Mine Action Support Group Update

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The facility is adjacent to a 72 square kilometer (28 square mile) demolition range that will provide the WP compound in vacuum conditions. Therefore, when it is exposed to oxygen, it instantaneously combusts and emits toxic smoke, and it is very difficult to stop the burning if appropriate measures are not taken beforehand. Because the WP compound left on subsurface fragments will cause serious burns if it comes into contact with human skin, it is extremely dangerous and should be moved while dealing with this type of UXO.

To prevent any negative effects to humans while handling the devices containing WP, personal protective equipment should include leather gloves of a special design, fireproof coveralls over body armor, hard hats, respirators and glasses. In case of an emergency, an on-site medical support team should have a compounded solution of sodium carbonate and copper sulfate available to smears over affected areas.

Another innovation to protect the team consists of a water-filled, metal tub installed at the site. As soon as the subsurface fragments with the WP are recovered, they are immediately placed into the tub to prevent burning. If the tub is too far from the operation point, then ordinary metal buckets of water may be utilized for collecting the fragments. A team of four or five people should be able to move the tubs to the demolition area safely.

During the demolition preparations the WP UXO projectors can be molded with the other types of munitions, because usually the thickness of their casing is greater and there are no other explosives inside. This process requires a larger donor charge to disrupt and vaporize these items—for example, TNT to destroy WP-free projectors. Also, explosives used during the demolition operations of WP ammunition should be placed underneath the stockpile in order to provide the maximum possible height of explosion, as this will prevent scattering and provide full neutralization of the WP substance.

This article has provided an overview of the ANAMA team's operations in the field as part of the Sahafa Project. Hopefully, this account of the team's work has given the international demining community useful insights into dealing with the unique hazards of UXO containing white phosphorous.
Update from UNDP

Algeria. UNDP contracted the French NGO Handicap International to conduct a mine-risk education needs assessment. This study will enable the mine action program to identify the most at-risk population and to measure the level of awareness of the population and its behaviors in situations of risk. In addition, the study will identify the existing awareness means and the actors involved in sensitizing in order to better target the action.

Iraq. The Republic of Iraq acceded to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Treaty on 15 August 2007, becoming the 153rd State Party. The treaty entered into force on 1 February 2008. Iraq’s initial transparency report required under Article 7 is due no later than July 2008. Iraq’s treaty-mandated deadline for the destruction of all stockpiled AP mines is 1 February 2012, and its deadline for destruction of all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control is 1 February 2018.

The government took the decision to transfer the National Mine Action Authority from the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation to the Ministry of Environment. The handover process was also completed by the end of 2007.

A two-year U.N.-junta project between UNDP and the World Health Organization in the town of Gao, in the northern region of Mali, funded by the Norwegian Government, was launched in September 2007 in Ebril. For the execution of the project, mainly national NGOs partners are being used. The project aims at enhancing the victim-assistance capacity that was developed under the United Nations Office of Project Services Mine Action Programme as part of the Oil for Food Programme that was closed in 2007.

Jordan. Key achievements in Jordan were as follows:
- The Wadi Araba project in the southern third of the country was completed, and the clearance activities concluded in late 2007. The National Committee for Demining and Rehabilitation set a target of 50,000 square meters per year with Norwegian People’s Aid, and the region was declared free of mines as of 1 February 2008. This means that NPA/NDCR has returned over seven million square meter of land to the country’s most affected area in two years. Some of the land is in the most intensive building/development areas in the country, with over US$1 billion in investments going into projects on this land.
- Clearance along the last major remaining minefield running over 100 kilometers (62 miles) along the northern border began in October 2007.
- With technical assistance from UNICEF and funding from the United States, a targeted MRE program is now running in the border area of Mafray.

Key objectives in Jordan included:
- Norwegian Border Project. The complexity of the border and the fact that a replacement fence will need to be built in tandem with the actual demining will affect the project both from a management and a technical perspective.
- UXO is causing more injuries than mines, and it is critical that a program of appropriate planning for potential mine action activities in southern Jordan, fund raising and intermediat- ing with African Union planning staff in Addis Ababa.

Key challenges in Jordan include:
- Conduct workshop for national strategy.
- Implement 2007-funded mine-action activities.
- The Strategic Plan for Victim Assistance was completed. This Plan was presented during the Eighth Meeting of States Parties to the Mine Ban Treaty in November 2007 by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development.
- The technical surveys and follow-up activities were completed in 36 hazardous areas.

Key objectives in Uganda include:
- Four additional multi-purpose demining teams are to be deployed (splitting existing teams) in 2008.
- MRE-made EODs. Interagency quality assurance/quality control and post-clearance survey training are to be conducted.
- The project document for national execution of the mine-action program by the Office of Personnel Management is being completed.
- The Landmine Survivor Surveillance Network database is to be field-tested.
- Targeted needs assessment in the Acholi subregion is to be completed.
- Preparations for the deployment of a mine-detection dog component in cooperation with SNPs are to be completed.
- Key challenges in Uganda include:
- The return of IDPs is proceeding, and there is an ongoing urgent need for mine-action operations as a prerequisite to respond to a safe and protected return process.
- There is a risk of segregation in northern Uganda, with landmine survivors with disabilities.
- There was no extension of the Victim Assistance Advisor’s contract, although an extension to the end of 2008 was highly recommended by the government, U.N. Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery missions and external mine action evaluators and related funds were pledged by the government of Norway.

Update from UNICEF

Bosnia and Herzegovina. With UNICEF support in August, the Bosnia Herzegovina Mine Action Center organized a three-day workshop with the aim of reviewing the results of the BiH Mine Action Strategy 2004–2008, including MRE and landmine victim-assistance sub-strategies and preparations for the new 2009–2019 Mine Action Strategy. The objectives of the new strategy were defined, including strategic and operational goals and the final draft plan for 2009–2011.

From September, with UNICEF’s support, the local NGO Genesis Project, in collaboration with the Ministry of Defence and Security, implemented a new mine action strategy and a national program by the end of 2008.

In addition, UNICEF, in collaboration with the NMAC and the Ministry of Education in the three states of Kassala, Blue Nile and South Kordofan, implemented a school-based MRE project.

Key objectives in South Sudan included:
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