richard Kidd was able to interact with the detachment technician who attended the same HDTC course as the author. The "Team Tech" demonstrated clear familiarity with Landmine Impact Survey procedures. This understanding is facilitating the work of the NGOs involved in the Thai Survey, TMAC and the U.S. government in Thailand.

The potential for other U.S. military humanitarian demining teams to positively influence national and international authorities and humanitarian implementers regarding Landmine Impact Surveys indicates that a SAC presence during HDTC instruction he received at HDTC serves a purpose.

The Future: Expanding Civil-Military Cooperation in Mine Action Training

HDTC is planning several initiatives for the near future. A five-day humanitarian demining orientation course for international officers is under development. In addition, a train-the-trainer course is planned that will prepare selected members of conventional units to advise commanders regarding unit mine awareness training.

Similarly, through a participatory presence in the "schoolhouse," mine action NGOs will develop a clear understanding of U.S. military capabilities and objectives in their shared arena. HDTC Director Steve Gryzb, and other DoD and DoS officials have expressed interest and support for this concept, and discussions are underway between HDTC and SAC as to how this might be accomplished.

Two of the major international demining NGOs have stated that the idea is one they would support. Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers, former commanding general of USAES and the current commanding general, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is one of the driving forces behind the creation of CTSC/HDTC.

He emphasizes the continuing DoD commitment to the humanitarian mine action community: "Humanitarian demining is clearly an evolving mission area. It is a vital piece of the Army's contribution to the National Security Strategy. The Counter-Mine Training Support Center and Humanitarian Demining Training Center are tremendous venues for equipping our soldiers with the skills and knowledge that they will need to safely and successfully deploy into an increasingly complex international environment. In order to succeed in the humanitarian demining arena, it is critical that the Army work in close concert with other [DoD] agencies and [NGOs] in order to share experiences and exchange information."