Clearing the Way in Azerbaijan

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activities within the total reconstruction and development effort; living standards and human development surveys are not capable of rating the severity of the local landmine and UXO impacts. It is their combination with participatory methods that leads to better UXO impacts. It is their combination with participatory assessments that elicit the voice of local communities.9

And both survey traditions can benefit enormously from participatory assessments that react to a number of requests for the removal of UXO fired during the war and lodged in the basements of houses, in the walls or in the adjacent yards. Normally, clearance of one house takes about three working days. House-clearance operations are very labor-intensive. The majority of UXO is found subsurface, which requires excavation efforts sometimes to the depth of five meters (16.4 feet).

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Published by JMU Scholarly Commons, 2007

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ANAMA continuously receives requests from affected communities as well as humanitarian aid organizations for clearance of houses from mines and unexploded ordnance. Due to the absence of a specialized team able to react quickly and eliminate such problems, a limited amount of explosive ordnance disposal tasks were dealt with until late 2005, when a 12-man ANAMA Emergency Response Team was established. The U.S. European Command and ArmorGroup EOD Specialists trained the team. During this training, basic principles of booby-trap and house-clearance operations were covered. Since completion of its training, the ERT has been actively deployed to fire-war-affected districts of Azerbaijan to perform house-clearance operations.

Residential Area Clearance

Initially, 95 houses in Yukhari and Ashagi Kurdmahmudli villages of Fizuli region that were requested by Norwegian Refugee Council for further reconstruction activities were cleared of explosive remnants of war. This operation allowed reconstruction of houses for more than 100 local families, who then could live free from the threat of explosive devices. Besides this operation, ANAMA continues to react to a number of requests for the removal of UXO fired during the war and lodged in the basements of houses, in the walls or in the adjacent yards. Normally, clearance of one house takes about three working days. House-clearance operations are very labor-intensive. The majority of UXO is found subsurface, which requires excavation efforts sometimes to the depth of five meters (16.4 feet).

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High-priority Clearance

Besides house-clearance operations, ANAMA is currently implementing a de-mining project in support of governmental initiatives to repatriate internally displaced persons. Last year ANAMA signed a contract with the Social Development Fund for IDPs concerning clearance of 19 million square meters (4,695 acres) of suspected area in Zobjug, Final region. This project is a high priority for the government, as cleared land will be used to construct a huge settlement that will allow more than 2,000 displaced families to leave temporary residences in tent camps and move to Zobjug. The duration of clearance for the project is projected to be 19 months.

Since the beginning of the project, 53 deminers, 17 mine-detection dogs and five mechanical demining machines have been involved in operations. This mined area has been identified by General Survey and Landmine Impact Survey. Several mine incidents have occurred in the northern part of the area; however, most of the land is classified as a low-threat, suspected anti-tank mined area. In order to ensure operations are conducted in the most efficient manner, ANAMA has conducted a field test of various clearance methods and developed a new system where all three tools are integrated in a most time- and cost-effective manner. The system stipulates 100-percent clearance where demining machines cut lanes (every 10–15 meters [32–50 feet]) with a subsequent quality-assurance check by dogs or magnetic locators in between the lanes (see photo X). The Foerster magnetic locator, with four probe attachments, known as the FEREX 4.032 DLG, is continuously used for clearance of Zobjug area. This tool continues to show excellent results—daily productivity of the locator can reach 15,000 square meters (3.7 acres). As a result of the employment of a new area-reduction methodology, overall productivity at the Zobjug site has reached approximately one million square meters (247 acres) per month.

Based on past experience with demining machines in Azerbaijan, ANAMA’s mechanical demining specialists compiled a comparative analysis of the machines’ performance. Table 1 reflects summary results of the analysis undertaken.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model of</th>
<th>Date of</th>
<th>Total operational</th>
<th>Total period</th>
<th>Total fuel consumption (metric tons)</th>
<th>Missed working days</th>
<th>Exploitation expenses for the machine (AZN) (1)</th>
<th>Fuel cost per sq.m. cleared (AZN) (2)</th>
<th>Total cost per sq.m. cleared (AZN) (1)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-4 (1)</td>
<td>09/2004</td>
<td>2,100</td>
<td>28 / 448</td>
<td>1,746,284</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>77,393</td>
<td>0.0025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-4 (2)</td>
<td>05/2005</td>
<td>556</td>
<td>8 / 128</td>
<td>488,800</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22,542</td>
<td>0.0033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bozina-5</td>
<td>06/2005</td>
<td>1,033</td>
<td>19 / 304</td>
<td>1,035,845</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>86,321</td>
<td>0.0055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Val</td>
<td>08/2005</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>4 / 64</td>
<td>61,500</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5,950</td>
<td>0.0210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhino</td>
<td>09/2005</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>16 / 256</td>
<td>237,800</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>58,427</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Comparative analysis of mechanical demining machines.

Conclusion

Following the war, hundreds of Azeri families were unable to return home due to mine and UXO contaminations in residential areas. New clearance projects from ANAMA, however, have helped make Azerbaijan safer by eliminating the threat of UXO and landmines from affected houses, yards and villages. A combination of technology and human commitment has been necessary for the successful clearance of residential areas and the safe return of displaced families. See Endnotes, Page 7.

Benefits of Integrating MRE into School Curricula

When MRE is integrated into the curriculum of schools, not only does financial support from the government increase for MRE activities, but also the importance of mine-clearance issues among the population rises. Therefore, ANAMA recommends this initiative be considered a priority task for MRE programme implementations in any country.

Currently, 1,520 teachers at 790 schools teach the MRE course in Azerbaijan, reaching 32,500 students. The Ministry of Education pays the expenses for the training, and the heads of district education departments are responsible for supervising the classes. The responsibility of teachers and heads of schools increases and thus the attitude towards MRE changes. For the teachers and community leaders it becomes a humanitarian task, or, rather, a noble duty which they perform in order to help and protect their communities and fellow citizens.

Since integrating MRE into schools, students have become more sensitive to the problem. After being taught MRE, they begin to inform the authorities and their teachers when they find mines, unexploded ordnance and unknown objects and thus the attitude towards MRE changes. For the teachers and community leaders it becomes a humanitarian task, or, rather, a noble duty which they perform in order to help and protect their communities and fellow citizens.

By changing its approach, the Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action has been able to achieve much success in its mine-risk education program. As Head of the MRE Department for ANAMA, Musa Jalalov describes the new steps being taken in Azerbaijan to educate the public and involve the community in mine action.

by Musa Jalalov [Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action]