

# The Key Milestones of International Mine Action and Humanitarian Demining

**October 1980** || The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is created to regulate the use of landmines and other weapons, marking the first time that there has been an attempt to restrict the use of landmines.

**December 1983** || The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons enters into force, as does Protocol II of the CCW, which deals with the use of mines, booby-traps and other devices.

**1988** || Rae McGrath defines the survey process as an absolute prerequisite for mine action. He defines the Impact Assessment Survey (Level One) as a field assessment through interviews and questionnaires conducted among the local population, former fighting forces, hospitals and community as a prerequisite for determining the impact of landmines and UXO on the community. The Technical Survey (Level Two) is a mapping process to confirm the location and size of the minefield. \**Landmines and UXO: A Resource Book* by Rae McGrath.

**1988** || The founders of HALO Trust, a private British demining organization, engage in one of the earliest private demining efforts in Afghanistan. They are credited with

coining the term “humanitarian demining” to differentiate it from military demining efforts.

**August 1990** || The word *deminer* begins being used in the mine action community to describe the individuals who are removing the mines from the ground.

**August 1990** || The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) establishes rehabilitation centers in Afghanistan and Pakistan for training orthopedic technicians to render professional treatment to Afghan mine survivors.

**1992** || The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is formed. The ICBL brings together over 1,300 human rights and humanitarian mine action organizations in one of the most thorough information-gathering networks on mine action.

**October 1992** || The United States unilaterally bans the export of its anti-personnel landmines, per Public Law 102-484, Section 1365; 22 United States Code, 2778. This ban currently extends until 2003.

**1992** || Cambodian Mine Action Center is formed and it is considered the first major integrated mine action program.

**October 1993** || The United States formally establishes the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Program, an inter-agency (U.S. Department of State, USAID, U.S. Department of Defense) effort to provide appropriate assistance to mine-affected countries around the world that seek U.S. help. Since 1993, the U.S. has spent over \$600 million on humanitarian mine action.

**December 1994** || The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs releases *Hidden Killers: The Global Landmine Crisis*. This is the first of many reports detailing landmine statistics, deaths and injuries in mine-affected countries.

**1995** || Mozambique begins demining with its first commercial demining company, MgM, on a humanitarian mine action project.

**1995** || Geographic Information Systems are introduced to map contaminated areas, which will eventually result in mine contamination maps to assist in risk reduction.

**1995–1997** || Humanitarian demining begins on a large scale in the Balkans.

**1995 ||** Princess Diana visits Angola and draws world attention to the landmine crisis.

**1995 ||** United States Special Forces start training deminers throughout the world in support of the U.S. “Train-the-Trainer” program.

**1996 ||** DC Comic books are delivered to Bosnia. This is the first attempt to distribute mine awareness information on a large scale using the medium of comic book heroes to help expose children to the threats of mines in their communities.

**1996 ||** UNICEF establishes Mine Awareness Guidelines.

**January 1996 ||** MgM establishes an Internet forum, which provides many in the mine action community with an information-sharing network as well as a place to air criticisms and concerns.

**May 1996 ||** The Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons Review Conference adopts the Amended Mine Protocol. It is made applicable to both internal and international armed conflicts.

**1996 ||** The Copenhagen Conference unveils a proposed set of standards and procedures for

mine action, including MedEvac procedures, for deminers and UXO.

**1996 ||** First introduction of *Jane's Mines and Mine Clearance*, edited by Colin King. This is an encyclopedia of landmine information giving technical details and photos of nearly all mines used around the world.

**June 1997 ||** The first issue of the *Journal of Mine Action* appears online. “Its appearance marks a milestone in transparency and information sharing.” –Andy Smith, independent demining consultant.

**August 1997 ||** Landmine Survivors Network patron, Princess Diana, visits Bosnia.

**October 1997 ||** The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) is formed to serve as the UN focal point for mine action. At the global level, it is responsible for co-ordinating all aspects of mine action within the UN system to ensure an effective and proactive response to mine contamination. At the field level, it is responsible for providing mine action assistance in the context of humanitarian emergencies and peacekeeping operations.

**December 1997 ||** The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of

Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction, commonly known as the Ottawa Treaty, is opened for signatures in Ottawa, Canada. It plays a significant role in the public's awareness of the mine problem and in directing government and donor funding and attention to it.

**December 1997 ||** ORDATA, The International Deminers Guide to Unexploded Ordnance Identification, Recovery and Disposal is released to the general public. It provides the mine action community with a reference guide in identifying, recovering and disposing of unexploded ordnance. The CD-ROM database was conceived by the U.S. Department of Defense to capitalize on the success of its earlier “MineFacts” CD. ORDATA has since been followed by ORDATA II and KORDATA. To date, over 18,000 copies of the ORDATA series database have been distributed free of charge to the mine action community, as well as military and civilian bomb disposal technicians.

**June 1998 ||** The first *Landmine Monitor Report*, a massive reference guide to landmine facts and statistics around the world, is released. It is an invaluable reference tool for all involved in demining and mine action.

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**1998** || The Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) is established by the government of Switzerland to support mine action efforts of the international community and the United Nations through research, operational assistance and support of the mine ban treaty.

**October 1999** || The UN, in cooperation with the GICHD, initiates a review of what was then known as the "International Standards for Humanitarian Mine Clearance Operations." The review, and subsequent revision, has acknowledged the important changes that have taken place in the strategic management and funding of mine action and reflects ongoing developments in operational practices and procedures. Twenty-two new standards now form part of the framework of the overall International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), which in September 2001 were endorsed by the UN Interagency Coordination Group.

**November 1999** || The *Journal of Mine Action* appears in print. The first hard copies are mailed to 300 subscribers. Subscriptions quadruple over the next year.

**1999** || The Information Management System for Mine Action

(IMSMA) Version One is developed by UNMAS. Expectations are that such a system will greatly enhance monitoring, planning and program implementation. It will also serve the needs of both the UN and other partners involved in mine action activities. In response to this need, an agreement was concluded between UNMAS and the GICHD to develop and maintain an information management system. Version One of the System was completed in 1999 based on experience in a number of existing mine action programs. IMSMA has been designed for use within mine-affected countries, and incorporates a database and Geographic Information System (GIS). It provides an effective tool to store, process and analyze the information gathered during the three levels of survey. It also deals with mine awareness- and survivor assistance-related data.

**February 2000** || The *Deminer Injury Study* is released to the international demining community. It broke new ground and established not only a milestone, but also a baseline for future collection of deminer injury data. The initial study has since been undertaken as a long-term project by the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining.

**July 2000** || The United States, the European Commission, Belgium, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Sweden sign the International Test and Evaluation Program (ITEP) for Humanitarian Demining Equipment, Processes and Methods, in Brussels.

**August 2000** || The U.S. Department of Defense releases the final report of its Lower Extremity Assessment Program. This milestone effort utilized full-body human cadavers to fully evaluate the mechanism of injury and determine current levels of protection provided by commercially produced landmine protective footwear. The research broke new ground in the use of test instrumentation, in particular high-speed radiographic imaging (cineradiography).

**2000** || First Landmine Impact Survey completed in Yemen.

**2000** || The Kosovo Mine Action Coordination Center is heralded as a success in establishing the major coordination role of a mine action center.

**2001** || The revised UNMAS International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) are released to include structures for timely revision and

for sharing information. Many believe this is more significant than the first issue of IMAS because now the industry has usable standards that can be applied and revised.

**July 2001** || The results of the International Pilot Project for Technology Cooperation are published. The U.S. Department of Defense conceived the milestone report, sometimes referred to as the metal detector “consumer report,” as a first-ever attempt to conduct a multinational test and evaluation venture. Canada, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the European Commission’s Joint Research Centre joined the U.S. in evaluating 25 different detector models from 13 manufacturers. The intent of the project was to determine the best detector(s) for a given set of operational parameters, as well as serve as a pilot project for the International Test and Evaluation Program.

**September 2001** || The conflict in Afghanistan and the media attention on the landmine problem results in increased landmine awareness among the general population.

**April 2002** || The Quick Reaction Demining Force makes its first foreign deployment to Sri Lanka in order to assess the landmine threat and perform short-term clearance.

## Why Landmines Are Used *by Huntington Associates*

Some countries consider mines to be vital and legitimate defensive weapons and maintain that if they are carefully regulated and subjected to new technologies designed to limit their life spans, they can be used to protect soldiers and homelands without danger to civilians.

Several countries cite the need for mines to protect international borders; others focus on the practicality of using mines for the defense of vital infrastructure; and major military powers agree that antitank mines are essential weapons for modern military forces engaged in ground warfare.

**Mines Used in Border Defense** || Finland, India, Russia, China, Kuwait, and South Korea claim that mines are necessary to protect their borders. They believe that the presence of mines would slow or stall an invading enemy army, giving them time to organize a response. Nations with relatively small militaries compared to neighbors with much larger forces say that mines are vital for protecting and preserving civilian populations.

Border minefields should be recorded, mapped, marked, and, if possible, fenced. Signs or patrols, or both, are sometimes used to alert local citizens to the dangers of mines so that they do not enter these areas.

When border mines are deemed no longer necessary, they can be removed. The United States removed its mines from Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba, within a few months, and, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, deminers removed the vast carpet of landmines stretching from the North Sea to the Alps in less than a year.

**Mines Used to Protect Ground Forces** || Many countries believe that despite the desire for wars to be fought remotely with bombs and guided missiles, future conflicts will continue to be low-intensity, low technology, drawn-out affairs. They claim that the availability of “smart mines” provides them with a force multiplier that protects soldiers at the same time that it safeguards civilians and that “smart” technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated. Without “smart” landmines, they point out, there are times when ground forces might have to be increased fivefold to achieve the same objectives.

Military leaders also caution that without landmines fighting a war might become less rather than more humane. They call attention to fact that a great deal more artillery and bombing might have to be employed to take the place of today’s mines. Such increased use of force might cause greater civilian casualties.

The regulated and defensive use of mines by conventional military forces to protect national security interests stands in sharp contrast to the indiscriminate use of mines by irregular forces in civil conflicts. Unfortunately, today’s high cost of “smart” technology used in “smart” mines practically ensures that insurgents or terrorists will not use them when ordinary mines are available.

**Mines Used by Unconventional Forces** || Unconventional forces—guerrillas, insurgents, rebels, and terrorists—engaged in internal conflicts are responsible for the majority of mines laid in the last several years. These groups tend to use mines indiscriminately without marking or mapping where they have been laid.

In some instances, unconventional forces will purposely target civilians in order to demoralize and disorganize enemy families and communities. Some of these groups lay nuisance mines, that is, mines placed to interrupt daily activities like drawing water from a well, gathering firewood from a field, going to school, or picking fruit from an orchard.

For insurgent forces throughout the world, “dumb” landmines have become the “weapons of choice.” These mines cost less than \$3 to buy, and homemade versions are easy to make. Mines are “soldiers who never sleep”; they can help turn a small rebel group into an army.

The indiscriminate use of mines by unconventional forces, untouched by international law and humanitarian conventions, remains a major challenge for the global community today.