August 2001

AICMA: Helping Central America

Organization of American States

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AICMA: Helping Central America

Since its creation in 1998, Comprehensive Action against Anti-personnel Mines (AICMA) has been devoted to numerous landmine issues. AICMA and its partners have accomplished a great deal throughout the continent.

American countries affected by anti-personnel mines. Since May 1995, responsibility for the general coordination and supervision of PADCA has been assigned to the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy (UDP), with the technical support of the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB). The distinctive feature of PADCA, which is an integral component of the AICMA program, is that it is largely a humanitarian project, since it seeks to restore safe conditions and the confidence of citizens, to reduce the threat and danger posed by explosive devices and anti-personnel mines, and to restore the use of the lands dedicated to agriculture and livestock in affected zones. Furthermore, it is a multilateral program, since a number of donor and contributing countries (such as Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Guatemala, Holland, Honduras, Japan, Norway, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United States, and Venezuela) and various organizations (such as the OAS and the IADB) participate in it.

Role of the UDP

The main responsibilities of the UDP/OAS within PADCA are to raise funds in the international community, to administer and oversee the use of those funds and to coordinate the Program from a political and diplomatic standpoint. This responsibility also includes the task of ensuring that all the essential components of each national demining project are in place and functioning properly. This includes a system for communications, evacuation and emergency; the provision of food and equipment for demining troops; insurance; and a stipend for all supervisors and sapper soldiers involved in operations and building campaigns designed to educate populations about the latent risk of anti-personnel mines.

Technical Assistance

The IADB is responsible for organizing the international team of supervisors in the four countries participating in the Program (Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua). At the moment, the international team of experts is composed of about 30 supervisors who are responsible for providing technical and logistical support, training demining troops, and providing certification that demining operations are appropriate and meet international safety standards. In September, Guatemala became the first PADCA beneficiary country to provide the chief of the international supervisory team, known as the Mission of Assistance for the Removal of Mines in Central America (MARMINCA).

International Support

The successful work completed and progress achieved by PADCA is, in large measure, due to the invaluable and generous support of member states such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Peru, Venezuela and the United States, as well as the contributions of major international donors, including Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation, South Korea, Spain and Sweden. Over the course of one year, these contributions have amounted to approximately $6 million (U.S.).

Coordination with International Entities

In order to promote victim assistance initiatives, the Program established and broadened contact with the Trust for the Americas, seeking to deepen and expand the relationship of cooperation with the private, public and academic sectors, as well as with different civil society institutions in the hemisphere.

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During this period, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) supported the Latin America initiative, which helped fund a number of projects aimed at promoting peace and economic development in the region. The CABEI contributed to the establishment of the Regional Task Force (RTF), a partnership between the United Nations, the Organization of American States, and the European Union, to coordinate efforts to make landmine-affected areas safer for civilian populations. The RTF provided technical assistance and funding to governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working on landmine clearance and victim assistance.

In the case of Central America, the regional approach was particularly effective in countries like Guatemala and Nicaragua, where the government and civil society organizations worked closely together to raise awareness and promote landmine clearance. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also played a significant role in supporting landmine clearance projects in the region, through its Mine Action Phase (MAP) initiative.

The efforts of the CABEI and other international bodies were complemented by the work of NGOs like the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), which played a pivotal role in the global movement to ban landmines. The ICBL and its supporters, including the Landmine Monitor and the Global Centre for the Study of International Law and International Relations, worked to highlight the humanitarian problems caused by landmines and to provide information and resources to those affected by them.

In conclusion, the period from 2000 to 2001 saw significant advances in the efforts to make landmine-affected areas safer for civilian populations in Central America. The cooperation between international organizations, NGOs, and governments was instrumental in achieving these results, and the work of the CABEI and other bodies will continue to be crucial in the ongoing effort to make Central America a safer place for all.
The primary purpose is to assist in prioritizing mine action efforts according to the greatest need. In the future, data on all known and suspected mined areas, their characteristics, the status of mine clearance in each area, and complete information on accidents and mine victims.

The primary purpose is to assist in planning the program will be to ensure that priority is given to the location, demarcation, recording and destruction of anti-personnel mines to develop and apply appropriate technologies for the detection and destruction of mines that threaten the civilian population; to effectively build awareness among the civil population regarding the danger of these devices; to assist victims and to store land to productive use.

An agreement to support a program in Ecuador was finalized in March 2001, with the initial phase of activities focusing on an accelerated stockpile destruction process. Ecuador and Peru have both expressed interest in carrying out accelerated stockpile destruction with international assistance. Ecuador submitted its action plan and budget in February 2001, and arrangements on this initiative were also finalized in March. The framework agreement for a Peru/OAS program is currently underway, which may be a final legal review. In each case, the international community has provided or promised more than $1 million to get the programs underway.

The Organization has maintained a specific fund for the Program for Demining Assistance in Ecuador/Peru (PADEP) using $300,000 (CAN $198,800-45 U.S.) in contributions from the government of Canada in April 1999. This contribution, which was divided equally, has been used exclusively for the purchase of equipment and materials for activities to support humanitarian demining associated with the demarcation of the border between Ecuador and Peru.

It is important to underscore the recommendation of the United Nations regarding the multilateral coordination of this humanitarian effort, with emphasis being placed on the capacity of the OAS in doing so coordination work with the assistance of the United Nations.

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Members of Lt. Yumer Granados' unit watch as he prepares various explosive devices and landmines for a demonstration.

UN Photo/ESR (X:X:VX-0/00), "Support to Action Against Mines in the Americas: AICMA: Helping Central America" 1

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Latin America