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Congolesse Soldiers Learn to Combat UXO and Mines

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sponders. Additionally, OASIS enables data-sharing with other reconstruction and relief organizations, allowing these groups to safely implement a wide range of field projects in Iraq.

Conclusion

Using OASIS and IMSMA, iMMAP works to make HMA in conflict and post-conflict arenas safer and more efficient. The security-information gap hampers efforts by the U.N. and other national, international and nongovernmental stakeholders. With accurate information about security incidents and ERW locations, people with little field experience can make informed decisions, increasing the safety of all operations. iMMAP provides a solution for minimizing the security-information gap—not only does OASIS provide the HMA community with quality information, but it also offers greater security for the individuals implementing humanitarian programs through increased information availability. Additionally, Iraq’s ERW victims receive improved service and assistance to speed their return to productive lives as a result of iMMAP’s HMA information-management analysis. See endnotes page 83

CISR staff member Blake Williamson contributed to this article.

Eric Sawyer is a Geospatial Information Management expert with knowledge in international humanitarian assistance. He is employed as iMMAP’s Iraq Country Representative and has spent the last 10 years working with the international humanitarian community to improve information management and data-sharing.

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This article focuses on how U.S. Africa Command (U.S. AFRICOM) supports the Democratic Republic of the Congo in carrying out its mine-action objectives by providing train-the-trainer and supervisory services and mine-action equipment to the DRC.

by Staff Sergeant Amanda McCarty | U.S. AFRICOM |

“African solutions to African problems,” a motto for U.S. Africa Command engagement in Africa, stands as a reminder that helping African militaries self-sustain their operations is often just as important as the activity itself. Recent mine-action training in the Democratic Republic of the Congo provided an example of how U.S. AFRICOM incorporates sustainability into its activities with African partners. AFRICOM teamed with Congolese Armed Forces soldiers as part of the command’s humanitarian mine-action program to help re-establish a mine-action company at Camp Base in Kisangani, DRC.

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“Partnering is essential to the success of this program; no one organization can do it alone,” Holly says. “We are partnering with the U.S. Department of State (PM/WRA), Handicap International—an international nongovernmental organization—and the United Nations Mine Action Centre and the DRC Center for Demining, both in Kinshasa.” PM/WRA provided support to AFRICOM via Handicap International in the form of a grant for $15,775. This funding was used to purchase equipment that assisted AFRICOM’s training program. PM/WRA’s grant will support AFRICOM’s four training missions in 2011 and 2012, while also helping HI stay engaged in Kasai-Oriental province. Although Handicap International did not provide funding, they did contribute to the AFRICOM project in Kinshasa with in-kind support in the form of training/war awareness programs on humanitarian demining and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personal Mines and on their Destruction’s five pillars, as well as deconstruction components for explosives. Contamination varies throughout DRC’s provinces; however, mine threats are believed to be significantly less than that of ERW. AFRICOM’s HMA training teaches identification and safe disposal of both. “Unexploded ordnance is the leading cause of injuries in Africa, surpassing that of landmines,” Holly points out. “We won’t be able to expand into new areas without passing the planning and execution phases of the program to [U.S. AFRICOM’s] component commands.”

The goal of HMA activities—specifically in the DRC—is enabling and helping equip the Congolese with the skills and abilities to safely address their mine problems, something the AFRICOM HMA coordinator Jack Holly said the Congolese are well prepared for. The final training with the mine-action company at Camp Base was completed 29 July 2011; however, Holly says this is not the end of AFRICOM’s engagement. “U.S. Africa Command’s HMA program will continue to support this important project into the future, promoting mine action, engagement and mentoring the FARC’s HMA instructors.”

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