April 2008

Iraq

Country Profile
CISR

Follow this and additional works at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol11/iss2/33

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
Iraq
by Matthew Voegel [Mine Action Information Center]

Since 2003, the government of Iraq has taken action against mines and unexploded ordnance. On 15 August 2007, Iraq acceded to the Ottawa Convention becoming the 155th State Party. The raising levels of violence in recent years, however, have made focusing on mine action difficult for the Iraqi government—or anyone, for that matter. This decrease in violence has taken focus, time and energy from ridding the country of its extensive problems with landmines and other explosive remnants of war.1

The Mine Situation
Iraq is one of the most ERW-contaminated areas in the world due to its turbulent history of internal violence and large-scale wars, such as the 1980–88 conflict with Iran, which left the border between the two countries devastated, the first Gulf War in 1991, and the most recent invasion by U.S.-led Coalition Forces in 2003. The largest areas of contamination span hundreds of kilometers along the border with Iran and also along the border with Saudi Arabia. The most recent impact Survey of Iraq was completed in only 13 of the 18 governorates due to the security situation in the remaining areas of the country. 6 In 2003, the survey found 1,718 square kilometers (663 square miles) of contaminated land, the majority of which is agricultural. According to the IEDS, the Kurdish governorates in Iraq are some of the most contaminated areas of the world with 1,424 communities affected.2

Many communities are also affected by large amounts of unexploded ground and air ordnances, such as rockets used by Coalition Forces, along with a large quantity of abandoned explosive ordnance and ERW left by Saddam Hussein’s Army. These abandoned explosives have led to casualties in the southern part of the country in governorates like Basra, Thi Qar and Missan.3

Due to the threat of landmines and ERW, the situation with armed non-state groups has been particularly severe in many governorates, largely in the north. Yemen are victim or combat activated,2 they are causing significant casualties among U.S. military forces and local citizens.3

Mine Organizations in Iraq
Because of the extent of the contamination in Iraq, there are many different organizations, governmental and nongovernmental, working within the country to help contain the problem. These organizations include the National Mine Action Authority, the former Regional Mine Action Centre–North, the Regional Mine Action Centre–South, the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Centre and the United Nations Development Programme.

National Mine Action Authority
The NMAA was established in 2003 with support from the United Nations and was placed under the Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation. Its responsibilities included managing the budget for mine-action and donor relations, setting mine-action standards and maintaining a national database.4 The NMAA is also in charge of the organization of all mine-related education in Iraq. In 2006, the United Nations Children’s Fund collaborated with the NMAA and the General International Centre for Humantarian Demining to organize a three-day workshop in Amman, Jordan on communicating ARIE in Iraq. During the workshop, officials agreed upon a plan of action for the rest of 2006, and focused on the needs of the northern and southern regions.5 To help educate children about landmines the NMAA ran a national media campaign, which included TV and radio spots. The TV spots were broadcast on Shanawah, the national Iraqi television station, and on the Arabic children’s channel.6

However, the MoDPC issued a letter in the summer of 2007 to the Council of Ministers requesting the NMAA to be moved to another ministry. As a result, the Office of the Prime Minister declared that the NMAA be disbanded under the MoDPC and the organization was made into a “non-functioning entity.”7 To complicate matters, Abdul Wahab Adwan, General Director of the NMAA since 2003, was kidnapped on 2 November 2006, and kidnapped again in May 2007. As of this writing, there has been no news on his whereabouts.8 According to Iraqi officials at a meeting at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C., on 9 October 2007, the NMAA has been transferred to the responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment.

Mine Action Centers
In 2003 the NMAA set up three mine action centers in the country: the Iraq Mine Action Centre in Baghdad, which oversees all mine action in the city; the Regional Mine Action Centre–North, located in the city of Erbil, and RMAC–South, located in the city of Basra. RMAC’s responsibilities include monitoring all mine-action activities in their respective regions, collecting and analyzing data, preparing plans and assigning clearance tasks, and monitoring quality assurance.9 In 2005, IMAC ceased to exist and thus the NMAA gained responsibility for all mine-action activities in the Baghdad area as well as fulfilling other IMAC duties.10 Between 1997 and 2003, the U.S. Office of Project Services was responsible for the Northern Iraq Mine Action Program, using funds provided through the U.S. Oil for Food Programme. UNOPS was able to establish a number of local Kurdish demining NGOs. These NGOs were transferred to RMAC–North when the UNOPS program was handed over to the NMAA and the Coalition Provisional Authority in 2003.11 Then in 2004, the Kurdish regional government assumed responsibility of mine action in the three Kurdish governorates. RMAC–North was eventually renamed and returned to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Centre, which is still separate from NMAA. IKMAC oversaw all mine-action activities in the three Kurdish governorates. RMAC–North was eventually renamed and returned to the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Centre, which is still separate from NMAA. IKMAC oversaw all mine-action activities in the three Kurdish governorates. While the General Directorate for Mine Action manages mine action in the South.

At the end of May 2005, IKMAC had cleared 53,027 square meters (512 acres) of land. Also in 2005, IKMAC—with the help of the Iraqi Regional Government—undertook a project to clear 500 kilometers of roads and 800 kilometers of pipelines.2

United Nations Development Programme
The UNDP has been responsible for the back-up mine action in Iraq. The UNDP has worked closely with the NMAA before and is still working with it. UNDP and RMAD used to work under the Ministry of Environment, it is currently trying to help the Iraq government create the Iraqi Mine Action Authority.12

Profile Iraq

Matthew Voegel has been working as an Editorial Assistant for the Journal of Mine Action since October 2006. He is currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in international relations at James Madison University.

Matthew Voegel, Editorial Assistant, Journal of Mine Action

Published by JMU Scholarly Commons, 2008

11.2 | spring 2008 | journal of mine action | country profiles | 77