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Ukrainian Mine Action

The Ukraine is highly affected by landmines and UXO, but long-term preparatory planning and integrated efforts of local NGOs offer a promising future for mine action in the area.

Russian deminers navigating a rough terrain.



Humanitarian Demining Center (HDC of MOD)

HDC of MOD has actively operated since September 1, 2001, as a source of qualified manpower for Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and mine clearance operations in the Ukraine and abroad and as an epicenter of new demining technology and methodology research. This organization is tightly linked to domestic structures and analogous centers involved in MA abroad. As a result, the most recent rotation of the deminers trained according to international MA standards has been relocated to

South Lebanon. Upon launching an internal national MA program, the Center could become a coordinating body for the entire program.

The Ukrainian Mine Action Information Center (UMAIC)

UMAIC is another key organization involved with MA in the Ukraine. Their principle operations include keeping contacts with the international MA community, disseminating information to concerned organizations, providing necessary assessments and analysis to decision makers, coordinating the efforts of NGOs, and launching initiatives on MA issues.

The Emergency Ministry (EM)

EM has been officially assigned to perform in the Crimea EOD and demining program. Mine and UXO incidents (except criminal cases) have become a part of EM's routine activity. Additionally, a brand new issue of the coastal waters safety program involves

demining the bottom of coastal waters as well as demining and clearing coastal areas. As a bridging issue (along with the previously mentioned tasks), EM implemented a Mine Awareness Education project, starting in the regions defined as most hazardous. EM has its own system of courses, and through the Ministry of Education, EM plans to implement mine safety lessons in the secondary school program.

The State Department for Veterans

The State Department for Veterans has also become involved with the Ukrainian MA program by taking care of mine victims and establishing a research group to compile and maintain a database on mine victims and survivors. Accordingly, this group will develop a national victim assistance project.

Stockpile Destruction

The Ukraine has approximately 10.1 million stockpiled AP mines that were inherited after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In March 1998, the Ukraine destroyed 101,028 PFM-1 landmines from the Ukrainian Army arsenals on the testing ground near Kiev. Based on that experience, the Ukraine has

become concerned with environmental safety during such a process. Under the Framework Arrangement (Ukraine-Canada), the focal point (and simultaneously, the stumbling block) is a lack of proper and safe technology, so the estimates for destruction costs cannot be made confidently until the technology for PFM destruction is clearly determined.

Demining Organizations

As the participation of Ukrainian specialists in domestic and overseas EOD operations is fairly obvious, there should be organizations and companies here to run the system of selecting, training, supplying and managing demining manpower. At the moment, there are several organizations that have already started similar activities. Among them are UkrOboronService (UOS), the Engineer-Veterans Demining Group (EVDG), the Peacekeeping Veterans Demining Team (PVDT) and Strum Demining Detachment (SDD), who are all currently prepared to bid in tenders.

Prospects

The future of MA in the Ukraine

looks promising. In fact, legislation regarding Ukrainian MA should be implemented in late 2002. Looking forward to late 2002, we see the Ukrainian MA legislation taking effect. On the foundation of these existing elements of a future integral system, we will be able to build the national program. Furthermore, this program can be immediately put into action, thanks to such a long-term (and even a bit subtle) preparative phase. We also foresee future cooperation with the UN, European Union (EU), OSSE, a group related to the EM, and other international organizations. ■

*All photos courtesy of UMAIC

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1. For more information on the extent of the landmine situation in the Ukraine, please refer to the 1999-2001 Landmine Monitor reports.



Engineers prepare to burn vegetation in a suspected area to make clearance easier and expose trip wire threats.

by Lieutenant Colonel Sergio Pashinsky, Ukraine MAC

Introduction

There is no doubt that the Ukraine is a mine- and UXO-affected country.¹ This fact is well known but still not recognized by the international mine action (MA) community. Perhaps the biggest issue is that the Ukrainian government has not acknowledged this national challenge, and consequently, international assistance has not been given.

Mine Action Principles

The three principles required for the development of the national MA program are currently being identified. First, authorities have recognized the mine and UXO problem in the Crimea region and allocated a considerable sum from the state budget for its solution. Also, some other Ukrainian regions are being inves-

tigated to define the most hazardous ones. Second, having learned from the international experience of Azerbaijan, Croatia and other countries, the Ukrainian Mine Action Information Center (UMAIC) is working with the Humanitarian Demining Center (HDC) and the legal bureau on a draft of the National MA legislation and implementing the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) for further domestic and international activity. Third, an infrastructure (though still uncoordinated) is gradually being designed on various issues of national MA.

NGO Involvement

A number of significant NGOs play a key role in the Ukrainian MA program. These include the HDC of the Ministry of Defense (MOD), UMAIC, the Emergency Ministry (EM) and the State Department for Veterans.