

Chile

History

In 1973, Chile's Marxist government was overthrown by a dictatorial military regime led by Augusto Pinochet. With the goal of exterminating Marxism, Pinochet suspended parliament, banned political activity, limited civil liberties and boosted efforts to guard Chilean borders. Between 1973 and 1983, in an attempt to protect the country from its neighbors, Pinochet's government littered the Chilean borders of Bolivia, Peru and Argentina with 293 minefields containing one million mines. In 1990, Pinochet stepped down and a presidential parliamentary democracy was restored with the election of Patricio Aylwin.

Landmines/UXO Overview

After Pinochet's rule, parts of Chile remain heavily mined with a reported 123,442 anti-personnel mines existing near the northern and southern borders. Chile also reportedly manufactured anti-vehicle and fragmentation mines. In November 2002, Chile hosted the Fifth Conference of Defense Ministers of the Americas and established the "Santiago Declaration," which called for "support for the efforts of the United Nations, Organization of American States and various national demining programs to eliminate...anti-personnel landmines."

According to the Chilean government, Chile has not produced or exported landmines since 1985. As of May 2003, Chile had destroyed 210,446 stockpiled anti-personnel mines and planned to retain 6,245 mines for training and development purposes only. Records do not specify how many minefields still exist nor how much land they occupy. However, Chilean army reports lead to indications that 17 towns and three major cities are potentially affected. Although some items of UXO have been discovered in the urban area of Santiago, only several items of UXO have been found in the past year. All UXO

found has been reported or delivered to police for detonation. Chile ratified the Ottawa Convention in September 2001.

Casualties

Between 1976 and 2000, 26 civilians were injured and seven killed by landmines. In the years following, the numbers decreased with only seven injuries and one death in three years. Most of these incidents were the result of accidents in minefields laid by guerrilla forces. Because Chilean minefields are located in remote locations, it is suspected that incidents have occurred without being reported. Chileans who are injured by landmines or UXO are cared for in military hospitals without assistance from the public health system, private health institutions or non-governmental organizations.

Demining

Due to a scarcity of demining equipment and an intense climate, demining in Chile is especially difficult. Demining in the south can only take place in January, February and March, while no demining during these months can occur in the north because of heavy rains. As of September 2002, Chile had only enough demining equipment for 10 deminers. But in that same year, despite the lack of official humanitarian clearance efforts, an entire area in the north was cleared of 382 M-14 mines and forces continued to clear an area in the south near the border of Peru. Chile began clearance of its northern areas in 2004 and it plans to complete all demining by its deadline mandated by the Ottawa Convention, which is 2011.

Reality Check

By the end of 2004, Chile hopes to clear 14 minefields in three regions. However, with harsh conditions, it is yet to be determined if this will be a reality. In



April, Chile was selected as a test area for the recently developed Swedish demining equipment, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Information System (EOD IS). As a result, the Chilean army has been trained in surveying the Peruvian border for landmines and will use the new system to achieve its clearance goals.

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