Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

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completed the first phase of olfactory detection and discrimination of seven explosive bases in controlled conditions (see photo above). The average discrimination index achieved by the six subjects (four females and two males) was 90 percent. The results were replicated with a group of subjects that grew in the laboratory. These rats were exposed directly to other species such as cats, dogs and humans, which helps sensitise them to the smells they are likely to encounter in an actual minefield.

Hope for Progress in Mine Detection
Currently, the open-field phase of detection (see photo at left) is being developed near the Animal Behavior Laboratory of the Escuela de Estudios Superiores de Policia (Graduate School of Police) in Bogotá under the direction of Dr. Luisa Fernanda Méndez Pardo. While research is ongoing, initial results have already been reported in several national and international media.

Colombia’s progress in the detection and deactivation of explosive remnants of war could make the country a vital part of the solution to the anti-personnel landmine problem. If this research project proves successful in real minefields, as with the African giant pouched rat, relief from mine contamination is well on its way for the war-torn country. See Endnotes, Page 78

Explosives-detection field training of a rat in an open field at the Graduate School of Police, Bogotá, Colombia.

Luisa Fernando Méndez Pardo has a veterinary degree from La Salle University in Bogotá, Colombia. She specialised in college teaching and also in explosives- and drug-detection canine training. Currently, Méndez Pardo is a researcher in the Animal Behavior Laboratory of the Escuela de Estudios Superiores de Policia in Bogotá. Since 2005, she has directed the research project “Detection of Explosives Using Rattus Rattus norvegicus, Vitorino.”

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Andrés M. Pérez-Acosta graduated with a degree in psychology from the National University of Colombia in 1996. He obtained his doctorate in experimental psychology from the University of Seville, Spain, in 2001. Currently he is Associate Professor in the Psychology Department of the Universidad del Rosario in Bogotá, Colombia. Since 2004 Pérez-Acosta has been Editor-in-Chief of the international journal of psychology Avance en Psicología Latinoamericana.

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The objective of the Berlin conference was to support the timely implementation of Article 3 (stockpile destruction) and related obligations of the CCM, and to maintain the momentum of its signing ceremony in December 2008. Experts from both states and civil society gave presentations organized in thematic sessions that led to fruitful discussions. Further details can be found on the Web site at http://www.berlin-ccm-conference.org.

The 8th International Security Forum was held in Geneva 18–20 May 2009. The GICHD arranged a workshop titled “Explosive Remnants of War, Human Security and Development” that included a range of speakers from mine-action programs and NGOs. The session

by Ian Mansfield | Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining |...
IEDs: A Major Threat for a Struggling Society

The use of improvised explosive devices by guerrillas, drug cartels and paramilitary groups has threatened Colombian society for the past 30 years. This article examines the types of IEDs found in Colombia, and the extent and history of its IED problem. Also outlined are the Colombian government’s efforts to counter IEDs, and possible solutions to the challenges ahead, such as enhanced intelligence and community security.

Colombia, located in the northern tip of South America, is the country in the Western Hemisphere most affected by improvised explosive devices. Its level of contamination is comparable to countries like war-torn Iraq and Afghanistan, where international forces deem IEDs a major threat to their plans and to the security of their personnel.

by Pablo Esteban Parra Gallego | PAICMA |

The GICHD is collaborating with the national mine-action centers of Senegal (Centre National d’Action Antimines du Sénégal) and Mauritania (Programme National de Démminage Humanitaire pour le Développement) and the mine-action training center of Benin (Centre de Perfectionnement aux Actions post-conflictuelles de Démìnage et Diplomation) to carry out the Bibliomines project. The Bibliomines online library was created for French-speaking communities affected by mines and ERW, and for national actors within mine action. The library collects and makes existing documents on mine and ERW action accessible in French. The materials on the Bibliomines Web site include the following:

- Documents from mine-affected countries
- Documents from international institutions
- Conventions and texts of international law
- Documents developed for national implementation (legislation, strategies, national standards, procedures, programs, etc.)
- Studies, surveys, publications, etc.

In addition to facilitating access to mine-action-related documents in French, Bibliomines promotes the production and dissemination of new documents and creates opportunities for cross-sectoral exchanges of expertise. The Bibliomines Web site can be accessed via the GICHD Web site or at www.bibliomines.org.

Recent Publications

Recent publications from the GICHD include an updated version of the Guide to Cluster Munitions, the first edition was published in November 2007. This guide presents some content of the Convention on Cluster Munitions and information on stockpile destruction, while offering new findings in procedures for survey and battle-area clearance. Another recent GICHD publication is the Guide to Mechanical Demining Handbook. A full list of all GICHD publications can be found at http://www.gichd.org/gichd-publications/overview.

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