October 2012

Franco-Mines: A French-language Forum for Mine Action and Other Explosive Devices

Manuel Gonzal

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://commons.libjmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol16/iss3/17

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Franco-Mines: A French-language Forum for Mine Action and Other Explosive Devices

by Manuel Gonzal - view pdf

In 2005 the United Nations Development Programme – Africa organized the Socio-Economic Approaches to Mine Action Planning and Management Regional Workshop for Africa at the International Mine Action Training Centre in Nairobi. This workshop aimed to study socioeconomic approaches to mine action. Although the course was taught in English, only eight of the 25 trainees were native English speakers. Of the other 17 trainees, four were Portuguese speakers and 13 spoke French. This inspired three French-speaking participants involved in mine action to create a virtual space for French speakers to express their thoughts and concerns.

This French-language forum—Franco-Mines, Le Forum Francophone des Actions Contre Les Mines et Autres Engins Explosifs—which began in January 2007, represents an effort to make mine action more accessible to French speakers, both within and outside of the field. Similarly, it reflects an effort to promote French-speaking mine action programs around the world. To access the forum visit: http://franco-mines.com.

The forum’s main topics include...
As of September 2012, Franco-Mines had 493 members around the world and plans to reach 500 members by the end of 2012. Franco-Mines is a free forum consisting of a mailing list to which members subscribe. The moderator previews messages yet strives to permit freedom of speech and maintain forum member anonymity when necessary.

The forum's main challenges include:

- Maintaining forum integrity while preserving freedom of speech
- Offering informal help for those seeking employment
- Providing technical support
- Encouraging discussion among participants
- Maintaining the anonymity of members who request it
- Maintaining confidential information, such as restricted technical data

Numerous explosive ordnance disposal personnel and others working in mine action benefit from the network and the advice of its professional members. Requests for assistance in identifying ERW rarely remain unanswered due to the proactive nature of the forum's participants. To date the forum has proven to be especially useful in Libya, where forum members communicated through it for safety reasons.

This forum is not limited to the French-speaking world and creating mine action forums in Arabic or Spanish is under consideration.

**Biographies**

**Manuel Gonzal** began his mine-clearing profession during the First Gulf War in 1991 while serving with the French Foreign Legion. After 17 years with the Foreign Legion, he became a technical adviser for Handicap International in Lyon, France. Beginning in 2006, he has run various mine action missions in Sudan for DanChurchAid, in Guinea-Bissau for Cleared Ground Demining, in Colombia for TRANSTEC / EU, and in Afghanistan and Chad for MineTech International. Since June 2009, he has worked as the chief technical adviser and operations for the United Nations Development Programme in Casamance, Senegal.

**Contact Information**

Manuel Gonzal  
Moderator  
Franco-Mines  
BP 521  
Ziguinchor / Senegal  
Tel: +221 77 527 32 60  
Email: mod@franco-mines.com  
Website: http://franco-mines.com  
Skype: gonzaldemexplo

**Endnotes**
