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PROFILES

THAILAND



HISTORY

Political corruption and social unrest have plagued Thailand for the past 30 years. In addition, external conflict with Cambodia, Burma, China and France and concern over communist guerrilla attacks from the north and from the Thai-Malaysian border have detracted from movement towards a stable infrastructure and a democratic society. Since 1932, numerous attempts to overthrow the Thai government have been unsuccessful. In November 1971, a military government was established to regulate a dwindling economy and control pervasive guerrilla activities that posed a threat to Thailand's borders. Most landmine and UXO activity is concentrated around these borders.

LANDMINES/UXO OVERVIEW

In Thailand, landmines affect 19 provinces and cover 796 sq. km of land. Of these 19 mine-affected provinces, AP landmines and UXO are most heavily concentrated in seven provinces lining the Thai-Cambodian border. Although the Thai military no longer uses landmines, the proliferation of landmines along the Thai-Burma border contin-

ues. New mines are often laid by Myanmar troops and Burmese refugees on the border. An estimated 100,000 mines exist across the country, according to the *Landmine Monitor Report 2000*. As reported to the United Nations on Jan. 31, 2000, Thailand stockpiles approximately 411,625 AP mines.

CASUALTIES

In a 30-year span, from 1969 to 1999, 56 fatalities occurred in Thailand as a result of landmine explosions. A list of these victims is published by the Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC). In addition, a total of 1,849 deaths and injuries have resulted from landmines. Treatment for landmine victims comes from the Thai government, army and local NGOs and is often in the form of medical, prosthetic, humanitarian, or rehabilitative assistance.

DEMINING

On Dec. 3, 1997, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to sign and ratify the Mine Ban Treaty. Under the treaty, Thailand proposes to rid its border areas of landmines in three years. Through the implementation of mine programs, the education of mine awareness and the rehabilitation of mine victims, TMAC hopes to accomplish these goals. TMAC has already supervised the destruction of 10,000 AP mines and plans to destroy all stockpiled mines under the Master Plan for Humanitarian Mine Action for 2000-2004. Plans are also underway to conduct a survey of the socioeconomic effects of landmines in Thailand.

REALITY CHECK

In October 1997, the ratification of a new constitution increased human rights protection in Thailand. Still, the most serious human rights issue is the Thai government's treatment of refugees in camps along Thailand's borders with Burma and Cambodia. Human Rights Watch cites fear of "the growing number of unemployed and the government's inability to ease the hardship" as concern for future political and social conflict.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Thailand Mine Action Center
(TMAC)
183 Sonprabha Road
Tongsrigun Sub-District
Donmueng District
Bangkok 10210
Tel: +02 565.5207
Fax: +02 565.5202