The U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Demining Training Center: A Center of Excellence

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Carpenter et al.: The U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Demining Training Center: A Center of Excellence

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HUMANITARIAN DEMINING TRAINING CENTER

A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Introduction

Humanitarian mine action (HMA) is a field known for its paradigm shifts. Just as technological advances create more efficient and innovative equipment and techniques in the engineering sciences, emerging technologies offer newer and safer ways to detect landmines. Integrating these advances into the HMA community and thereby the training curriculum, is one challenge faced by the staff of the U.S. Department of Defense Humanitarian Demining Training Center (HDTTC).

Background

Established in 1996, HDTTC is located at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and is a joint Army Training Support Center. The staff of U.S. government personnel, the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller) directed HDTTC be transferred to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency for oversight and direct supervision. The typical student attending the two-week HMA course comes primarily from the Army's Special Operations Forces (SOF). The students come to HDTTC to prepare them to deploy on HMA training missions in one of the 43 mine-affected nations presently supported by the United States. These missions range from establishing a new program to maintain ongoing mine action initiatives.

SOF soldiers are well trained to perform HMA missions due to their experience working in small units, their ability to work independently and an innate cultural awareness. The last test is extremely important, since these "unofficial ambassadors" represent the United States—in people, government and military—to the citizens of the host nation. The contact these soldiers have with their counterparts and students may be far more personal and intimate in nature than that which many diplomats experience.

Training Curriculum

The basic HDTTC curriculum is the same for all students during the first week. This common-core training focuses on the basic principles of mission planning, U.S. policy, and the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). All students are exposed to the signs of demining during an introduction to the use of mine detectors and basic mine clearance procedures. It is during this training that all students don protective equipment and locate and expose a mine in a one-meter training lane while at the same time practicing safe and proper techniques and procedures. While the novelty of the first few moments amuse the soldiers, their training quickly demonstrates the difficulties and toll of clearing vegetation, avoiding trip wires and finally, of preparing the mine for destruction in place.

During the second week, students are trained according to their specific responsibilities for the upcoming mission. Generally speaking, Special Forces soldiers focus on demining skills throughout the second week of training, as this will be their responsibility in the demining in the host nation. These particular soldiers arrive at the HDTTC with many of the skills necessary to teach demining. They are experienced trainers, possess advanced language skills and have extensive training with explosives.

Civil Affairs soldiers arrive trained and experienced in working with military levels of government. This background lends itself well to the program management and "engineering" development aspect of HMA. These soldiers are given additional training on general management, the U.S. Department of State's Country Plan Assessment, the host nation's current work plan, and an overview of other organizations involved within the country. Armed with this knowledge, these soldiers are called upon to teach or assist in strategic planning, coordinate efforts with other HMA activities, and advise in logistical planning.

Additional Components of HMA

Mine risk education (MRE) is a vital aspect of HMA, allowing the greatest reach and influence at the lowest program costs. To achieve this goal, soldiers arrive at the U.S. Army's Psychological Operations organizations bearing development skills to the table. These skilled warriors receive much of the same training as Civil Affairs soldiers regarding the HMA situation in a host nation. Additionally, they receive mission-focused training on MRE methodology, identification of at-risk groups, and integration of community-based MRE efforts into the larger country-wide programs.

Another group of soldiers supporting the U.S. government's HMA effort comes from the U.S. Military's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) specialty. These highly trained technicians hail from all branches of the Armed Forces. A typical class may include soldiers, sailors, and Marines. It is this specific diversity that often strengthens the group's skill sets and experience levels. EOD students receive the same basic HMA instruction as all students attending training at the HDTTC. Since they already possess a strong background in the UXO disposal, their mission preparation consists primarily of the type of threat and the type of training they will have to plan for the host nation. EOD technicians left HMA training with a perspective of how to address explosive contamination from an HMA perspective.

HDTTC Museum

Students and visitors are often surprised at the level of sophistication awaiting them at the HDTTC. The HDTTC Museum is at the reception area, where all manner of mines, ordnance and interactive displays are available for evaluation. The items mine are displayed on shelves, in kits or as cutaway models, or even in an underground side-view of equipment. The museum includes an ever-expanding array of fossils, anti-handling devices, bombs, rockets, sub-munitions, detonators, protective equipment and ammunition.

Given the center's varied contacts throughout the HMA community, many different people, organizations and agencies have come together to provide items samples of the many items found in countries where the U.S. government HMA program is involved. More than just an interesting place to visit, the museum allows students and visitors an opportunity to safely see and touch "the real thing." This enhances the learning experience, and gives all a better understanding of the threat from these indiscriminate killers.

Teaching at the HDTTC

Course Managers at the HDTTC all have a primary area of expertise. In addition, they each fill diverse or assistant instructor positions in one or more courses. At first glance, this broad-reach collaboration may appear less difficult than it is in application. The expectation is that all staff members reach beyond the Center's current activities and scopes to become subject matter experts in one or more HMA-related areas. This directly supports the Department of Defense's vision for a "Center of Excellence" in HMA training.

A Center of Excellence

By Lloyd D. Carpenter, Course Manager, Paul Arcangelli, Director, and Rodney A. Robideau, Technical Director, HDTTC...
Enhancing Combat Capacity

The provision of assistance to local military forces for mine action purposes, in the form of training and/or equipment, has sometimes been controversial as these can also enhance combat capacity. The nation providing military assistance must carefully consider the potential ramifications of supplying training or equipment to a military force. The bilateral or trilateral context of the conflict, the current peace and reconciliation processes, and the nature of the military structure and deployment must all be weighed against the potential benefits of military support for mine action prior to the provision of assistance. There is no simple mechanism to decide this, as military-to-military assistance is provided on a bilateral basis.

CONCLUSION

The GICHD study on the role of the military in mine action found that the military has played a significant role in a number of national mine action programmes. This is achieved through involvement by the local military forces or with support from a visiting military force. Irrespective of the conflict, local militaries will need training and equipment to enable them to undertake humanitarian demining tasks according to international standards. The decision to provide such support will need to be carefully weighed against the risk of enhancing war-fighting capabilities, and what role the post-conflict period is to play. The study was unable to determine if it was cheaper to use the military for demining tasks, as productivity and cost effectiveness are areas that require further study in the whole mine action sector. The use of visiting military forces on the other hand, has been found to be more effective in the emergency or start-up phase of a national mine action programme.

Wherever there is a mine or UXO problem, humanitarian and developmental initiatives necessarily involve a high degree of contact and interaction among military personnel, non-military mine action personnel and local communities. Military capabilities, if properly discussed and coordinated, can be instrumental in meeting humanitarian needs. The needs and capabilities of non-military mine action organizations are normally trained to be mission-oriented and to complete these missions as quickly and efficiently as possible. This works well for almost all humanitarian emergencies, and for many humanitarian problems like infrastructure repair, but establishing national mine action programmes under post-conflict conditions normally requires a long-term focus with detailed planning and coordinated efforts. Where there is a commitment to work together, the military in a combat zone can be very effective where the conflict is not ongoing.

New Plans for Training

The HHDTC is planning to add two additional training modules to its curriculum. The first is a Level 1 UXO Clearance course that will enhance training of technicians to perform basic UXO clearance (preliminary) in contaminated areas. Students attending this course will also be the first to work with the HHDTC’s new UXO clearance equipment.

The second new training module pertains to an information database manager’s course on the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMMSA). The Geneve International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) site at www.gicdh.ch contains information about the concept of "command and control," but that broader issues like national strategies and priority setting for all the aspects of mine action are developed in a consultative manner with the full range of actors.

ENDNOTES

1. See www.gicdh.ch.

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HHDTC, based on page 11
Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction, 7, 1 (1994), art. 4, 77-81
This study provides an overview of the current state of the humanitaria
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already uses a version of IMMSA that incorporates digitized maps of the...
Thus, although UN peacekeepers have been present in Lebanon for more than two decades, they have typically conducted only mine clear-
ance to support their own operations, and according to their own national military procedures. Though this may be consistent with the obligations of parties to a conflict under international law to be responsible for mines, booby-traps and other explosive devices laid by those parties, it does not necessarily lead to substantial remediation of the public hazard in the long term. In fact, throughout the more than 20-year experience in Lebanon of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), as seemingly simple a task as the handover of records, con-
cerning the mine clearance work between incoming and outgoing con-
tingents, appears not to have been accomplished.

Use of Military TAs

Visiting military forces have often assigned military personnel to serve as TAs to the various MAG and project implementation units. Many of these have performed admirably, and the secondment of active military personnel appears to have been a successful strategy for getting a mine action programme up and running in an emergency phase and in highly specialized roles, such as EOD.

However, the GICHD study has concluded that the overall contribution of these secondment programmes has proven modest in the long term. There have also been criticisms of the role played by some TAs, on the basis of unclear chain of command and reporting lines and confused terms of reference. It has also been claimed that coordinating authorities have sometimes failed to exploit fully their skills and potential contributions to the programme. Thus, a number of the case studies in the GICHD report, while acknowledging an important role for in-kind military advice at the outset of a mine action programme, express concern about their contribution over the longterm in a development context. This is the case in Bosnia-
Hercegovina and Cambodia in particular, where TAs may not neces-
sarily have been equipped with the skills needed to sustain mine action. Nor are TAs necessarily experienced in building local capaci-
ties through advising their local counterparts.

In the case of Cambodia, for instance, the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) hosted 76 TAs, both military and civilian. A review by UN Development Program (UNDP) concluded that, "while the military has made an impressive contribution in developing capacity within the CMAC, particularly technical capacity, in general military advisors are limited in their ability to train the training needs and capacity demands CMAC currently faces." Indeed, TAs may end up learning more about mine action than about their own national counterparts. These difficulties are compounded by tours of duty—typically six months—that are often too short for the individuals to make an effective contribution to the programme.

Enhancing Combat Capacity

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times been controversial as these can also enhance combat capacity. The nation providing military assistance must carefully consider the potential ramifications of supplying training or equipment to a mili-
tary force. The historical evolution of the conflicts, the current pace and reconciliation developments as well as the nature of the military structure and deployment must all be weighed against the potential benefits of military support for mine action prior to the provision of assistance. There is no real mechanism to decide this, as most military-to-military assistance is provided on a bilateral basis.

CONCLUSION

The GICHD study on the role of the military in mine action found that the military has played a significant role in a number of national mine action programmes. This can be either through involvement by individual military forces or with support from a visit-
ing military force. Inevitably, at the end of a conflict, local military forces will need training and equipment to enable them to undertake humanitarian demining tasks according to international standards. The decision to provide such support needs to be carefully weighed against the risk of enhancing their war-fighting capabilities, and what phase of the post-conflict period it is. The study was unable to derive

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