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EDITORIAL

Integrating ERW Programs: The Case for Consolidating CWD Activities

For years, the mine-action community has been revising its definition of explosive remnants of war. Viewing unexploded ordnance, landmines, ammunition stockpiles, and small arms/light weapons as individual threats, the mine-action community has created distinct budgets, programs and policies to address each of them. What we're beginning to realize, however, is that a more integrated approach allows for greater progress in reducing the ERW threat.

by Mark Adams [PM/WRA]



A technician throws away remnants of surplus weapons destroyed by the Congolese Armed Forces (FARDC) at the central logistics base during a collaboration project between Mines Advisory Group and the FARDC.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF J.B. RUSSELL/MAG

In the last 20 years, the organized support for humanitarian mine action has allowed us to make great strides in reducing the landmine threat worldwide. Now, however, we find ourselves in a position where the traditional lines between mine action and the threat of excess and poorly secured small arms/light weapons and other conventional weapons have blurred.

The traditional approach to taking mines and unexploded ordnance out of the ground has evolved. The mine-action community has begun widening its scope to focus on armed violence and the problems caused by aging stockpiles, remaining landmines and UXO, and the removal of all of this hazardous debris of conflict to make the land safe. We now actively

work to eliminate the unintended consequences of unstable ammunition detonation or loss of control of poorly secured government stockpiles of weapons, which are just as dangerous as explosive remnants of war. Mine-risk education and risk management have now broadened to become “armed-violence risk” or “ERW-risk education/risk management.”

Wisely, our community has refined and revised its views about ERW. Perhaps it is time to consider revising and refining our strategies as well. I believe these new ideas should be reflected in integrated approaches to programs, policies and budgets for dealing with ERW. Since we no longer think about UXO, landmines, aging ammunition stockpiles or abandoned ordnance as separate entities, why do



Members of MAG loading munitions stockpiled at a FARDC central logistics base onto trucks to be transported to a demolition ground.

we have separate budgets, programs and strategies for dealing with them? Is there perhaps a better, more efficient way of doing business?

Integration

At this time of global financial downturn and international donor fatigue toward HMA activities, I argue that finding a way to better deal with the ERW problem in affected countries will allow us to more effectively justify budgets to our lawmakers and donors. I often discuss with many of my counterparts “eating the elephant” one bite at a time. I have nothing against elephants, but the analogy is that we can only solve the problem one piece at a time by collectively putting together all of our problems related to ERW and integrating our efforts regarding policy, programs, resource management and direct action. This

process allows us to deal with a very serious problem over time in a well-thought-out, systematic way.

An integrated, centralized strategy for dealing with ERW allows us to more effectively and compellingly demonstrate our needs and objectives. An integrated approach to ERW brings together similar skill sets related to explosive ordnance disposal under one umbrella. It streamlines communication. It can accelerate decision-making. It allows us to be more nimble and responsive. It ensures a unified, rather than competing, agenda for ERW. It improves our visibility across related programs. It enhances our ability to see and monitor the totality of our efforts, and track and measure our successes. It improves cost-effectiveness. And at a time when we are being asked and often required to do more with less, these benefits seem

to be worth the effort involved to consolidate and integrate our interests and missions as follows: HMA + SA/LW = ERW. Thus, the action of dealing with ERW can be called “conventional weapons destruction.”

Perhaps we should rethink national strategies and review our collective ERW strategy. This review would run the gamut from where to place the “Office of ERW” to appeals for donor support to the development of a new ERW national strategy. This approach is radical and even anathema to many governments compared to the way we have conducted business in the past, but I believe it helps develop a national vision and provides better synchronization and synergy in the program and project management of all ERW activities.

Although there will always be issues of how to resolve different ministries' equities (usually mine action



Members of MAG and the FARDC prepare a demolition pit to destroy stockpiles of munitions as part of a MAG-FARDC project to eliminate munitions stocks and reduce the risk of accidents.

is conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or Ministry of Interior and SA/LW/ammunition destruction is relegated to the Ministry of Defense), an integrated approach allows one office or one ministry to take the lead. Whether Defense or Foreign Affairs, it doesn't matter, but having it all under one roof allows for a more streamlined decision-making process to deal with a huge, multi-level problem.

In the early years, the international community always encouraged affected governments to develop their own mine-action capacity and a national mine-action center, as well as to develop a strategic, integrated mine-action plan.

Progress was measured by one or more of these yardsticks:

- Area cleared
- Decreasing numbers of civilians injured or killed
- Area of roads opened up
- Any similarly appropriate measuring tool

Now, the international community can do the same by also measuring the number of weapons/tons of ammunition destroyed or the number of facilities strengthened with better security systems.

The Challenges of Integration

A national strategic plan that conducts humanitarian mine action and executes the reduction of stockpiles of excess weapons and unstable ammunition could be managed by an "Office of ERW Removal" or "Office of Conventional Weapons Destruction." Below is a sample list of challenges that office might face:

- Preventing loss of life (since civilian communities have grown up around ammunition storage sites)
- Reducing the amount of weapons and high stocks of unstable ammunition accessible to criminal elements by improving inventory control
- Designating stockpiled ammunition as "excess" if unassociated with a host-nation's weapons system
- Identifying old weapons systems no longer required by defense forces
- Developing a destruction plan for SA/LW and ammunition to reduce loss of control and accidental explosion risks
- Managing and protecting the appropriate amount of weapons necessary to meet host-nation security and defense needs
- Conducting an adequate defense

modernization review to identify real war-fighting needs.

- Initiating strict security for at-risk weapons systems (such as shoulder-fired missile systems) to prevent civilian and commercial impacts

This sounds great in theory, but how does it "play" in the real world? In 2004, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs merged the program offices of Humanitarian Demining and SA/LW Destruction to form the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA). The next step in this evolution will integrate all aspects of ERW into one program budget, thereby focusing a single lens on the global human-security problem of ERW. Our consolidated budget will be called Non-proliferation Antiterrorism Demining and other Related Conventional Weapons Destruction. With this consolidated budget, we can better focus on the most severe ERW problems in the world. We will continue to be fully engaged in severely mine-/UXO-affected countries such as Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Iraq, Laos and Vietnam, and further strengthen our efforts to reduce excess stockpiles of weapons and destroy old, unstable ammunition in these and other countries.

The United States is not the only nation or organization that has seen efficiencies in merging CWD programs. The International Trust Fund for Demining and Mine Victims Assistance has developed a five-year strategic plan envisioning the expansion of its role from HMA in the Balkans to global ERW remediation. I salute the Slovenian government for its great vision and huge

undertaking. Similarly, James Madison University's Center for International Stabilization and Recovery has changed the name of this publication to *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action*. Other examples exist; these are but two.

Change takes time. New national policies and mine-action organization objectives won't happen overnight. For that reason, when I talk to groups of landmine experts, I encourage embracing the problem of inventory control, destruction and security of SA/LW and ammunition. Likewise, when I talk to SA/LW experts, I encourage them to talk to and coordinate with their mine-action counterparts.

I realize the difficulty for those in some countries to talk laterally to their counterparts in the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Foreign

Affairs or Ministry of Interior, but reaching across ministries is the way of the future. With a unified, ERW strategic plan the global CWD community can increase its outreach and access to the donor community and, ideally, reduce the ERW impact on civilians.

Conclusion

Whether you work in government or a regional organization, I encourage you to review your achievements over the past years, embrace an expanded view of dealing with ERW and reinvent your organization. I believe our great collective community has a wealth of knowledge and capacity for innovation that can carry us far into the future to better handle the ERW problem and, thus, make our world a safer place. ♦



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Letter to the Editor

Dear Ms. Carter Fay,

I would first like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I have recently been appointed as Geneva Call's Coordinator for Landmines and other Explosive Devices. I will therefore be the main contact person for all related issues within the organization.

I would also like to inquire whether the authors of the article "Non-state Actors and Mine Action: Complications and Solutions," in the most recent issue of *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* (Issue 14.2), have any illustrations of where humanitarian engagement with NSAs have led to their enjoying "a new bargaining position that they may in turn use to advance their international standing," or use "to their advantage by recruiting new members or securing new resources from interested sponsors"? As you are probably well aware, this is an issue that is potentially of great concern to Geneva Call, and which we endeavour to mitigate. It is also one side of an argument used to discredit such humanitarian engagement. We'd therefore be very keen to receive any supporting evidence where this proved to be the case.

Thank you very much for your attention.

Best regards,

Katherine Kramer
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