The International Test & Evaluation Program

On 17 July 2000, Belgium, Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Commission (EC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding to create the International Test and Evaluation Program (ITEP). Germany became a participant on 14 June 2002. The following information was extracted from the ITEP website (www.itep.ws).

by ITEP

Mission

Through its members, ITEP constitutes a global network of test and evaluation resources for humanitarian demining. The following are activities within ITEP:

• Developing and using universally accepted standards for test and evaluation methodology.
• Collecting, generating and distributing robust, scientifically objective data on technologies, materials and systems for humanitarian demining.
• Establishing a responsive and cost-effective test and evaluation program.
• Performing test and evaluation of equipment and systems—existing or in development.

Efficiency is achieved through collaboration among ITEP participants with complementary test facilities and technical capabilities. Data generated through ITEP test and evaluation activities is available to the demining community in the form of reports published on the ITEP website.

Organizational Structure

ITEP is managed by an Executive Committee consisting of one representative from each member, that reports to a Board of Directors. Administrative and technical support is provided by a Secretary, currently hosted by the EC Joint Research Centre in Italy. The Secretary is the main communication channel and point of contact for those seeking information on or contact with ITEP. Points of contact for the participating countries are provided on the website and contact information for the Secretariat may be found at the end of this article.

Activities

A work plan, listing national and collaborative projects, has been prepared and published on the ITEP website. It is divided into six technical areas listed as survey, detection, mechanical assistance, personal protection, manual tools and neutralization. The lead nation and partners are identified for each project, and a timeline for completion is provided.

When ITEP was established in 2000, there were no universally accepted methods for testing and evaluating humanitarian demining equipment and systems. Individual ITEP participants were in the process of developing test methods that generate reliable, reproducible and statistically significant data. Under ITEP workshops are being conducted to review these national methodologies and identify universally acceptable test protocols for metal detectors and mechanical assistance equipment. A similar process is planned for personal protective equipment (PPE).

A systematic inventory has been completed of test and evaluation activities, capabilities, and needs in the Eastern Hemisphere. The inventory was carried out through questionnaires, visits to Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Slovenia, and a regional workshop in Croatia. A report is available on the website.

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Costa Rica: The First Country in Latin America Free of Anti-Personnel Landmines

On December 10, 2002, Costa Rica declared itself the first country free from antipersonnel landmines in the Western Hemisphere. Placed in hills and brooks, bridges and roads, mines and UXO were buried for more than 15 years during the conflict in Central America.

by Jaime Perales and Carl Case

Introduction

With the support of the Organization of American States (OAS), Costa Rican deminers destroyed more than 338 mines on the border with Nicaragua, and cleared more than 130,000 square meters of land. As a result, formerly contaminated areas were rehabilitated as potential agricultural zones. There were 356 mine accidents, or 338 deaths, that we had the opportunity to prevent and this gives us satisfaction and pride,” said Luis Alfonzo Rivas, international supervisor of the OAS.

OAS/Mine Action began its work in 1996 with the government of Costa Rica in the areas of mine clearance, mine risk education (MRE) and mine victim rehabilitation. With the conclusion of operations, the government formalized its commitment to the Ottawa Convention, which stipulates the destruction of anti-personnel landmines in approximately a ten-year period. Costa Rica signed the Convention in 1997 and ratified it in 1999.

Multilateral Cooperation Effort

OAS/Mine Action is a program created by the OAS at the request of its member countries. Apart from Costa Rica, OAS/Mine Action has programs in Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Peru. In collaboration with the Inter-American Defense Board (IADB)—military counterpart of the Inter-American System—the program has the following components: 1) humanitarian demining, 2) MRE, 3) mine victim rehabilitation, 4) stockpile destruction and 5) database and information systems.

The financial support of 19 donor countries has permitted the OAS to clear more than 1,400,000 square feet of land in Central America and more than 22,000 anti-personnel landmines. The total effort cost of more than $40 million (U.S.), channelized through the OAS for all Central America, has been key to finalizing mine clearance operations in Costa Rica.

The IADB has assisted in the training for demining operations since the creation of the program. To the present, this military entity has trained approximately 260 international supervisors from 11 member countries. International supervision coordinates more than 900 deminers placed in five mine-affected countries.

Mine Clearance In Latin America

The programs supported by OAS/Mine Action have different challenges, depending on the country. In Honduras, some 2,269 mines have been cleared from the border with Nicaragua. In addition, in 2000, Honduras became the first country in Central America to destroy all its stockpiled mines. In 1998, Hurricane Mitch caused flooding and mudslides, which have delayed operations. Despite this setback, it is expected that demining will finalize at the end of this year.

Civil war in Guatemala lasted more than 30 years, leaving different types of UXO throughout the country. The UXO found in the affected zones includes homemade mines, booby traps and various types of grenades. There is an estimated 8,000 pieces of UXO in the country that are being located and destroyed systematically by three entities: volunteer firefighters, former members of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unit and the National Army. It is expected that operations will be completed by the end of 2004.

In Nicaragua, mines are scattered throughout the country, especially in strategic areas such as bridges and electric towers. Nevertheless, Nicaragua has reliable equipment and personnel (as well as a reliable infrastructure) in these areas, which have permitted a constant clearance effort. According to official sources, more than 63 percent of mines have been cleared and all mine stockpiles have been destroyed. It is expected that Nicaragua will be a landmine-free country by the end of 2005.

As a result of the 1995 conflict between both countries, Ecuador and Peru have more than 130,000 mines sown on their border. With more landmines than the four Central American countries combined, Peru and Ecuador have emphasized the need for mine clearance operations. The OAS has collaborated in the areas of technical training, supervision and stockpile destruction. The large
Plays Nicely With Others:
Some Thoughts on Issues Raised at the 6th International Meeting of Mine Action Directors, Geneva, March 17-20, 2003

by Dennis Barlow, Director

How many times have we been cautioned to handle valuable information: to share it only at the risk of watering down our organization—our personal—power? Our altruistic inclination to give and (hopefully) receive information has all too often been battered back by vague suspicions of those who may want to use our information as a way to marginalize us. Often times, this imperative is reinforced, at least indirectly, by our own organization. At the Mine Action Information Center (MAIC), we have tried to drive this demon away and to deal in (as paraphrase Woodrow Wilson), "open information, openly arrived at." We were gratified at the directors' meeting when someone from outside the mine action community (Niels Harford of the UN High Commision for Refugees) suggested that the paradigm has now shifted. To share information in today's world, he asserts, is to increase—not diminish—one's power. It is through this hopeful and re-published lens that we would like to review two critical issues facing the mine action community—strategic planning and coordination, which were raised at the recent meetings in Geneva.

Strategic Planning

The recent efforts, notably of Cranfield University and the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), to apply a more structured and goal-oriented approach to mine action planning has resulted in a methodology that requires discrete and logical actions based on goals, levels of analysis and decision-making strategies. Each of these decisions—which to determine objectives or tasks, analyze various courses of action, implement the plan or evaluate it—requires a different set of informational inputs.

Even more daunting, the information needed for each set of requirements will probably be vastly different. Some required data can be very technical information on the environmental, social and political impacts on affected communities, while others are more focused on the strategic and tactical perspectives on the mine action planning.

Coordination

The words communication, cooperation, coordination, collaboration and integration cause entirely too much trouble in the mine action community. They should be terms that everyone can "play well together," but they have become mired in sentence. The result is that we all too often spend our time fighting over terminological and perceived use of these terms. In the end, whatever word we use can hint at the authenticity, supportive, subordinate or other kinds of relationships.

Nevertheless, the concept of coordinating plans, and finding and utilizing synergies exists both within mine action campaigns (internal coordination) and outside the realm of mine action (external coordination), has become a major focus of concern. The requirement for more meaningful coordination is now more common than planning an event to be conducted by a coordinated organization (e.g., military operations) concerned with a short-duration conflict (e.g., a disaster relief operation), or a very specific task (e.g., capping an oil well). Even worse from the planner's perspective is that mine action functions are very diverse, often calling for capabilities residing in organizations that do not usually "play well together." A mine action campaign, therefore, should account for this by supporting phases over a considerable period of time, involve a number of unrelated functional specialties, support the well-being of all segments of a threatened region and collaborate, the integrate, or at least cooperate, of diverse—perhaps even antagonistic—organizations. This last requirement quite naturally leads us to the second major topic of the directors' meeting.