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1. Mongooses, Robots Team up for Demining

A team of Sri Lankan researchers has been testing a new system for clearing minefields. This system involves the use of trained mongooses, which possess a heightened sense of smell, to detect buried explosives.

The mongooses are tethered to remote-controlled robots, which carry small video cameras that detect the precise location of a buried explosive. Researchers say the system is particularly beneficial because the combined weight of each pair is insufficient to trigger a landmine.

In one test, according to reports, the robot-mongoose team took just 30 seconds to locate a buried

landmine a few feet away from where it started.

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2. LSN No More: Organization Changes Name, Augments Mission

The organization formerly known as Landmine Survivors Network announced recently that it would henceforth be known as Survivor Corps, a change the group said would reflect an expanded mission. SC will serve not only those injured by landmines, but also all those injured by war and violence. SC has launched a new Web site to coincide with the new name: www.survivorcorps.org.

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3. Newly Implemented Demining Program Faces Difficulty in Senegal

Although the government of Senegal finally succeeded in launching a demining program in the Casamance region in early 2008, ongoing conflict has made clearance difficult. The Casamance-based Movement for Democratic Change signed a peace accord in December 2004 with the government of Senegal; however, violence persists. Recent mine casualties have brought the continuing threat of landmines to the forefront once again.

Demining efforts in the region have been modest because of the security situation. International partners have said that current demining staff, numbering in the single digits, will need to be supplemented with as many as 250 personnel if demining is to have a serious impact. More than 90 villages in Casamance are mined, disrupting the lives of 90,000 villagers; additionally, 149 more villages are suspected to be mine-contaminated.

UNICEF and other international organizations, like the United Nations Development Programme and Handicap International, have been taking small, measured steps to increase safety and awareness despite the precarious situation. UNICEF has marked potentially dangerous areas and delivered mine-risk education to 500 schools in the area. Demining efforts by the Senegalese Army have been sporadic, helping but not healing the mine situation.

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4. Red Cross, Soccer Star Ronaldo Team Up

International soccer star and humanitarian ambassador Cristiano Ronaldo presented a check for CHF100,000 (US\$95,000) to the International Committee of the Red Cross as part of the 2008 Score for the Red Cross campaign. The fundraiser, a joint program with the ICRC and Union for European Football Association, benefits landmine victims in Afghanistan, providing them with prosthetic limbs, physical therapy and vocational training.

The presentation formally opened the online platform of the Score for the Red Cross campaign, which allowed soccer fans to purchase virtual goals for their favorite teams. The team with the most goals will be named "Most Humanitarian Team." A weekly drawing will be held for people who purchased at least seven goals online, entering them to win prizes. UEFA will donate €4,000 (\$6,200) for every goal scored and €5,000 (\$7,800) for every goal scored by Ronaldo during the final UEFA tournament. For more information, visit www.scorefortheredcross.org.

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5. Help Wanted: 2,000 Iraqi Demining Jobs Available

Approximately 2,000 demining positions are available in Iraq, having been created to help boost clearance operations in the country. Individuals chosen will receive training and then travel to various areas around the country to continue essential clearance activities. The majority of jobs will go to residents of Basra, which is plagued by about five million landmines, many dating to the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s.

Each employee will receive 150,000 Iraqi dinars (US\$128) in monthly wages and a risk allowance of 50,000 dinars (\$43). UNICEF figures from 2006 indicate an average gross national income of about 2.6 million dinars (\$2,170), making this total salary slightly less than the national average. The contractors are essential to continued mine-action efforts in Iraq, which has struggled with demining because of the inability to procure and maintain modern equipment. The security situation in Iraq also makes demining activities difficult, as trained deminers must also contend with roadside bombs, car bombs, missiles, mortar rounds, and other stand-alone and cached weapons.

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6. Gunmen in Afghanistan Kill Seven Demining Staff

After two separate attacks by gunmen in Afghanistan in late March, seven demining staff members were killed and several others were injured. In the first incident, gunmen stopped a convoy of deminers from Afghan Technical Consultants returning from work in Jawzjan province, opening fire and killing five deminers. Seven people were injured in this incident. The convoy included an ambulance.

In the second attack, a vehicle carrying demining staff was attacked by gunmen, who killed the driver and a deminer from the Mine Detection and Dog Centre. Officials were uncertain if the attack was related to a private hostility or militant activities.

The incidents are just a couple in an growing number of reports in Afghanistan concerning increased violence from insurgent forces in that country.

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7. Travel with a Purpose

“Experiential tourism” continues to gain attention as a pursuit of travelers worldwide, and a new book seeks to make enriching, fulfilling vacations easier. Expanding on an earlier edition that focused on North American destinations, Pam Grout’s *The 100 Best Worldwide Vacations to Enrich Your Life* (National Geographic, 2007) showcases vacations that seek to change lives, including information on assisting landmine victims.

Vacation ideas are grouped into four categories—arts and crafts, volunteerism, learning, and wellness—and include information on travel planning, local culture and points of interest, and little-known facts. In the volunteer opportunities section, Grout explains how readers can assemble wheelchairs for mine victim in Cambodia. Other opportunities include chances to maintain trails on Mount Kilimanjaro, help monitor wild horses in Mongolia or help prepare for the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver, Canada.

For more information on *The 100 Best*, visit

<http://www.randomhouse.com/catalog/display.pperl/9781426202797.html>.

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8. Five Children in Pakistan Die Playing with Mortar Shell

According to authorities, a mortar shell killed five children in Quetta, Pakistan, in early June. The children had apparently been playing with the munition before it exploded. Five others were wounded in the incident. All of the casualties were in an Afghan, scrap-dealing family living in Quetta. Three more mortar rounds were found in the children's home by authorities. The home, which was reportedly being used to store some scrap, was partially destroyed in the blast.

In another incident in early June, children also fell victim on a road near Parachinar in Pakistan's Kurram tribal region. They were killed when the van in which they were travelling struck a landmine. Four people, including two children, died in that incident.

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9. U.S. Congress Extends Ban on Transfer of AP Landmines

As part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008, the United States Congress voted to extend a moratorium on the transfer or exportation of antipersonnel landmines to other countries until 2014. Legal prohibitions on the transfer of landmines date to October 1992, when they were formalized in the Landmine Export Moratorium that was amended in 2001. The moratorium does not apply to the employment of AP mines by U.S. forces.

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10. Former Khmer Rouge Soldier Arrested in Killing of Deminer

Authorities in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, have arrested and charged former Khmer Rouge soldier Sin Dorn in connection with the kidnapping and premeditated murder of British deminer Christopher Howes and Huon Huot, Howes's Cambodian translator, in 1996.

Howes, 37 at the time, was given the opportunity to leave his team of 20 deminers from the Mines Advisory Group to retrieve a ransom. Howes refused and, although the team was eventually released, Howes and Huon Huot were taken further into KR-held territory and killed. Howes's remains were found in 1998.

Sin Dorn, the fourth former KR soldier to be arrested in connection with the murders, was captured in a KR stronghold in northern Cambodia. Three other former rebels were arrested in November 2007 on the same charges. Authorities allege that the men captured Howes and Huon Huot near the Angkor Wat temples in northwest Cambodia, detained them, and then shot them several days later.

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11. Schonstedt Gives More than US\$76K in Detectors

Schonstedt Instrument Company, based in West Virginia, has donated more than \$76,000 in magnetic detectors to global clearance organizations and operations since January 2007, when it began a public-private partnership with the U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. Schonstedt was donated more than 74 detectors, each worth a total of \$1,029, to deminers. The company sent 20 of the 74 detectors to Kenya and Somalia.

The enterprise, Schonstedt Humanitarian Demining Initiative, is a partnership between the company, which donates one detector for every commercial detector sold, and the United Nations Mine Action Service, which helps prioritize donation requests. Full coverage of the partnership can be found in the Spring 2008 issue of the [Journal of Mine Action](#).

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12. Angola Crowns First Miss Landmines

The inaugural Miss Landmine Beauty Pageant, a collaboration between the Angolan government and Norway's Arts County, was held in Angola's capital, Luanda, in April 2008. The winner, 31-year-old Augusta Hurica of Luanda, said she would advocate a national fund for disabled persons and the provision of quality prostheses for all Angolan amputees. As part of her prize package, Hurica was fitted for a custom-made artificial limb.

Event organizers cited Angola's enduring mine problem as well as a cultural affinity for pageants as compelling reasons to sponsor the pageant. All contestants received about £100 (US\$195) a day for participating in the event. They also were given dresses and jewelry to wear during the pageant, which they were allowed to keep.

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13. Afghan Demining Destroys More Than 38,000 Landmines

The U.N. Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan announced the destruction of more than 38,000 anti-personnel landmines, 400 anti-tank landmines and 957,000 other explosive remnants of war in the first half of 2008. The announcement, made by UNMACA Director Dr. Haider Reza via the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, highlights the tremendous success of demining operations, Reza said.

Reza added that landmine victims declined from a 40-per-month average in previous months to 24, an important decrease for a country that has suffered about 70,000 landmine-related casualties in the past 18 years. Security for deminers continues to be problematic, Reza announced, with insurgent groups targeting deminers in some cases. He added that UNMACA has been troubled by news that members of the Taliban have been emplacing new landmines, although he could not offer direct evidence of this practice. UNMACA has called on all warring parties to stop using landmines and other explosive devices.

For full coverage of UNMACA's announcement, visit http://www.unama-afg.org/_latestnews/2008/08july21-Afghaistan-clear-landmines.html.

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14. U.S. Corporation Signs License Deal on Landmine-detection Technology

Peak Resources, Inc., a Colorado- and Texas-based corporation, recently signed a deal with U.K.-based

Roke Manor Research to license new landmine-detection technology. Developers with Peak Resources hope the new technology will allow unmanned aircraft to fly over minefields, detecting explosives in the ground below. If successful, the new technique should greatly improve deminer safety and efficiency.

Although the proprietary detection technology will also be available in handheld devices, the advantages to detection and mapping capabilities from an unmanned aircraft are significant. Once research and development is finished—plans call for about a year of collaborative work—the companies hope to deploy the technology in conjunction with consulting support as part of a fully-integrated detection system. The final product will be targeted at governments and nongovernmental organizations, as well as oil, gas and mining corporations.

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15. State Department's Richard Kidd Heads to Department of Energy

In late June, Richard Kidd, Director of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, announced plans to take a position at the U.S. Department of Energy. Kidd, who served seven years with the DOS and worked 10 years with humanitarian mine action, joined the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy on 7 July 2008.

"I leave the State Department with tremendous respect and admiration for the organization, its mission and its staff, particularly those in the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, who are some of the hardest working and most dedicated individuals with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working," Kidd said in a prepared release. "Each day the team in WRA makes decisions and manages programs that have a positive impact on our foreign policy, and on the lives of thousands and thousands of people around the world. The team in WRA demonstrates a commitment to helping others and a seriousness of purpose and integrity that reflects the very best attributes of public service."

He continued, "I will never look at the world in the same way or without the deepest appreciation for the professionalism and dedication of America's entire inter-agency foreign policy team." Forwarding information for Richard Kidd will be available through the WRA office: <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/wra/>.

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16. New Report 'Counts the Cost' of Lebanon's CM Contamination

A report from Landmine Action, "Counting the Cost—The Economic Impact of Cluster Munition Contamination in Lebanon," quantifies the economic consequences of the use in 2006 of cluster munitions in southern Lebanon. While the extent and ramifications of CM usage have been reported since then, the report focuses on three areas of concern:

1. The cost to agricultural production in affected areas
2. Costs associated with clearance operations and risk-reduction activities
3. The extensive costs to victims from deaths and injuries sustained from the contamination

The report factors in the importance of agricultural activities to the economy of Lebanon; clearance capacities of those organizations and agencies operating in Lebanon, as well as the projected costs for establishing in-country resources capable of addressing the contamination; and an overview of the impact on the civilian population, in addition to the health-care and assistance programs available to victims.

Annexes to the report cover in greater detail the extent of cluster munitions usage and contamination in

Lebanon, as well as information on public health, mine action and the agricultural sector of the country as a whole.

The full report is available at http://www.landmineaction.org/resources/Counting_the_cost.pdf.

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17. State Department Co-sponsors MANPADS Threat-reduction Seminar

The U.S. Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs co-sponsored the first African seminar on reducing the threat from man-portable air defense systems (MANPADS), which are also known as shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles. With the Regional Center on Small Arms (RESCA), PM/WRA held the seminar in Nairobi, Kenya, on 1–2 July 2008.

The seminar was hosted by the government of Kenya and attended by State Department Special Envoy on MANPADS Threat Reduction Ambassador Lincoln Bloomfield, Jr., officials from the 12 African member states to RESCA, and representatives from the United Kingdom and nongovernmental organizations. The attendees discussed in detail MANPADS proliferation in the African Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa.

The seminar stressed the importance of strengthened physical security and stockpile management in light of activities by the United States to bolster efforts to protect international aviation from MANPADS. Since 2003, the State Department, via the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, has helped 25 countries destroy more than 26,000 at-risk MANPADS. The Office of Conventional Arms Threat Reduction in the State Department's Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation, along with Special Envoy Bloomfield, has promoted stricter controls on governments' importing, exporting and transferring of MANPADS by governments.

This effort has been in tandem with PM/WRA's broader efforts to end the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (in Africa and globally), protect civilian populations, and strengthen peace.

For the original State Department press release on this seminar, visit

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/jun/106314.htm>.

For a fact sheet on the MANPADS threat and PM/WRA's efforts to combat it, visit <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/fs/107632.htm>.

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18. Nepal Expresses Commitment to Becoming Mine Free

Members of the Nepalese Constituent Assembly gathered in early August with representatives from national and international non-governmental organizations, civil-society groups, and security forces to express a commitment toward building a mine-free Nepal.

The declaration they made, entitled "Mine Action and the Ottawa Treaty," focuses on providing holistic victim assistance (through financial, material and other resources) and remediating national contamination from landmines and other explosive remnants of war. The declaration builds on anti-landmine efforts already active in Nepal; with support from the Campaign to Ban Landmines–Nepal, the Nepalese Minister for Peace and Reconstruction has signed a letter of support for banning landmines. Demining activities are underway, but observers note a disappointing lack of progress. Organizers hope this newest declaration will lead Nepal to become a State Party to the Ottawa Convention.

Mine contamination and the use of improvised explosive devices have been prevalent in Nepal as part of

that country's prolonged internal struggles. Since the cessation of hostilities in 2006, demining activities have not progressed quickly, and much of the country remains affected by mines and other ERW. The cease-fire agreement has held, making the formation of a national mine-action authority possible; however, the lack of manpower and demining capacity (both financial and technical) has hampered efforts. Beyond possible accession to the Ottawa Convention, the new declaration could increase support for mine action in-country, as well as internationally.

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