

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- North Korea should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a State Party to the APMBC, North Korea has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- North Korea should cease all use of anti-personnel mines.
- North Korea should resume mine clearance in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) as soon as possible and permit independent verification of clearance.

ANTI-PERSONNEL MINE CONTAMINATION

The extent of North Korea's mine problem is not known. North Korea admitted in 1998 that it had laid mines in the DMZ, a 1,000km² strip of land between the north and south of the peninsula believed to be one of the most densely contaminated areas in the world. Mined areas are reported to be marked and fenced but mines are also believed to have shifted as a result of flooding and landslides.¹

North and South Korea completed clearance of the Joint Security Area (of the DMZ) in Panmunjom in October 2018 under an agreement on measures to ease tensions. Additional clearance was conducted in late 2018 around Arrowhead Hill (also known as Hill 281) in Cheolwon, Gangwon province, under a pilot joint operations project to recover human remains.² No other land release is known to have occurred.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

North Korea has no functioning mine action programme.

In September 2018, the North Korean and South Korean Ministers of Defence signed a military agreement, the Panmunjom declaration, which mandated North Korea, South Korea, and the United Nations Command (UNC) to "remove all mines in the Joint Security Area (of the DMZ) in Panmunjom within 20 days, beginning on October 1, 2018".³ Diplomacy intended to improve relations between North and South in 2019 did not lead to any additional action.

Following a request from North Korea to the UNC, the Korean People's Army engineers received training on use of US detectors using ground penetrating radar for tackling box mines.⁴ US army engineers trained South Korean army engineers who in turn provided the training to the Korean People's Army.⁵

LAND RELEASE

South Korean officials confirmed on 22 October 2018 that clearance of the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom by North and South Korea had been completed.⁶ Officials said North Korea had notified the government it had cleared 636 mines while South Korea found none.⁷ At the request of the Korean People's Army, South Korean troops trained by the US Army conducted the clearance of one area on the northern side of the JSA that was heavily contaminated by box mines working with US-supplied Minehound dual purpose detectors.⁸ The north also reportedly cleared a 1.3km-long mine belt in the Arrowhead Hill region.⁹ Reviving tensions between North Korea and the United States in 2019 held back further progress in demining.

1 Statement of North Korea, United Nations (UN) General Assembly, New York, 4 December 1998, UN doc. A/53/pv79, pp. 8–9; Choe Sang-Hun, "Koreas start clearing landmines at DMZ in effort to ease tensions", *New York Times*, 1 October 2018.

2 Song Young-moo and No Kwang Chol, "Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain", National Committee on North Korea, 19 September 2018, Annex 2, p. 7, at: bit.ly/2XXbuXd; and "Korean leaders sign agreement for North Korea to take further steps to denuclearize", *ABC News*, 20 September 2018, at: abc7.ws/2XZM0bq.

3 "Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain", 19 September 2018, Annex 2, p. 7; and "Korean leaders sign agreement for North Korea to take further steps to denuclearize", *ABC News*, 20 September 2018.

4 Presentation by Col. J. P. Lloyd, Command Engineer, UNC, Side event at the National Directors' Meeting, Geneva, 11 February 2020.

5 Emails from Col. John P. Lloyd, UNC, and Maj. Mark S. Born, UNC, 14 April 2020.

6 "Koreas finish removing land mines from border village", *Associated Press*, 22 October 2018, at: bit.ly/2GhPFVn.

7 "Two Koreas Complete Mine Removal in JSA", KBS World Radio, 19 October 2018, at: bit.ly/2XT18Kk; "Minister: N. Korea eliminated 636 mines from Panmunjom area," *Yonhap*, 12 November 2018, at: bit.ly/2Nbv2Fc.

8 Emails from Col. John P. Lloyd, UNC, and Maj. Mark S. Born, UNC, 14 April 2020.

9 PowerPoint presentation by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Han Cheol Ki, Side event to the Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 24 May 2019.