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Oman

Country Profile

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Since the seventh century, Oman has been an Islamic country, falling under Portuguese rule in the early 1500s. In 1650, Omani citizens revolted, regaining control of the majority of their land until 1741 when Persia took over. Upon signing a friendship treaty with Great Britain in 1798, Oman gained independence, but its troubles were not over. Between 1932 and 1970, a repressive ruler, Sultan Said bin Taimer, sparked a series of revolts in the Dhofar province, which ended when the Sultan's son, Qaboos bin Said, overthrew him and began modernizing the country. Today, Oman is working to clear the landmines left over from these disputes.

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Landmine / UXO Overview

The number of landmines that exist in Oman is unknown at this time, but reports indicate that the United States may be stockpiling approximately 10,000 anti-personnel mines in various storage units throughout the country. Roughly 12 different types of landmines have been found in formerly occupied areas of Oman. The majority of Oman's landmines are found along the border of the Dhofar province, and several major roads pass through landmine-infested regions. Omani officials report that they do not produce landmines and do not have a landmine problem. Currently, they are considering signing the Mine Ban Treaty, but they are not members of the Convention on Conventional Weapons or the Conference on Disarmament.

Casualties

Although the exact number of mine-related accidents is unknown, 103 have been reported since 1971, and the effect of these casualties has been severe. The nomadic population, which inhabits areas where landmines and UXO are often washed during rainfall, is most threatened by landmines.

Demining

In December 1999, the United States agreed to assist Oman in humanitarian demining training beginning in February 2001. The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) established a Mine Clearance Troop in 1984 with 40 deminers (four sections of 10 deminers) and 20 support personnel. This group has performed demining activities throughout Oman and is currently focusing on old battlefields and formerly occupied regions. There are no records of which areas have been demined, and no donors support Oman with its demining efforts at this time. However, the United States may allot \$2.2 million (U.S.) in 2001 once the land has been surveyed to evaluate the country's needs.

Reality Check

Since gaining control in 1970, Sultan Qaboos bin Sain has worked to modernize the Omani society. This involved allotting more freedom and establishing a more

stable health, education and housing structure. Despite these advancements, Oman remains a secluded country with little international relations.

Contact Information:

Major Alhunaini Ahmed
Ministry of Defense for Oman
P.O. Box 1462
Code 111
Seeb, Oman

Tel: 00968 613602

ABOUT JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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