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Mozambique

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by Jeremy Coulson, *MAIC*

History

Between the 1890s and 1920, Portugal led a military campaign to colonize Mozambique. After over 40 years of Portuguese rule, nationalist groups in Mozambique united to form the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO). In 1964, FRELIMO began a movement of guerilla warfare against the Portuguese, starting a trend of civil war that would ravage Mozambique for decades. By the early 1970s, FRELIMO's 7,000 guerilla fighters controlled most of central and northern Mozambique. In 1974, the Portuguese military overthrew the government and installed leadership that was sympathetic toward Mozambique. Portugal struck a mutual cease-fire agreement with FRELIMO and gave Mozambique its independence in June of 1975. Unfortunately, the Portuguese exit left the country with a shortage of machinery and skilled labor. In a reaction to this, FRELIMO leader Samora Moisés Machel instituted a Marxist government in Mozambique. In 1980, following an invasion from Zimbabwe, the Mozambique National Resistance Movement (RENAMO) began its own guerilla campaign against Machel's government. In an attempt to quiet the social and political unrest, Machel reduced the size of the government and privatized some industry. Despite his efforts, the conflicts between FRELIMO and RENAMO ravaged the nation until 1992.



Landmine/UXO Overview

Mozambique does not make or export any mines. During decades of civil war, few records were kept of minefields. FRELIMO and RENAMO forces buried AP mines around villages, water sources and infrastructure. Of its 128 districts, mines affect 123. This makes a total of 1,374 possible mined areas, covering a collective area of 562 square kilometers. Of the mined areas, about 41 percent are less than 1,000 square meters. Less than five percent are more than a square kilometer. Mines affect agricultural land and non-agricultural land, roads and even access to water supplies. In the past two years, five floods hit Mozambique. Unfortunately, these floods covered many minefields and could have moved the mines.

Casualties

Between 1992 and 2000, there were 385 mine incidents in Mozambique, leading to 249 deaths and 374 injuries. More recently, landmine casualties in Mozambique are on a rapid decline from 133 in 1998 to 25 in 2000. This decline is a testament to effective mine awareness programs in Mozambique.

Demining

According to the National Demining Institute (IND), 4.98 million square meters were cleared by the end of 2000. Mozambique has a stockpile of 37,818 mines. The government is still preparing a plan to destroy the stockpile. Mozambique's IND, a semi-autonomous group reporting directly to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, operates with a mandate to organize and execute a national mine action system. The IND has regional offices throughout Mozambique. In 2000, the IND formed an Emergency Mine Action Committee to deal with the mines that may have been displaced in the floods of previous years.

In 2000, \$17 million (U.S.) from several different organizations went to clearing mines in Mozambique. Many national and international agencies assist in demining Mozambique. The two most active groups are the Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) and the Accelerated Demining Program (ADP). In 2000, NPA cleared 2,624,231 square meters of land in central Mozambique manually and with dogs. They also destroyed 3,506 mines and 458 UXO. Also in 2000, ADP used manual demining and dogs to clear 1,295,733 square meters and destroy 542 mines and 76 UXO in southern Mozambique.

Reality Check

Mozambique's government has a policy of establishing one ortho-prosthetic center in each province. Handicap International (HI) runs six of these, and the Ministry of Health operates the other four. The UK-based non-governmental organization (NGO), POWER provides the materials for the artificial limbs as well as advice to the Ministry on Logistics, Quality and Service. The Ministry, POWER and donors are investigating the possibility of providing cost-effective rural service to mine victims through assistance from the public and a private non-profit organization.

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