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Geneva Diary: Report from the GICHD

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Demining machine in action.

large numbers, while others have been made in the remotest locations in the world. Delivery of spare parts within days to some of the latter has been that all mechanical demining be followed by after-sales service packages and complete, after-sales service packages and demining; the other for follow-on processes, after the use of demining machines. The latter states the following: ‘Follow-on operations after technical survey may not be required if the machine does not encounter a hazard, and has been proven capable of detecting and destroying similar expected hazards in similar conditions. If a machine does encounter a hazard, then follow-on will be required in all but exceptional cases. The specific follow-on activity can only be determined at the site—and would normally be either by manual demining or mine-removal operations. If a machine does not encounter a hazard, and has made their areas safer for themselves as well as civilians.

Technology Workshop

The GICHD and the United Nations Mine Action Service co-hosted a technology workshop in Geneva from 8–10 September 2008 (see full article on page 78). This meeting was a follow-up to the one held in February 2008, which recommended that a similar meeting be held every two years. This year’s meeting continued the September meeting, representing national mine-action programs, field operators, commercial companies, equipment manufacturers and technology organizations. The major topics discussed were metal detectors, dual sensors and the interference of soil on their performance. The workshop also addressed the operational challenges related to road clearance and land release in a technology context. It provided a forum in which equipment requirements could be expressed and recorded. Challenges and experiences in humanitarian demining techniques from some mine-affected countries were presented, as well as exchanges and shared ideas to improve efficiency. Presentations and film clips used during the proceedings of the meeting can be found at http://snipurl.com/45sdr. There is an informal plan to continue holding these workshops every two years, with the next expected in 2010.

Odor-detection Conference

The GICHD organized an international conference, “Odour Detection by Animals: Research and Practice,” held in Oslo, Norway, in mid-June 2008. Around 120 participants attended including practitioners and experts involved with animal-detector systems particularly those with animal systems for humanitarian demining detection. The purpose of this unique meeting was to encourage those with expertise in this area to share it and to highlight the research findings that are applicable across a range of animal species searching for various target odors. End-users—such as humanitarian-demining administrators, police, customs officials, defense specialists, and search-and-rescue organizations—were also represented. They discussed their practical experiences and contributed views on how animal detection systems can best meet the unique requirements. The outcomes of this meeting can be found at http://snipurl.com/45sdr.

New Publications

The GICHD has recently released a number of new publications. These have included A Guide to Road Clearances, which aims to contribute to the development of, more efficient and cost-effective road clearance systems by providing recent examples, data and methodologies from the field. Along with the information gathered in this guide, the GICHD has gathered supplementary technical data through visits to road-clearance projects in four countries.

The Guide to Marking and Fencing in Mine Action Programmes has also been developed. Based on research conducted by the GICHD in 10 mine-affected areas and territories, this guide describes the extent to which marking and fencing are carried out in existing mine-action programs. It assesses the impact of different methods of marking and fencing of hazardous areas. It also discusses the contribution of medium- and long-term marking towards casualty reduction in situations where clearance cannot be conducted immediately.

by Ian Mansfield
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Ian Mansfield is Deputy Director and Head of Operations at the GICHD and is responsible for all operational, technical and research activities of the Centre. He is also responsible for administering existing and potential areas of activity for the Centre, as well as all evaluation, assessment and consultancy activities. Mansfield holds a Master of Business Administration and a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering.

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GICHQ Offerings

Three more International Mine Action Standards are under development, in addition to IMAS 09-50 Mechanical Demining. The new IMAS will include operator safety, quality management and the application of mechanical demining machines. In 2008, the GICHD published the seventh edition of the Mechanical Demining Equipment Catalogue and A Guide To Road Clearance. The Mechanical Demining Handbook was published in 2008. Beginning in 2009, a mechanical demining reference library will be available on the GICHD Web site. The reference library will include most documents related to mechanical demining that have been published over the years and will be available to all interested in mechanical demining.

As seen above, demining machines have evolved enormously since 1942. The GICHD will continue to follow and assist in the further development and improvement over the coming years.

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