August 2003

Summary of MAG Achievements in Iraq, March–May 2003

Sean Sutton
MAG (Mines Advisory Group)

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

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.
Summary of MAG Achievements in Iraq, March–May 2003

This article highlights the demining efforts and accomplishments of the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) in Iraq.

by Sean Sutton, MAG

MAG has worked in northern Iraq since 1993 and has a large and well-developed mine action programme conducting landmine clearance, explosive ordinance disposal (EOD), survey, area demarcation and mine risk education (MRE) activities. This programme employed 700 Kurdish staff members who were supported by two expatriate advisors, fielding 17 Mine Action Teams and 14 Mine Risk Education Teams in the three northern governorates of Sulaymaniyah/New Kirkuk, Dohuk and Erbil.

Prior to the beginning of the recent conflict, donors supported MAG’s emergency preparedness activities in the region. This was primarily aimed at reducing the risk of injury or death to the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish refugees who began moving to remoter areas of northern Iraq in fear of the impending conflict. MAG focused its efforts on demarcating known dangerous areas where the thousands of displaced Kurds were expected to head. MAG also erected large billboards, distributed flyers and conducted MRE with travellers to pass on the key message: “stay on the road.” Radio and TV messages were also broadcast, reaching an estimated 500,000 people.

MAG posted additional expatriate advisors to support the programme as it moved into an emergency configuration. MAG was operational before, during and after the recent conflict, with staff working seven days a week at the busiest time. MAG continued to conduct demining and MRE activities throughout the conflict and expanded its operations into former government of Iraq (GOI) areas as Kurdish and Coalition forces pushed south. While the conflict was ongoing, MAG started re-planning its work with the aim of reducing injury and death to Kurdish internally displaced persons (IDPs) who would soon start returning to areas around Kirkuk and Mosul. Due to the vast amount of abandoned ammunition and UXO, and the presence of many unmarked minefields in these areas, MAG has now focused the majority of its capacity in former GOI areas around the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, and along the former “green line,” as security allowed access. With recently approved Department for International Development (DFID) funding, MAG is currently establishing a new mine action capacity in Mosul.

MAG also positioned staff in Kuwait prior to hostilities, enabling them to move quickly into southern Iraq to begin assessment activities as soon as the security situation allowed. MAG was able to immediately commence a United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)-funded MRE project in southern Iraq, and will soon have an EOD and landmine clearance capacity in the south.

Security has not adversely affected MAG’s operations. From the beginning of March up to the end of May, MAG achieved the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Metric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area cleared of mines and UXO</td>
<td>1,981,650 square metres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mines destroyed/relocated for destruction</td>
<td>15,068 mines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Items of UXO destroyed/relocated for destruction</td>
<td>314,803 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UXO removal tasks conducted</td>
<td>479 tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minefields/mined areas cleared</td>
<td>8 minefields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct beneficiaries of above</td>
<td>473,223 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Billboards erected</td>
<td>60 boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamphlets printed/distributed</td>
<td>200,000 printed/40,000 distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities visited</td>
<td>1,109 local population visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools, mosques etc visited</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDP locations visited</td>
<td>268 new IDP locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mine Awareness Workshops/</td>
<td>28 sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training sessions held</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct beneficiaries of above</td>
<td>1,222,979 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even with effective mine action campaigns, children will still be curious about UXO.
operations in both the north and south of the country, while coordination with military and civil bodies has been strong and beneficial. MAG is still the only mineaction agency fully operational in former Gaddafi-held areas of Iraq and will also continue its innovative work into central Iraq as security allows.

Mine Awareness, continued from page 80

(MAP) since 1997, UNOPS was able to expedite and fine-tune mine awareness programs by developing a mine action database by the year 2000. Between December 2000 and June 2002, the MAP provided mine awareness education to over 143,000 beneficiaries.

Meanwhile, UNICEF has launched an impressive MRE campaign in Iraq as well. In an effort to further target children, UNICEF has aired television campaigns to be sure children are educated and aware of the dangers they face. UNICEF is trying to get the Iraqi children back in school as quickly as possible in order to both increase MRE and to keep them off the streets and away from danger. UNICEF is the lead agency for MRE within the UN system.

Conclusion

The work these mine action organizations have completed thus far has already made vast improvements on the quality of life many Iraqis witness today. While much work remains to be done in order to build adequate infrastructure for everyday living, the long road ahead is becoming easier to navigate as these organizations figure out new and more comprehensive ways to teach mine awareness.

References

2. For more information, see the ICRC website at http://www.icrc.org/Eng/blend/40908.shtm and Iraq/OpenDocument.

Contact Information

Kristina Davis
MAIC
E-mail: daviskl@jmu.edu

Putting Sea Mammals to Work: Dolphins Help Coalition Forces in Iraq

by Nicole Kreger, MAIC

In the first month after arriving in Iraq, the dolphin teams achieved a number of successes, including unofficial clearance of 913 nautical miles of water, investigation of 237 objects, and recovery and/or destruction of over 100 mines.

Dolphins Helping Out in Iraq

Iraqi forces laid sea mines in Umm Qasr, Iraq's only deep-water port, as they withdrew from the area in late March. Thus, before humanitarian aid ships could enter, the area had to be cleared of sea mines. This mission marked the first time the NMMP dolphins were used in a combat environment. Military personnel from the United States, Australia and Britain—including 50 divers with sophisticated underwater equipment—spent four days clearing the port with the help of the dolphin teams.

Several dolphins in all helped out in the region; Tacoma and Makai arrived first, and they were later joined by Jefe and Kahili, two males, and Kona and Pursani, both females. In mere hours, the team had cleared a path for the Sir Galahad, a humanitarian aid ship. After clearing a 50-mile shipping lane in the port, the teams began clearing hazardous explosives from a wider area. The dolphin teams were also being employed to help clear the Khawr Abdullah waterway, which connects Umm Qasr to the Gulf.

The dolphins were well taken care of during their deployment; veterinarians and handlers monitored their health carefully. The group in Iraq adapted fairly well, probably because the Gulf is similar to their normal environment. One dolphin, Tacoma, left the area for about 48 hours, and some were worried he was gone for good. He did return, however; as their trainer, Aviation Ordnanceman First Class Dee Jennings, says, "They take day trips. They're not missing. We do have tracking devices on them, but we don't worry about it. They always come home."