



The Landmine Problem

Afghanistan's mine and UXO (unexploded ordnance) problem is the consequence of more than 23 years of war: the Soviet invasion (1979-1989), civil fighting (1989-2001) and the military operations against Al-Qaida and Taliban (October 2001-present). The continuous strife has left some 778 km² of contaminated land affecting 2,837 communities and 17% of the total population. The U.S. led intervention in Afghanistan has resulted in the increased use of cluster munitions. This contamination, coupled with Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) has increased the suspected hazardous area from previous estimates. Additionally, Improvised Explosive Devices continue to plague both coalition forces and civilians alike.



Humanitarian Demining Programs

Afghanistan's Mine Action Program is one of the oldest and largest demining programs in the world. Established in 1989 the Mine Action Program currently employs some 8,000 Afghans. Since 2001, the Mine Action Program, overseen by the United Nations, has overseen the clearance of 147.5 square kilometers of land, 487.9 square kilometers of battlefield, and 49.8 kilometers squared of land released via cancellation or area reduction efforts. In 2006 alone,

approximately 134 square kilometers of land were cleared via mined area and battle area clearance, while 33.5 kilometers squared were released via area reduction and cancellation. Until recently, the Mine Dog Center (MDC), was the sole national Afghan mine-clearance NGO utilizing MDDs in Afghanistan. A recent effort among donor nations and the UN intends to broaden the scope of mine action capabilities within each of the national NGOs.

The Marshall Legacy Institute's Program

With funding from the Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement, MLI provided three mine-detection dogs to the Demining Agency For Afghanistan (DAFA). Trained at the Global Training Academy in Somerset, TX, these dogs arrived in Kabul in September, 2007. In 2008 MLI received a matching grant from the US Department of State to provide 15 mine detection dogs to Afghanistan. The first "six pack", trained at the Global Training Academy in Somerset, TX, arrived in Kabul in June 2008, where the lifesaving dogs are training to "sniff out" mines with Afghan clearance organization OMAR – the Organization for Mine Action and Afghan Rehabilitation. MLI will continue to raise funding and awareness among the U.S. population to send more of these valuable canines to mine clearance organizations in Afghanistan in early spring of 2009. MLI is also launching a CHAMPS (Children Against Mines Program) International campaign in Afghanistan. Schools in the United States will communicate via Skype-Cast with schools in Afghanistan to promote good will, global citizenship, and raise money to provide rehabilitation to a young Afghan landmine survivor.

Sources of Additional Information

- *Landmine Monitor Report 2007*, Human Rights Watch/International Campaign to Ban Landmines
- *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, U.S. Department of State