

# International Campaign to Ban Landmines Australian Network Inc.

Tel: (03) 9251 5277 Fax:-(03) 9654 2136  
Email: [australia@icbl.org](mailto:australia@icbl.org) Website: <http://australia.icbl.org>

Memorandum 86  
September 2009



Roundtable on Mine Action - Especially on Victim Assistance and Mine/Cluster Munitions Clearance in Countries of the South East Asia region.  
Tuesday August 11 2009  
Asia Pacific College of Diplomacy ANU.

The roundtable was hosted by the Australian Network to Ban Landmines and organised by Lorel Thomas, Bernadette West and John Heathers. Thanks to the good offices of Professor William Maley we were able to secure the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University for the day.

Delegates from all the ASEAN countries were invited and all except Singapore and Burma/Myanmar accepted. Unfortunately Malaysia had to withdraw due to other commitments.

However, we still had delegates from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

Speakers and/or other participants came from: the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, The Medical Association for the Prevention of War (MAPW,) AusAID, ActionAid Australia (formerly Austcare,) Mines Victims and Clearance Trust (MiVAC) and the Australian Government Department of Defence and Trade(DFAT)

The programme included: Legal issues, Clearance issues, Victim Assistance, Non-State Actors, Possibilities for Financial Assistance, the Mine Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions and Shared Resources and Cooperation.

Although much technical information was provided and discussed the emphasis was on regional cooperation and the sharing of both knowledge and resources.

Australia has a pivotal role to play in mine action in this region and the ANBL hopes to be able to facilitate further regional discussions.

Lorel Thomas  
Secretary  
ANBL



Left to Right:  
John Heathers, Lorel Thomas and  
Bernadette West

Roundtable participants from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and ANBL.



Roundtable participants from AusAID, the Lao PDR and Cambodia.



Tubes of Cluster Bombs Found in Vietnam.

Cam Lo District, Quang Tri Province :

An unexploded and partially intact assembly of cluster munitions, packed in a configuration of tube-type pods dropped from an American aircraft more than three decades ago, has been unearthed in Quang Tri Province near the DMZ.

A quick response EOD team (explosive ordnance disposal) from Project RENEW, which locates and destroys such explosive remnants of war, was alerted by a local resident who told them he knew of buried ordnance that had been in the area for many years.



EOD team members followed the man along a winding dirt road about 5 km west of Highway 1-A, through rolling land planted with acacia trees, to a bomb crater about 10 meters wide.

In the middle of the crater were the aluminum tubes, almost buried by soil. The team began the slow and difficult task of digging, carefully and safely removing the packed earth around the tubes, to a depth that would allow the ordnance to be removed or neutralized.



The ordnance has been identified as SU-14/A dispensers, comprised of aluminum tubes mounted in a rack and containing approximately 100 to 120 BLU-24/B sub munitions in a full assembly. After days of difficult excavation work, on the morning of Wednesday, August 19 the team managed to pull the dispenser out of the crater from a depth of 2.5 meters. Five tubes on one end of the rack were missing, indicating that the pods may have come apart before they hit the earth.

Project RENEW's EOD team and NPA have operated in Cam Lo District since June 2008, destroying more than 1,200 ERW. One-third of that ordnance was cluster bombs.

The EOD teams depend heavily on information gathered from local people as part of Project RENEW's Mine Risk Education community reporting network, a system now covering five communes of Cam Lo District. Cooperation between local residents and the EOD quick response team has helped reduce the threat of ERW in affected communities.

However, the clearance work is far from finished. According to Handicap International, from 1965 to 1975, the U.S dropped at least 96.9 million antipersonnel and other cluster munitions all over Vietnam .

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM)

The global ban on cluster munitions is the latest development in the field of international law. The treaty bans the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of cluster munitions and places obligations on countries to clear affected areas, assist victims and destroy stockpiles. It is the most significant treaty of its kind since the ban on anti-personnel landmines in 1997. Like the Mine Ban Treaty, this new treaty is likely to have a powerful effect in stigmatising cluster bombs, so that even those countries that do not sign the treaty will not be able to use them without being subject to international condemnation.

The CCM has now been signed by 98 countries and ratified by 17. It will enter into force, (become binding international law,) when 30 countries have ratified.

To find out more about cluster munitions and the CCM go to:<http://www.stopclustermunitions.org/>

**EGYPT: Where World War II Now Targets the Indigenous.**  
**An article by Cam McGrath from Inter Press Service, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2009**

It has been more than 65 years since the guns fell silent, but the World War II desert battlefields where Allied forces defeated Rommel's Afrika Corps are still claiming lives. Each year the casualty count grows, as Bedouins planting crops, herding livestock and collecting scrap metal are killed or maimed by rusting landmines and munitions hidden beneath the baking sands of Egypt's North West Coast.

More than 670 Egyptians have been killed and 7,500 injured by landmines in this underdeveloped region during the last 20 years, according to the Landmines Struggle Centre (LSC), a Cairo-based NGO that collects data on mine victims. "There are dozens of casualties every year, most of which go unreported," said Sami Abada, the centre's director.

The Allied and Axis armies that fought pitched battles in northern Egypt during the summer of 1942 left behind vast quantities of mines and shells. An estimated 16.7 million landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) contaminate the coastal plain between Alexandria and the Libyan border, posing a threat to local Bedouin residents and an obstacle to the region's economic development.

Having failed in its attempts to hold the countries that planted the landmines accountable for their removal, Egypt instead invited them to support a 10.5 billion dollar scheme backed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to develop the expansive governorate containing the WWII battlefields. The North West Coast and Inland Desert (NWCID) project envisages clearing the area's landmines and UXO to make the land accessible to agriculture, livestock and mining. The economic development is expected to create 400,000 jobs, encouraging up to 1.5 million people to move from the overcrowded Nile Valley by 2022.

In 2006 the Egyptian government and UNDP initiated a joint programme to fund and implement the development mega-project, breaking it down into bite-sized chunks more appealing to foreign donors. The first phase is a pilot project to establish an administrative unit, procure equipment and de-mine 13,000 hectares of land. The government and UNDP covered 27 percent of the phase's 3.2 million dollar price tag. Foreign donors put up the rest.

Mine clearance began in February on two blocks deemed high priority for development: a 1,300-hectare plot near Al-Alamein earmarked for civic expansion, and an 11,800-hectare swath along an important irrigation canal. "Currently the army is working on the second area after having already cleared the first batch," said Fathy El-Shazly, director of the executive secretariat for the Demining and Development of the North West Coast, the agency coordinating the pilot project.

El-Shazly said his agency is still trying to determine the full extent of the contamination area and the amount of deadly explosives it contains. The official estimate - 16.7 million mines and UXO littered across 240,000 hectares - was extrapolated from de-mining work carried out by the Egyptian army in the 1980s and 90s. The figures are contentious, however, as they do not take into account corporate demining operations, nor reconcile with the geographic distribution of landmine victims. "We know that within this area many hectares have been cleared by oil and gas companies, the desert research centre and other agencies," El-Shazly told IPS. "At the same time, the contamination has been found to extend beyond the area suspected by the army. In some areas such as Ras Hekma and Siwa there are no mines indicated (on maps), yet many accidents."

El-Shazly's team is attempting to build an accurate map of the contaminated zones using data gleaned from wartime maps supplied by foreign governments, landmine casualty reports, and the exploratory surveys of oil and gas companies. "We are now compiling all the activities of the individual operators into a national database that will enable us to state the exact number (of mines) and where they are located," he said. The team has also conducted field surveys and reviewed existing case files to create a comprehensive database of landmine incidents and casualties. So far, 647 landmine survivors, including 206 amputees, have been identified. "Whenever we identify new survivors who were not available when we made the survey we add them," El-Shazly explains.

Ulrich Tietze, UNDP's chief technical advisor for mine action, suspects that at least half of all landmine incidents are not reported. The Bedouin who live in the region have a deep-rooted suspicion of the government and police, and may see no advantage in notifying them. They may also fear prosecution. "Many of the areas (where Bedouin graze their herds) are designated as army land or have been declared off-limits," he said. "The victims often think of themselves as having done something illegal, so they feel it is better not to go to the police."

Economic hardship has pushed many Bedouins into collecting scrap metal, despite the obvious danger. "After 60 years all the safe scrap metal lying on the surface has already been picked up," said Tietze. "What remains are only the dangerous items." While Egypt's development drive promises to rid the North West Coast of its deadly legacy, it could be over a decade before the funding is in place to complete the mine action programme. In the meantime, efforts should be made to improve medical facilities in mine-infested areas, and secure the welfare of landmine victims and their families, argues LSC's Abada, who accuses the government of neglecting these victims because they are generally poor and marginalised people living far from the policymakers in Cairo. "In 10 years (of campaigning) almost nothing has been achieved."

The majority of landmine accidents occur in remote areas. Field clinics can perform crude surgeries, but the nearest equipped hospital facilities are hundreds of kilometres away. And time is critical, Abada stresses. "If the victim is admitted to a hospital within one hour the surgeons might only need to remove his foot. But if it takes five or even 10 hours to reach a hospital he will probably lose the whole leg."

Landmine victims can expect little in the way of state assistance. Compensation is negligible, when provided at all. The government provides neither trauma counselling nor rehabilitation programmes for civilian landmine victims. And amputees are expected to pay for their own prosthetic limbs. "Don't believe what is written in the newspapers about the government helping victims," said Abada. "It is all propaganda."

The UNDP has tried to step up with project proposals for the rehabilitation and vocational training of landmine survivors in Bedouin communities. The response so far has been muted, but according to Tietze, state agencies of the countries that fought on Egyptian soil during WWII are cautiously expressing interest in contributing. "There is still this old question of compensation, which has always been denied by the parties (that planted the landmines), because they say they don't have a legal obligation," he said. "But everyone knows that there is a moral obligation, so maybe we are benefiting from this bad conscience." (FIN/2009)

### **From the Landmine Monitor 2008**

World War II and the Egypt-Israel wars of 1956, 1967, and 1973 have left Egypt a mine-affected country. Egypt often cites a figure of 23 million landmines emplaced in the country. Official Egyptian sources have estimated that 16.7 million landmines affect 2,480 million square meters in the Western Desert area (from Alexandria to the Libyan border and 30 kilometers deep from the Mediterranean coastline) and 5.1 million landmines affect 200 million square meters in eastern areas (Sinai peninsula and Red Sea coast). Other Egyptian officials have stated that only 20-25 percent of these "landmines" are really landmines, the remainder being other types of unexploded ordnance (UXO).<sup>[7]</sup> Antipersonnel mines believed to be in the Western Desert include German S-type bounding fragmentation mines and British Mk.2 mines. Antivehicle mines are thought to include German Riegelmine 43, Tellermine 35, Tellermine 42 and Tellermine 43 mines, Italian B-2 and V-3 mines, and British Mk.5 and Mk.7 mines.<sup>[8]</sup>

Egypt has not signed the Landmine Ban Treaty. Nor has it signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

### Death of ICBL Campaigner in Chechnya.

Zarema "Rayana" Sadulayeva Abdulieva, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines' (ICBL) colleague and researcher in Chechnya was murdered in Grozny on Tuesday 11 August.

Rayana and her husband, Alik Dzhabrailov, were abducted from the "Let's Save the Generation" office on Monday 10 August and their bodies were found on Tuesday 11 August.

>

Rayana founded the Non-Government Organisation Let's Save the Generation in 2001. The organization works to promote the rights of children and persons with disabilities through the provision of social, psychological, financial, and legal support, primarily to conflict-affected children. From 2001–2005, Let's Save the Generation collected information on landmine and unexploded ordnance casualties and carried out a risk education program with UNICEF. From 2006–2007 it was an implementing partner of UNDP's risk education program.

>

Rayana became involved with the ICBL in 2007 after meeting ICBL Executive Director Sylvie Brigot at an event in Paris, France. She participated in the Eighth Meeting of States Parties (8MSP) to the Mine Ban Treaty in November 2007 at the Dead Sea, Jordan. In 2008 and 2009, she contributed research on risk education and victim assistance to Landmine Monitor, the ICBL's research and monitoring initiative. She also worked with others in the ICBL to promote the rights of mine survivors.

>

Rayana was a tireless advocate and her death is a huge loss to the mine action community.

>

Human rights advocates work at great risk in Chechnya. Less than one month ago Natalya Estemirova, head of the Chechen human rights group Memorial, was murdered in similar circumstances. The ICBL condemns the persecution of human rights defenders.

News from Croatia, the fifteenth country to ratify the Convention on Cluster Munitions.  
In the words of Mina Zunac –Croatian Cluster Munitions Survivor and Mine Ban Advocate

Refusing a weapon as horrible as this, banning it completely is not just a military thing between two countries, it is a way that Croatian government is showing respect for all citizens of our neighbouring countries, telling them that every one of them, every living soul is important and we cherish every life, and that's why we have to ban Cluster Munitions because 98% of recorded casualties are civilians. What Croatia signed is not a contract between countries, governments .... it's a contract between Croatia and citizens of neighbourly countries telling them "we won't harm you, be safe, feel safe, live safe". By removing the threat you remove reason for conflict. My greatest hope is that our neighbours will recognize the significance of this and that they will follow in doing the same thing. When they do (and I'm not saying "if" I'm saying "when" because I believe they will) ... when they sign Convention on Cluster Munitions stability in our region will increase more and this will become even more beautiful place to live.

To whoever is considering themselves to be a small country or is categorizing someone else as a small or insignificant, this is how a small country can have a global impact, by taking a first step and signing the treaty but also by making an example to others. We can't choose our neighbours, but we can choose how to communicate with them. Banning the Cluster Munitions is excellent way to build up trust and respect between countries. Croatia was in war not so long ago, Cluster Munitions was used in that war, all of us (and by that I mean countries in this region) have it but Croatia decided to ban it. Croatia didn't fall in a trap, vicious circle "our neighbours have it, we need it to protect our self". Hope that other will realise that that is not good enough excuse for not signing. Cluster Munitions is not a efficient weapon, not in military terms, because 98% of recorded cluster munition casualties are civilians. Just last week in Zadar civilian found two bomblets 40 meters from his home. We are talking about urban area, the bomblets were found near the houses, church and children's playground. Luckily they didn't go off, and police was able to remove them safely. And it's been 15 years since the war. So by keeping this weapon who are you targeting? Don't answer that, just sign the Convention on Cluster Munition.

**Integral Mine Action in Colombia, Bogotá, 13-14 August 2009**

Geneva Call's objectives in Colombia are the elimination of AP mines, which are still today weapons of choice by the country's armed non-State actors (NSAs), and which continue to cause intense suffering among the communities living in the affected areas. Aware that the total elimination of these indiscriminate weapons is a long term objective, Geneva Call is active in trying to find ways to mitigate the immediate consequences of mine use.

This involves concrete work in the local communities, especially in the Southwest of the country, alongside civil society organizations, notably the Colombian Campaign to Ban landmines (CCCM). In order to give a rarely heard voice to these affected communities, Geneva Call, along with the Presidential Program for Integral Mine Action against Landmines (PAICMA) and the National Commission for Reparation and Reconciliation (CNRR), invited 45 representatives, including mayors, indigenous peoples and grassroots organizations, to Bogotá for an exchange of ideas and information, with the national civilian and military authorities and with the international community.

**Summary of the Debate:** The 120 participants to this workshop entered into a very rich and interesting debate, with very different perspectives. Participants of the affected communities and civil society expressed the opinion, that the army's demining actions are very often considered as military operations by the NSAs; as a result, tensions rise, new mines are laid, and the communities are once more put at risk. They proposed that they be consulted and involved before any mine action; that demining be implemented by international, neutral organizations; that a dialogue with the NSAs be undertaken to guarantee the protection of civilians and the sustainability of mine action. For their part, the armed forces and the PAICMA, while welcoming the implication of specialised organizations in Colombia, were adamant that demining activities in insecure areas should be carried out only by the army, especially due to the difficult security conditions and that these operations would be further developed.

**Cluster Bomb Deaths**

BEIRUT — Two young Lebanese brothers were injured by a cluster bomb on the 60th anniversary of the Geneva conventions on conflict, the Cluster Munition Coalition said.

Abbas Awali, 13, and Hussein Awali, 10, were gathering wood when they were hit by the blast in the southern village of Tulin, 10 kilometres (six miles) from the Israeli border.

"This makes the remembrance of the victims even more sad and relevant -- all that on the 60th anniversary of the Geneva Conventions," CMC communications officer Jean-Marc Jacobs told AFP.

The 1949 treaties formally outlined international law on the protection of civilians, detainees, the wounded and humanitarian workers in conflicts.

In May, Israel gave UN peacekeepers in Lebanon maps showing the location of over one million cluster munitions it dropped during its devastating air war on Lebanon three summers ago.

About 300 Lebanese civilians have since been killed or maimed by cluster bombs, according to the UN Mine Action Coordination Centre. Children, who mistake the bomblets for toys, account for most of the victims.

Cluster munitions spread bomblets over a wide area from a single device. The bomblets that do not explode on impact can do so later at the slightest touch, making them deadly as anti-personnel landmines.