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## A Civilian-Military Relationship: VVAF Support to HDTC

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## NGO Meets DoD

The Humanitarian Demining Training Center (HDTC) at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation's (VVAF's) Information Management and Mine Action Programs (iMMAP) are pleased to announce the establishment of a non-governmental organization (NGO) chair on the HDTC faculty. This effort is the culmination of several years of planning that began in 1999 with faculty-training exchanges between the two organizations. These initial training exchanges were begun with the intent of establishing shared mechanisms between the military and humanitarian mine action (HMA) communities so that interoperability could be improved and lessons learned by either community might benefit the other.

State, Bureau of Political/Military Affairs, Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement.

The HDTC was created in 1996. Since then, HDTC has trained more than 1,500 military trainers who have then deployed to 34 landmine-UXO-contaminated countries in support of U.S. Department of Defense and other U.S. government HMA initiatives.

As an HMA center of excellence, and through a "train-the-trainer" methodology of instruction and engagement, the center provides substantial "real-time" benefit to the U.S. government, many mine-affected countries throughout the world and the international humanitarian community as a whole.

In addition to the partnership with VVAF described here, HDTC works closely with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), other HMA NGOs, and various international organizations (IOs). These partnerships have allowed HDTC to expand its role of providing both direct and indirect support at all levels of HMA program development. While expanding its capabilities to encompass HMA information management and mine risk education (MRE), its core goals remain the same: to influence, support and develop a self-sustaining, indigenous demining capacity within those mine-affected countries that are enrolled in the U.S. government HMA program.

# *a civilian-military* **VVAF Support to HDTC** *relationship*

## Organizational Background

iMMAP is a program of the VVAF, an international humanitarian organization that addresses the causes, conduct and consequences of war through programs of advocacy and service for victims of conflict around the world. VVAF's iMMAP is the leading NGO in the field of humanitarian information management. The program provides technical assistance in identifying HMA and other public health priorities in post-war environments.

VVAF has individually (or with partner organizations) conducted landmine and UXO surveys in Kosovo, Yemen, Chad, Thailand, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Iraq. Currently, as one of several HMA country programs, iMMAP is implementing the National Landmine Impact Survey of Iraq, as well as providing Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) technical experts to advise the National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) there. iMMAP efforts in Iraq are made possible through funding from the U.S. Department of

## The Mission

The overall intent of this joint endeavor between HDTC and VVAF is to incorporate current HMA field experience and information management practices into the curriculum of HDTC in support of its role as the American military focal point for HMA training. The NGO Faculty Chair at HDTC will relay the extensive experience of HMA NGOs to the widest possible U.S. military audience, and by extension, to multiple international partners. This secondment of instructors will ensure greater cooperation, understanding and interoperability among military, commercial and non-profit HMA organizations operating throughout the world.

VVAF's provision of NGO instructors to HDTC will rotate approximately every six months. This rotation is by design. First, many of the highly capable HMA implementers are in high demand for fieldwork and are hesitant to remove themselves from the field for an extended period of time. Additionally, by bringing in a fresh, experi-

enced HMA technical expert every six months, VVAF will ensure that a wide and varying range of knowledge is made available to the HDTC faculty.

The first NGO Faculty Chair at HDTC is Mr. David Armitt. Armitt is a seasoned, highly experienced deminer and IMSMA Technical Advisor. He followed his retirement from the Canadian Armed Forces with entry into the HMA arena in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and has served in Eritrea, Iraq (several tours for the United Nations and VVAF), Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and several other country programs. During his tenure, Armitt will focus upon bringing his IMSMA expertise to the HDTC faculty, as well as sharing his knowledge of establishing technical demining programs.

Further, cooperation between VVAF and HDTC has not been limited to the classroom. During 2003, staff members of both organizations comprised sections of the U.S. Department of State's Emergency Mine Action Team (EMAT) that responded to the

post-war crisis in Iraq. Together, they provided a substantial amount of support in the effort to establish the National Mine Action Authority and the Iraq Mine Action Center (IMAC) in that country.

## Strong Support

VVAF wishes to thank the past director of HDTC, Mr. Paul Arcangeli, under whose tenure the original concept of NGO support to HDTC was conceived, developed and funded, and the present interim director, Mr. Rodney Robideau, who guided the concept to its implementation phase. VVAF also wishes to express great gratitude to the team at the Defense Security Cooperation Activity, who provide the necessary funding to support this important project, as well as the International Emergency and Refugee Health Branch of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for providing the administrative and financial framework that is allowing this project to proceed.

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