

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: MASSIVE, BUT NOT QUANTIFIED

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

3.52 km²

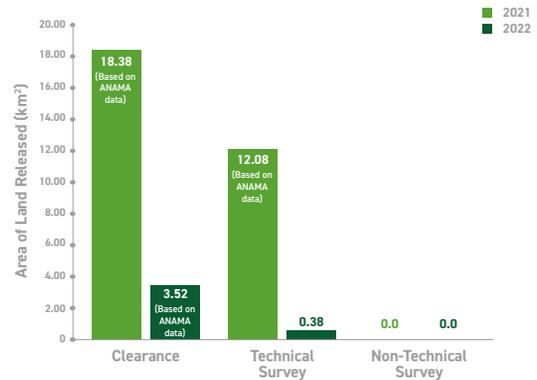
(BASED ON ANAMA DATA)

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

9,190

(INCLUDING 25 MINES DESTROYED IN SPOT TASKS)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The six-week armed conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020 ended with Azerbaijan regaining control over seven districts and part of Nagorno-Karabakh (formally referred to in Azerbaijan as the Karabakh Economic Region of Azerbaijan).¹ The area along the former Line of Contact (LoC) between Armenia and Azerbaijan is heavily mined, leading to a huge area of anti-personnel (AP) mine contamination falling under Azerbaijan's control. A massive effort to survey and clear areas containing mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues, although the pace slowed markedly in 2022. The Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) reported clearance of only 3.52km² of AP mined area in 2022, a huge drop on the previous year. Land release by the end of March 2023 is said to have covered 746km² of area affected by mines and ERW although this accounts for only 9% of total estimated contamination. On 19 September 2023, Azerbaijan launched a 24-hour large-scale military offensive which resulted in it regaining control of the rest of Nagorno-Karabakh.² Nagorno-Karabakh is now fully under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction and control. The leader of the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh authorities, Samvel Shahramanyan, signed a decree to dissolve all governmental institutions by 1 January 2024.³

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Azerbaijan should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- ANAMA should prioritise efforts to conduct evidence-based survey to better define the location and extent of the contamination and enhance planning and prioritisation of clearance.
- ANAMA should continue to capitalise on the use of the available technologies, including the Remote Aerial Minefield Survey (RAMS), to conduct more non-technical survey (NTS) and reduce the size of its suspected hazardous areas (SHAs).

1 Following a Presidential Decree in July 2021, Azerbaijan formally uses the term "the Karabakh Economic Region of Azerbaijan", which covers Khankendi city and Aghjabadi, Aghdam, Barda, Fuzuli, Khojali, Khojavend, Susha and Tartar regions.
 2 "Azerbaijan halts Karabakh offensive after ceasefire deal with Armenian separatists", *BBC*, 21 September 2023, at: <https://bbc.in/3rCVK0e>.
 3 "Nagorno-Karabakh's breakaway government says it will dissolve itself", *The Guardian*, 28 September 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/45ozvJ7>.

- ANAMA should consider the creation of technical working groups (TWGs) to identify and share lessons learned and promote best practice in land release.
- ANAMA should continue to strive to ensure that the revised National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), known as the Azerbaijan National Mine Action Requirements (ANMAR), are formally adopted and are fully understood and routinely implemented by all entities conducting clearance.

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- ANAMA
- The Demining Battalion of the Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Emergency Situations
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- The State Border Service
- Four national commercial demining companies, each with an international commercial sub-contractor:
 - Qaya Safety Solutions partnering with SafeLane Global
 - Safe Point partnering with RPS (a Tetra Tech company)
 - Alpha Demining partnering with Altay Group
 - Azerbaijan Demining Company partnering with Piper
- International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Azerbaijan)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Türkiye Armed Forces

OTHER ACTORS

- APOPO
- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The precise extent of contamination from AP mines in Azerbaijan is currently unknown but is certainly massive, especially along the 254km-long, 5-km wide LoC that previously existed between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces. The defensive belts of berms, anti-tank ditches, and barbed wire along the LoC contain huge quantities of both AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines, and the zone is now recognised as one of the largest mined areas in the world.⁴ The areas along the LoC were heavily mined over the three decades after 1990 by all parties to the conflict.⁵ Further minefields and other explosive ordnance contamination, including abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO), are found in areas previously occupied by Armenia outside the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Since the Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement, also known as the Trilateral Statement, came into effect on 10 November 2020, Azerbaijan has regained full control of the seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh: the four districts (Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Qubadli, and Zangilan) over which it took back control from Armenia, and the three districts (Aghdam, Kalbajar, and Lachin) from which Armenia agreed to withdraw its forces and return the districts to Azerbaijan

control.⁶ The fragile ceasefire has been interrupted by sporadic fighting by both parties to the conflict.

Azerbaijan also regained control of a substantial part of Nagorno-Karabakh, the rest of which was patrolled by Russian peacekeeping forces but still governed by the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh authorities⁷ until 20 September 2023 when Azerbaijan regained control of all remaining areas of Nagorno-Karabakh (See the Mine Action Review *Clearing the Mines 2023* report on Nagorno-Karabakh for further information).

The full extent of contamination across Azerbaijan will only be better known after completion of a countrywide survey that includes the areas it has newly regained. ANAMA has been surveying areas that came back under Azerbaijani control since November 2022, deploying a variety of methodologies including the Remote Aerial Minefield Survey (RAMS) multispectral data analysis, mine detection dogs (MDDs), and technical survey dogs (TSDs). In August 2023, it was also testing the use of mine detection rats (MDRs) to help identify SHAs as part of the baseline survey.

4 Online interview with Steiner Essen, Senior Mine Action Consultant, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Guy Rhodes, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, 29 April 2021; and email from Guy Rhodes, UNDP, 23 June 2021.

5 Statement of Armenia, APMBC Intersessional Meetings (online), 22–24 June 2021.

6 See, e.g., International Crisis Group (ICG), "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer", last updated 7 May 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3ui0ou2>.

7 ICG, "The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer", Last updated 7 May 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3ui0ou2>.

At the end of 2022, ANAMA has identified 1,008km² of mixed AP mines and AV mines contamination across nine confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs).⁸ The ongoing NTS and technical survey (TS) conducted in the regained territories identified a total of 8,234km² of SHAs contaminated with mines and other explosive ordnance. Of this, 1,479km² are classified as high threat and 6,755km² as medium to low threat areas.⁹ According to ANAMA's preliminary assessment, mined areas consist of roughly 60% flat agricultural land, 30% grassy hills, and 10% mountains.¹⁰ Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, national operator International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) surveyed 2,162km² of land on both sides of the former LoC and estimated 782km² of SHAs.¹¹ Between the Trilateral Statement in November 2020 and the end of 2022, 160

landmine incidents occurred, killing or injuring 279 people. Of this total, 130 were victims of AP mines.¹²

Areas of highest mine contamination include a mix of AP and AV mines. ANAMA has found several cases of AP mines improvised with AV mines, or Armenian-produced OZM-type mines with booby-traps. Some of the cases of improvised mines were found in areas beyond the former LoC, including in cemeteries, along riverbanks, or in destroyed settlements. Improvised mine contamination is believed to cover approximately 5% of the total mined area.¹³ Demining conducted over an area of 3.41km² across 21 fields in high threat areas revealed a density of more than 3,000 mines per square kilometre.¹⁴

Table 1: Mined areas by type of contamination (at end 2022)¹⁵

Location	Type of mine contamination	CHAs (km ²)
Former LOC	AP mines	585
	AV mines	149
	Mixed AP mines and AV mines	186
Other regained territories	Mixed AP mines and AV mines	88
Totals		1,008

Table 2: Confirmed mined area by district (at end 2022)¹⁶

Districts	CHAs (km ²)
Aghdam	300
Fuzuli	287
Jabrayil	8
Kalbajar	118
Khojavend	63
Lachin	18
Qubadli	6
Tartar	207
Zangilan	1
Total	1,008

According to ANAMA, Armenia laid mines in haste, including while retreating in 2020. Mines have been found in recently cultivated land, with mine ploughs abandoned nearby. Armenia denied the claims, stating that the retreating

Armenian forces had had scarcely enough time to remove the bodies of the 1,500 Armenian soldiers who had been killed during the fighting.¹⁷ Between August 2022 and January 2023, ANAMA said that it detected and neutralised 3,166 mines that were made in Armenia in 2021, including types PMN-E, PMN-2, and TM-62.¹⁸ This, Azerbaijan claims, indicates that Armenia continued to emplace mines even after the Trilateral Statement. In January 2023, Azerbaijan appealed to the International Court of Justice to "urgently order Armenia to stop the laying of land mines and booby traps on Azerbaijani territory and disclose the location of those already planted." Armenia rejected the allegations saying that it had "laid mines on its own territory as a defensive tactic to combat Azerbaijani aggression".¹⁹

Azerbaijan has requested "the immediate release of information by Armenia on the location of the remaining minefields".²⁰ Armenia maintains that most of the mines were emplaced by Azerbaijan in the early years of the conflict to deter Nagorno-Karabakh forces.²¹ Following extensive international mediation, Armenia released some minefield records providing information on 263,067 AP mines and 127,427 AV mines as well as other explosive devices.

8 Email from Ramil Azizov, Operations Manager, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

9 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 28 July 2023.

10 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 3.

11 Email from Donald Macdonald, Survey Advisor, UNDP, 21 August 2023.

12 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

13 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

14 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 3.

15 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

16 Ibid.

17 Statement of Armenia, APMBIC Intersessional Meetings (online), 22-24 June 2021.

18 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, pp. 2 and 4; and Statement of Azerbaijan, APMBIC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19-21 June 2023.

19 "Azerbaijan to UN court: Armenia must stop laying land mines", *AP News*, 31 January 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3S5zk2B>.

20 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings (online), 22-24 July 2021.

21 Statement of Armenia, Intersessional Meetings (online), 22-24 July 2021.

According to ANAMA, these records constitute only 5% of the regained areas and less than one third of the high-threat areas. In Aghdam district, one of the seven reclaimed by Azerbaijan in 2020, the map revealed the presence of 97,000 AP and AV mines.²² The accuracy of the maps provided by Armenia has yet to be fully determined, but Azerbaijan said only some 25% of the data had proven to be reliable.²³

A report by the International Crisis Group in May 2023 cautioned that Azerbaijan's allegations that Armenia continued to transport and emplace mines on its territories create an "unhelpful" impression that the issue is political rather than humanitarian, and called on Azerbaijan to "depoliticise" support for mine clearance by making it clear it sees demining as a humanitarian imperative not linked to its conflict with Armenia.²⁴ Azerbaijan says it has published photographs and documents that attest to the presence of Armenian-produced landmines.²⁵

In August 2022, ANAMA reported that systematic NTS was being conducted using European Commission Humanitarian Aid (ECHO) funding started in April/May 2022. According to ANAMA, evidence-based TS is conducted prior to clearance and according to the national work plan.²⁶ In November 2022, the President of Azerbaijan signed off a decree approving the "First State Program on the Great Return to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan" (the "Great Return" programme), which aims to resettle 34,500 families between 2022 and 2026 in three stages. The first involves the rebuilding of social infrastructure in 227 cities, towns, and villages in the regained areas, contingent on clearance of 147km² for residential areas by the end of 2024, as well as the clearance

of additional land for agriculture and infrastructure to support residential areas.²⁷ The second and third stages of the programme were not announced in detail, but were said to draw on the lessons learned from the first stage.²⁸ The endorsement of the "Great Return" programme came one month after the President of Azerbaijan stated that Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and a staggering bill of US\$ 25 billion to "solve the issues related to demining".²⁹

Since the end of the 2020 conflict, ANAMA has undertaken massive clearance efforts in the regained territories, prioritising residential areas, agricultural areas, areas of ecological importance, social infrastructure, roads, and water sources.³⁰ ANAMA has also been amassing international support through various fora, including the organisation of several international conferences in Baku, and attending APMB meetings to mobilise international support.

Mine contamination in Azerbaijan is predominantly the consequence of the 1988–94 armed conflict with Armenia, which saw landmines laid by both sides. During the most recent conflict in 2020, media reported that the retreating Armenian forces planted mines in civilian infrastructure, lamp posts, canals, road junctions, rural and urban paths, courtyard entrances, cemeteries, and riverbanks.³¹ In 2018, ANAMA had estimated that mine contamination in areas occupied by Armenia covered between 350km² and 830km², and contained between 50,000 and 100,000 mines.³² Following the subsequent surveys conducted in areas where Azerbaijan subsequently gained access, has proved to be a significant underestimate.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Azerbaijan is also suspected to be contaminated with cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other ERW: both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and AXO, the extent of which is not known (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023* report on Azerbaijan for further information).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action, which was established by Presidential Decree 854 in 1998, initiated humanitarian demining in 2000. In February 2021, again by presidential decree, ANAMA was restructured and given

the status of a public legal entity as the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.³³ The rebranded ANAMA has the mandate to plan, coordinate, and oversee humanitarian demining by national and international operators.³⁴ ANAMA

22 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings (online), 22–24 June 2021; "Armenia and Azerbaijan exchange detainees for mine maps", *Eurasianet*, 23 June 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3gXYWdx>; and ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 4.

23 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–21 June 2023.

24 ICG, "Defusing Azerbaijan's Landmine Challenge", 31 May 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/30ep6t8>.

25 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 23 August 2023.

26 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

27 Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), "Landmines in Azerbaijan continue to pose a lethal threat to peace and development", 22 June 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3DCZxgD>.

28 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

29 "Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining – President Ilham Aliyev", *Trend News Agency*, 13 October 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3qe8edY>.

30 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023, and: Centre for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "State Program on the Great Return to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan", 17 November 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3DDz9D1>.

31 "Mines, Karabakh and Armenia's Crisis", *New Eastern Europe*, 16 April 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3vezeaC>.

32 ANAMA, "Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action 2018", p. 5.

33 "Azerbaijan establishes Mine Action Agency", APA news, 15 January 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/35MhtEu>.

34 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 7.

has a national headquarters in Baku and two regional offices in Horadiz and Goygol.³⁵ In 2021, a national mine action law was drafted with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As at July 2023, however, it was still pending approval.³⁶

Prior to the 2020 conflict, ANAMA had been conducting demining operations with two contracted national operators: Dayag-Relief Azerbaijan (RA) and IEPF. In March 2020, RA's field personnel were incorporated within ANAMA while RA as an organisation continued to provide logistical support to ANAMA.³⁷ Since the end of the 2020 conflict, both ANAMA and clearance operations in Azerbaijan have been rapidly scaled up to address the significant mine and ERW contamination newly under Azerbaijan's control. An interministerial mine action working group, chaired by ANAMA, continued to meet twice a month in 2022 and included Azerbaijan's most significant ministries, including of defence, interior, and emergency situations, as well as the State Border Service.³⁸

The Azerbaijani government has been funding the vast majority (90%)³⁹ of the mine action programme's operating costs,⁴⁰ and mine action is considered a national priority by the government of Azerbaijan.⁴¹ It is integrated into the Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Development plan 2019–2023 and is considered a key contributor to meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁴² Azerbaijan has adopted national SDG 18: mine action for safe return, settlement, recovery, prosperity, and peace.⁴³

ANAMA has set the following key priorities for international assistance: enhanced planning through the use of data management and technology, including scaling up RAMS capacity; TS and feasibility studies for accelerating and streamlining humanitarian mine clearance; increased demining capacity through establishment and accreditation of additional national non-governmental organisations (NGOs); continued support to the institutional capacity building of ANAMA; an increase in ANAMA's mechanical demining capacities; further development of MDD training

and advising capacity; establishment of and support for female demining teams; demarcation and permanent fencing; explosive ordnance risk education (EORE); and mine victim assistance.⁴⁴

ANAMA says that it stands ready to actively engage with potential donors and organisations interested in contributing to mine action in Azerbaijan.⁴⁵ On 31 March–1 April 2022, ANAMA and UNDP organised an international conference on Mine Action and the SDGs in Baku. Among recommendations made at the conference were the establishment of an in-country donor coordination mechanism, such as a Mine Action Forum, and of technical working groups (TWGs) to address key mine action challenges.⁴⁶ ANAMA also organised an international conference "Mine Action: Challenges and Opportunities" in Baku in November 2022.

UNDP provides strategic and technical capacity development to ANAMA.⁴⁷ In 2020, the capacity development project was extended to 2023.⁴⁸ UNDP has supported the creation of an enabling mine action environment, including for the drafting of the national mine action law, and the revision of the NMAS. Analysis by UNDP in May 2022 of ANAMA's "National Needs and Priorities" informs the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, foreign diplomats, and donors. A third edition of the report was published in January 2023. UNDP has also drafted a generic mine action strategy, which was submitted to ANAMA in October 2022 for its consideration. UNDP also conducted a gender and mine action needs assessment, leading to the adoption of a gender policy and strategy and the organisation of a workshop on gender in March 2023. Additional consultancies on victim assistance and EORE are planned for 2023.⁴⁹

The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) also supported ANAMA in 2022, in particular with respect to information management. The GICHD provided the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core to ANAMA along with training on its use.⁵⁰

35 UNDP, assessment report, "Gender Organisational Assessment of Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)", February 2023, p. 12.

36 Email from Mark Buswell, Strategic Advisor, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

37 Email from Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 28 July 2020.

38 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; interview with Vugar Suleymanov, Chair of the Board, ANAMA; and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022; and presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022.

39 Presentation by Hikmet Hajiyev, Assistant to the President, Head of Division for Foreign Policy, Office of the President, Baku, 25 May 2023.

40 Emails from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June and 7 July 2022.

41 ANAMA, quarterly report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 3.

42 UNDP, assessment report, "Gender Organisational Assessment of ANAMA", February 2023, p. 10.

43 Presentation by Huseyn Huseynov, Head of Department for Sustainable Development and Social Policy, Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Aghdam, 24 May 2023.

44 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 2.

45 Ibid., p. 12.

46 Statement of the International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022.

47 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

48 Email from Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 21 May 2021.

49 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

50 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 8.

Mines Advisory Group (MAG) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with ANAMA in December 2021, with funding from the United States (US) and Canada. MAG provided a 10-month supervisor training course in 2022, with 16 ANAMA trainees successfully graduating from the course. Trainees also received refresher training on MDDs and mechanical assets deployment. A separate two-week refresher training was provided to 19 ANAMA supervisors. A post-training workshop was held on 19 December 2022, which was attended by the Head and Deputy Head of ANAMA's training and methodological assurance department.⁵¹ MAG had previously been present in Azerbaijan in 2000–02, training RA personnel.⁵²

ANAMA is also receiving capacity development support from the European Union (EU), France, the United Kingdom (UK), the US Department of State; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and the Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI).⁵³ The ICRC provides training for ANAMA site paramedics⁵⁴ and conducts risk education and other activities.⁵⁵ The Counter Explosive Defence Engagement office of UK Ministry of Defence is providing technical support to ANAMA on explosive ordnance disposal (EOD).⁵⁶ MLI has been operational in Azerbaijan since 2005, with an MDD partnership programme. It has provided 60 MDDs to ANAMA

to date and agreed a new two-year partnership in 2021, funded by Azerbaijan and the private sector in the US.⁵⁷

In 2022, ANAMA stepped up its operational capacity and established new mobile field camps for deminers in Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Khojavend, Lachin, Shusha, and Zangilan. It planned a further increase in the number of mobile camps in 2023. In addition, a base camp was set up in Shusha and a training centre in Goygol.⁵⁸ ANAMA plans to use these mobile camps to expand mine clearance operations. The mobile container-type camps can be readily moved to other areas, depending on the location of demining operations.⁵⁹

Türkiye reported training Azerbaijan Armed Forces personnel in mine action, mine clearance, and mine detection, and mine/improvised explosive device (IED) awareness, in addition to deploying Turkish military demining teams and machines (see section below, Operators and Operational Tools).⁶⁰

In July 2022, the EU allocated € 2.25 million to support demining in Azerbaijan.⁶¹ In October 2022, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, addressed the sixth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia saying that "International experts estimate that Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and 25 billion US dollars to solve issues related to demining."⁶²

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Azerbaijan's newly revised standards were still to be adopted at July 2023. The draft Azerbaijan National Mine Action Requirements (ANMAR), which cover all demining activities, include a dedicated chapter on Environmental Protection.⁶³ According to the ANMAR, "these requirements shall be complied with to ensure that the environment is not degraded by mine action work and land is returned in a state that is similar to, or where possible better than, before mine action operations commenced, and that permits its intended use." The Environmental Protection chapter includes information on Azerbaijan's mine action environmental management system and requirements for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of environmental aspects. These include waste disposal, water supplies, burning and removal of vegetation, animals, open burning and demolition, environmental aspects of mechanical operations, emergency preparedness, monitoring, cultural and historical sites, and completion and remediation.

The Government of Azerbaijan may also require the conduct of a formal environmental impact assessment in relation to large or publicly significant mine action projects, or ones that will take place in areas of known environmental vulnerability.⁶⁴

51 Email from Jeanette Dijkstra, Programme Manager, MAG, 16 May 2023.

52 Presentation by MAG, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022; and email from Olivier David, Country Director, MAG, 25 April 2022.

53 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

54 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 8.

55 ICRC, "Azerbaijan: Activity highlights for 2022", February 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3PmE07w>.

56 Presentation by Bert Appleton, Head of the Counter Explosive Defence Engagement office of UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) on "Building capacity through Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives", 25 May 2023.

57 Presentation by Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI), International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022.

58 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

59 "Azerbaijan Plans to Clear 40,000 Hectares of Liberated Land from Armenian Landmines", *Caspian News*, 30 January 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3FuQYW8>.

60 Statement of Türkiye to the Eighth International Pledging Conference to the APMBC, 24 March 2023; and Türkiye Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Forms D and I.

61 "EU allocates additional €4.25 mln to demining of Azerbaijani territories", *APA*, 11 July 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3DLSDW5>.

62 "Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining – President Ilham Aliyev", *Trend News Agency*, 13 October 2022.

63 Emails from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

64 ANMAR, Section IV Management Systems, Chapter 9 Environmental Protection.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Azerbaijan has much to do to ensure gender and diversity in mine action. In 2022, UNDP, with UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) funding, supported ANAMA in reviewing gender in mine action, and in partnership with ANAMA developed ANAMA's Gender Policy and Strategy documents.⁶⁵ UNDP carried out a gender needs assessment, which led to the drafting of a gender policy and strategy. A workshop on gender was organised in March 2023, and as at July 2023, UNDP was due to submit a draft strategy on gender.⁶⁶ The assessment underlines ANAMA's willingness to advance gender and diversity mainstreaming.⁶⁷

The Azerbaijani Code of Labour denounces any type of discrimination in labour relations, including between men and women. It does, however, include so-called "protective measures" which legally prohibit women from being hired into a wide array of jobs. Traditional norms and gender stereotyping also lead to women and men not being equally included in the different organisational levels. UNDP's assessment underlines the fact that concerns over women's reproductive health (for example, regarding pregnancy) are deeply rooted cultural norms that aim to protect women, but do present barriers to women's participation in the labour force.⁶⁸

In ANAMA, women are mostly concentrated in the headquarters in Baku and cover administrative roles. In ANAMA's headquarter, women constitute 31% of the team, but only 5% of the total employees in ANAMA's suboffices.⁶⁹ No, or very few, women are in operations or in leadership positions. On the other hand, few men are in non-operational roles, for example in the human resources (HR) department.⁷⁰ Women make up around 8% of ANAMA's total workforce, mainly employed in administrative positions. In 2022, no women were trained in demining in Azerbaijan.⁷¹

ANAMA has been working to mainstream gender and diversity and increase the proportion of women in its

workforce. Through the EU-UNDP funded project, MAG, in partnership with IEPF, will support ANAMA in deploying two fully equipped, women-only multi-task teams conducting clearance, battle area clearance (BAC), TS, animal detection systems, risk education, and NTS in 2023. MAG and IEPF will also establish two gender balanced/mixed teams through the 12-month US State Department Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) funding. All four teams began training in June 2023. APOPO will develop the MDD capacity of the four teams alongside the team's deployment.⁷²

According to ANAMA, survey and community liaison personnel are mostly from affected communities and there are no restrictions on the basis of ethnic groups or religious affiliation. Risk education teams create a network of affected communities, which include women and children. The government's reconstruction and rehabilitation programme is aimed at returning internally displaced persons (IDPs), including women and children, and ensuring sustainable development of repatriated communities in a safe environment.⁷³ Due to the fact that the regained areas are not populated, determination of the baseline of contamination is currently not through inclusive consultation with women, girls, boys, and men. However, ANAMA plans for survey teams to be gender balanced.⁷⁴

The rapid upscaling of ANAMA's mine action operations taking place provides a valuable opportunity for ANAMA to improve the proportion of women in operational roles and to mainstream gender and diversity throughout its programme. The development of the gender strategy and the goals set to create female operational teams are hoped to translate into improved female participation in the mine action sector, both in terms of inclusion in positions other than administrative ones, and increase the overall number of females in the workforce.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Azerbaijan's newly revised national mine action standards include the establishment of a single, unified, information management system, which ANAMA is implementing.⁷⁵ As at May 2023, ANAMA was still transitioning to IMSMA Core but had established an Online ArcGIS Portal.⁷⁶

65 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

66 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

67 UNDP, "Gender Organisational Assessment of ANAMA", Report, February 2023, p. 4.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid., p. 11.

70 Ibid., p. 4.

71 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 11; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

72 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; Jeanette Dijkstra, MAG, 16 May and 3 July 2023; online interview with Greg Crowther, Director of Programmes, MAG, 26 July 2023; and UNDP, "Gender Organisational Assessment of Mine Action Agency of ANAMA", Report, February 2023, p. 11.

73 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

74 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

75 Presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March-1 April 2022.

76 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

In 2022, UNDP and the GICHD supported ANAMA's information management efforts, including evaluations and assessment on how to implement IMSMA Core in compliance with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) 5.0. The following was achieved in 2022: digitisation and standardisation of data collection forms; production of most land release output and quality management (QM) forms, production of multiple dashboards demonstrating different outputs and analysis; and data cleaning and migration.⁷⁷ As at May 2023, an IMSMA charter on mine action procedures had been signed by the prime minister, and ANAMA was contracting a local company to house its IMSMA database.⁷⁸

ANAMA's efforts, including data quality checks and system improvements to improve the quality of data in the mine action database are ongoing.⁷⁹ Verification occurs initially at the regional level and then at headquarters. With the significant upscaling of operations and area of responsibilities since 2020, the progress reporting period was reduced from two weeks to one.⁸⁰ ANAMA plans to generate daily progress reports once it has migrated to IMSMA Core.⁸¹

All data on clearance operations, including those of the military, are reported centrally to ANAMA.⁸² But despite improvements in information management, ANAMA does not yet fully disaggregate survey, clearance, and contamination data related to AP mine contamination from battle area data related to other types of explosive ordnance.

PLANNING AND TASKING

The existing national mine action strategy was for 2013–18. Its main aims were to continue mine and ERW clearance in support of government development projects and to provide safe conditions for the local population in affected regions.⁸³ The strategy expired at the end of 2018 and had not been replaced as of writing. As at March 2023, UNDP had developed and submitted to ANAMA a new mine action strategy but ANAMA was said to be working on a second strategy with the government.⁸⁴

According to its January 2023 progress report, ANAMA said that the area cleared of landmines and ERW so far constitutes around 6.9% of the overall high-, medium-, and low-threat areas. The work plan for 2023 foresaw a massive (and highly improbable) 500km² of release through clearance, and the draft strategy for the medium term is to further increase clearance capacity to achieve output of 650km² annually.⁸⁵ This includes all forms of explosive ordnance clearance, as well as visual search of battle areas, which is not clearance as the term is understood in mine action. ANAMA foresees that, over the long term, this level of predicted output will not be maintained, once high-priority areas have been cleared and only high-density, but low threat/priority areas remain.⁸⁶

ANAMA coordinates the mine action activities of several state implementing agencies, NGOs, and commercial contractors.⁸⁷

ANAMA performs NTS of polygons prior to tasking operators on clearance,⁸⁸ but this is more akin to task preparation rather than full survey. Thus, most polygons selected and prioritised by the Cabinet of Ministers and tasked by ANAMA for release have not been subject to rigorous NTS in advance. IEPF is the only organisation tasked by ANAMA to conduct NTS and generate hazardous area polygons, with support from UNDP, but despite IEPF's experience in survey, its technical and human capacity are limited due to insufficient funding.⁸⁹

The Cabinet of Ministers, as the highest level executive body in the country, determines which polygons are cleared with priorities are set in accordance with rehabilitation and reconstruction plans in the regained territories.⁹⁰ According to ANAMA'S quarterly report on progress of January 2023, in accordance with its policy of ensuring the return of IDPs, the government prioritises the demining of areas of high importance such as main access roads, key infrastructure (highways, railroads, and electricity lines), agriculture, and planned residential areas.⁹¹ Accordingly, highly contaminated areas do not necessarily equate to areas that are a high priority for clearance. According to ANAMA, much of the former LOC will not be cleared for years, with the exception of areas where construction of infrastructure is required.⁹²

77 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

78 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

79 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

80 Emails from Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 21 May 2021; and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

81 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

82 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

83 Email from Sabina Sarkarova, ANAMA 2 May 2018.

84 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

85 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 10.

86 Ibid.; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

87 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 9.

88 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

89 Interview with UNDP, Baku, 24 May 2023; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 23 August 2023.

90 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023; presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022; and email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022; and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

91 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, pp. 3, 5, and 8.

92 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

The ANMAR were originally adopted in 2001 and then revised in 2003, 2004, and 2010.⁹³ In 2021, all chapters of the ANMAR were fully revised in line with IMAS.⁹⁴ As at June 2023, the revised standards were still in the process of being formally adopted,⁹⁵ but had been provided to all operators.⁹⁶ It is extremely important that the revised standards are formally adopted, as the existing standards do not allow for land release through NTS.

One of the challenges of conducting NTS in the regained territories is that many of the areas are unpopulated and therefore no local communities are present who can be asked about contamination.⁹⁷ To overcome this challenge, drones are accredited as an NTS tool and are used to identify areas suspected of contamination, despite their limitation in areas covered with vegetation. Due to this limitation, ANAMA systematically follows RAMS NTS with technical survey. When no evidence of contamination is found, areas are cancelled. However, this process is yet to be formalised into a standard. ANAMA reported that in some cases, the drones discovered the presence of minefields in very unexpected areas where contamination was unlikely to be found by any other means of information.

Azerbaijan faces the challenge of demining in urban areas with a high metal-content soil.⁹⁸ According a May 2023 report by the International Crisis Group, data on explosions of ordnance should be a crucial component of NTS in Azerbaijan, pointing to an experience in Cambodia where surveys helped shrink the area earmarked for demining by one third. This was made possible by gathering testimonies from locals, mine maps, data about deaths and injuries from mines, and aerial or satellite imagery to locate old military installations.⁹⁹ According to ANAMA, all incidents (including involving the military) are plotted in maps, which can serve as evidence points. ANAMA said that the demand for clearance is so high, however, that it is not always possible to conduct TS each time there is an accident involving a munition.¹⁰⁰

ANAMA takes into account planned land use in its prioritisation and tasking, and all clearance is conducted to three metres' depth in the plots where foundations will be laid for construction.¹⁰¹ In its January 2023 report, ANAMA referenced an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) technical assessment visit report, which suggested that to speed up clearance and reduce the risk to deminers, "a mix of mine-resistant heavy plant (bulldozers, backhoe loaders, and similar protected earth moving machinery)" was needed.¹⁰²

At present, only hazard signs and not also fencing are placed at the edge of each polygon, even when explosive ordnance contamination is known to continue beyond the edge of the cleared polygon. ANAMA said it is considering using fencing, in addition to hazard signs, for polygons in which people will be returned and communities established. In addition, at least 50m² is cleared from the polygon boundary.¹⁰³

ANAMA delivered on its plan to train operators on the revised standards in 2022.¹⁰⁴ A further review of the ANMAR was underway as at May 2023, and the results were expected to be issued in the second half of 2023.¹⁰⁵ Together with ANAMA and UNDP, MAG is supporting the evaluation and revision of 29 mine action standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the revised national standards. As at May 2023, 10 of the 30 SOPs had been updated and ANAMA expected the process to be completed within six months.¹⁰⁶ In 2023, ANAMA was planning to organise training sessions on 22 different topics for mine clearance personnel of all agencies.¹⁰⁷ UNDP says more work is required to implement NTS and disaggregate data.¹⁰⁸ In 2022, survey and clearance data of AP mined area was disaggregated for the first time from other types of explosive ordnance, although disaggregation did not extend to district-specific survey and clearance or the numbers of AP mines destroyed.

93 Email from Tural Mammadov, ANAMA, 19 October 2016.

94 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

95 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

96 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

97 Ibid.

98 Presentation of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 19–21 June 2023.

99 ICG, "Defusing Azerbaijan's Landmine Challenge", 31 May 2023.

100 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

101 Ibid.; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 19 July 2023.

102 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 7.

103 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

104 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

105 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

106 Email from Jeanette Dijkstra, MAG, 16 May 2023; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

107 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

108 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

ANAMA has undergone a significant restructuring and upscaling following the conflict with Armenia in 2020.¹⁰⁹ According to UNDP, ANAMA had initially planned to train, equip, and deploy an additional 100 deminers per month in order to respond to the surge in need since the end of the 2020 conflict. This monthly upscaling rate, however, could not be sustained and ANAMA has been encouraging the expansion of other operator capacities instead, including a significant commercial base, as well as seeking to strengthen its role as the national mine action centre.¹¹⁰ ANAMA is responsible for accrediting and monitoring all humanitarian mine action operators, including state actors involved in demining process in Azerbaijan.¹¹¹

At the end of 2022, ANAMA's operational capacity consisted of 920 deminers, 34 MDDs, and 24 mine clearance machines.¹¹² The number of deminers has significantly increased in 2022 compared to 2021 where ANAMA operated with 762 deminers, 34 MDDs, and 25 machines.¹¹³ In 2023, ANAMA expected 630 new recruits would join basic humanitarian demining and BAC courses, and 295 staff would undergo in-service training at ANAMA's centre in Goygol.¹¹⁴

The Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, and the State Border Service also conduct mine action. At the end of 2022, the Ministry of Defence had 450 deminers, 4 MDDs, and 20 machines. The Ministry of Emergency Situations was operating 50 deminers, 10 MDDs, and 4 machines, while the State Border Service had 30 deminers.¹¹⁵

As at December 2022, there were also four national commercial demining companies, each with an international commercial sub-contractor, to assist with operational planning and help build capacity. These are: Qaya Safety

Solutions partnering with SafeLane Global; Safe Point partnering with RPS (a Tetra Tech company); Alpha Demining partnering with Altay Group; and Azerbaijan Demining Company partnering with Piper.¹¹⁶ The four commercial companies combined had a capacity of 222 deminers, 11 MDDs, and 7 machines. In addition, as at December 2022, two national NGOs were working in mine action.¹¹⁷ Only one national demining NGO, IEPF, was conducting mine clearance in 2022.¹¹⁸ As noted above, IEPF is the only entity implementing NTS. It is tasked for this purpose by ANAMA and supported by UNDP.¹¹⁹

In 2022, Qaya Safety Solutions, in partnership with SafeLane Global, carried out demining in the 4.5km² area where a 240-megawatt solar power plant will be built in cooperation with the Ministry of Energy in Jabrayil district. Most of the mines found and neutralised were Armenian-made AP mines and AV mines with a plastic body.¹²⁰ Safe Point, in partnership with RPS, operated in Aghdam district based on instructions from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. Alpha Demining, in partnership with Altay Group, carried out demining operations in Fuzuli and Khojavend districts under the directions of the committee on urban planning and architecture to clear areas where tourism facilities will be established. In 2022, IEPF completed clearing a highway in Tartar region and continued to clear agricultural fields around that road.¹²¹

All actors are accredited and trained by ANAMA, in accordance with the Decree. All data are reported and entered into ANAMA's IMSMA database. ANAMA conducts monitoring and external quality assurance (QA) for operators and issues hand-over certificates after QA.¹²²

Table 3: Operational resources for explosive ordnance clearance (at end 2022)¹²³

Operator	Operational Staff	MDDs	Machines
ANAMA	920	34	24
Ministry of Defence	450	4	20
Ministry of Emergency Situations	50	10	4
State Border Service	30	0	0

109 "Dying To Go Home: Displaced Azerbaijanis Risk Mines, Munitions To See Homeland", *Radio Free Europe*, 18 February 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3vgaKh5>; and "Following war, Armenia and Azerbaijan Reckon with Unexploded Ordnance", *EurasiaNet*, 23 December 2020.

110 Email from Guy Rhodes, UNDP, 23 June 2021.

111 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 7.

112 Ibid.

113 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 7 July 2022.

114 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; and ANAMA, quarterly report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 8.

115 Ibid., p. 7.

116 Ibid.; and interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

117 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; and ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 7.

118 Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines (AZCBL), "Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance Problem in The Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan", p. 6.

119 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

120 Azerbaijan Campaign to Ban Landmines (AZCBL) report, "Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance Problem in The Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan", November 2022, pp. 6 and 7.

121 AZCBL report, "Landmines and Unexploded Ordnance Problem in The Liberated Territories of Azerbaijan", November 2022, pp. 6 and 7.

122 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 7 July 2022.

123 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; and ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 7.

Table 3 Continued

Operator	Operational Staff	MDDs	Machines
Alpha Demining	63	5	2
Qaya Safety Solutions	46	2	1
Safety Point	79	0	1
Azerbaijan Demining Company	34	4	3
Totals	1,672	59	55

The Turkish Armed Forces are also conducting mine and ERW clearance in Azerbaijan. According to Türkiye, eight military demining teams have been conducting demining operations since December 2020 to support mine clearance.¹²⁴ In addition, six demining machines (MEMATT-I) manufactured in Türkiye were sent to Azerbaijan in 2021 and it plans to complete the deployment of 20 demining machines (MEMATT-II) to Azerbaijan in the coming years.¹²⁵

Azerbaijan continued using RAMS in 2022 to identify suspected areas as part of establishing a baseline survey,¹²⁶ collecting information on mines and ERW, and other information, such as the location of trenches and military positions.¹²⁷ As at May 2023, there were two RAMS teams which can cover approximately 300km² per year. ANAMA is looking to increase RAMS capacity, but the technology is of limited use in areas with thick vegetation.¹²⁸ ANAMA has also acquired some MDRs capacity and has been testing the possibility to deploy them as at July 2023.¹²⁹

ANAMA now has a QM division, reporting to the Chair of ANAMA and QM capacity has been increased by around 300%, reflecting the significant upscaling of clearance operations in the reclaimed territories of Azerbaijan. Previously, quality control (QC) was conducted on 10% of land, but this has been reduced to 5%, while frequent site visits have been maintained.¹³⁰ UNDP supported efforts to enhance ANAMA's QM system by conducting a QM evaluation and organising a workshop on QM for ANAMA staff in 2022.¹³¹

DEMINER SAFETY

ANAMA has reported that no personnel were injured or killed by AP mines or other explosive ordnance as a result of survey or clearance operations in Azerbaijan in 2022.¹³²

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

A total of 3.9km² of AP mined area was released in 2022, of which, 0.38km² was reduced through TS and 3.52km² cleared. In the process, 9,165 AP mines (including 385 of an improvised nature), 4,133 AV mines, and 14,114 items of ERW were destroyed. In addition, 25 AP mines were destroyed in spot tasks. Of the AP mined area released in 2022, 300m² of the reduced area and 2,220m² of the cleared area were contaminated with victim-activated IEDs and booby-traps that meet the definition of an AP mine.¹³³ It is not possible to draw conclusions from the area released in 2022 compared to the previous year, as the 2021 land release figures were not disaggregated per type of mine contamination.

124 Statement of Turkey, 8th International Pledging Conference to the APMB, 24 March 2023.

125 Turkey Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Forms D and I.

126 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

127 Ibid.; and interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

128 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

129 Presentation of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 19–21 June 2023.

130 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

131 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

132 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 19 July 2023.

133 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

SURVEY IN 2022

According to ANAMA data, 380,720m² of AP mined area was reduced through TS in 2022.¹³⁴ This is a significant decrease on 2021 when ANAMA reduced 12.08km² of AP mined area, although the 12.08km² of reduction included both AP and AV mined areas.¹³⁵ ANAMA also reported the reduction of a little over 177km² of explosive ordnance-contaminated area in 2022. (See Table 4). Less than 10% of the land released in 2022 was reduced through TS. None was cancelled through NTS.

Table 4: Release of contaminated area through TS in 2022¹³⁶

Districts	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
Aghdam	ANAMA	10,485,859
	MOD	40,377,656
Fuzuli	ALD	334,322
	ANAMA	229,710
	MOD	2,083,708
	Goranboy	MOD
Gubadly	ANAMA	946,418
	MOD	13,500
Jabrayil	ADC	62,235
	ANAMA	4,044,076
	MOD	10,300
	QSS	143,210
Kalbajar	MOD	36,308,965
Khojaly	ANAMA	211,000
	MOD	3,263,900
Khojavend	ANAMA	499,703
	MOD	1,314,279
Lachin	MOD	7,841,825
Shusha	ANAMA	181,449
	MOD	1,180,000
Tartar	IEPF	775,512
Zangilan	ANAMA	6,825,221
	MOD	20,000
Total		117,224,043

IEPF reported conducting NTS over 1,422km² of land on both sides of the former LoC in 2022. A total of 347km² of areas suspected to contain AP mines was identified as a result.¹³⁷

CLEARANCE IN 2022

In 2022, a total of almost 3,515,388m² of mined area was cleared, with the destruction of 9,165 AP mines (including 385 of an improvised nature), 4,133 AV mines, and 14,114 items of ERW. Of the total cleared, 2,260m² was contaminated with victim-activated IEDs or booby traps that meet the definition of an AP mine. In addition, ANAMA destroyed 25 AP mines during spot tasks.¹³⁸ The AP mined area cleared in 2022 was a significant reduction compared to output in 2021 as ANAMA prioritised clearance in settlements located in the former LoC, which contained very dense contamination.¹³⁹ The number of AP mines destroyed in 2022 has more than doubled compared to 2021 when a total of 4,388 AP mines (including 1,909 AP mines of improvised nature) were destroyed.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

¹³⁶ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

¹³⁷ Email from Donald Macdonald, UNDP, 21 August 2023.

¹³⁸ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

¹³⁹ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 23 August 2023.

¹⁴⁰ Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 23 August 2023; and Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 23 July 2021.

ANAMA also reported having released 197km² of explosive ordnance-contaminated area through combined clearance and TS in 2022, destroying in the process 1,994 AP mines, 787 AV mines, and 171,955 items of UXOs. (See Table 5). The 1,994 AP mines destroyed are included in the 9,165 figure reported above.

Table 5: Land release through clearance and TS in 2022¹⁴¹

Province	Operator	Area released (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Aghdam	ANAMA	10,042,366			
	MES	330,000	14	22	3,604
	SPT	10,382,313			
Fizuli	ADC	2,008,593			
	ADL	6,366,475	241	241	93,291
	ANAMA	43,931,957			
Gubadly	ANAMA	8,299,906	156	2	4850
Jabrayil	ADC	6,857,879			
	ANAMA	44,576,513	1,502	451	91,210
	QSS	6,361,366			
Kalbajar	MOD		0		179
Khojaly	ANAMA	208,742	0	5	2,232
Khojavend	ALD	8,501,323	5	5	53,573
	ANAMA	11,075,213			
Lachin	ANAMA	211,000	0	0	0
Shusha	ANAMA	1,075,601	4	0	5,361
Tartar	IEPF	19,631,827	72	61	845
Zangilan	ANAMA	18,030,720	0	0	3,264
Totals		197,891,794	1,994	787	258,409

ANAMA said that, together with the demining operators, they have worked in 703 affected sites and cleared 626km² of land from mines and ERW between 10 November 2020 and 31 December 2022. During this time, 27,557 AP mines, 13,716 AV mines, and 38,976 items of ERW were found and neutralised. In 2022 alone, 419km² was cleared from mines and ERW, which constitutes around 6.9% of the overall high, medium, and low threat areas.¹⁴²

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Following the armed conflict with Armenia in 2020, the extent of AP mined area falling under Azerbaijan's control has increased hugely. ANAMA has adapted rapidly to restructure itself and upscale operations to address the increased contamination and workload. In 2022, ANAMA estimated that it will take approximately 10 years to complete AP mine clearance in Azerbaijan, provided the necessary expansion takes place.¹⁴³ This is exceptionally ambitious given the extent of contamination. By November 2022, Azerbaijan seemed to have increased its estimate of the time needed to complete mine clearance by three.¹⁴⁴ There are also additional mined areas now under Azerbaijan's full control in areas previously under the control of the de facto Nagorno-Karabakh authorities and over which Azerbaijan regained full control in September 2023 following the military offensive (See the Mine Action Review *Clearing the Mines 2023* report on Nagorno-Karabakh for further information).

According to ANAMA, some 600,000 IDPs are poised to return to the 2020 liberated territories under the "Great Return" programme, which foresees the clearance of 337,95km² of land in three stages by the end of 2026. The initial stage of the programme envisions the demining of 147km² for construction of homes in more than 80 settlements of Aghdam, Fuzuli, Gubadly, Jabrail, Kalbajar, Khojavend, Lachin, Shusha, and Zangilan districts. New access routes and other infrastructure projects had reached the former LoC, and increased traffic is now supporting reconstruction efforts and resettlement plans.

¹⁴¹ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

¹⁴² Ibid, 17 May 2023; and ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 2.

¹⁴³ Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

¹⁴⁴ "Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining – President Ilham Aliyev", *Trend News Agency*, 13 October 2022.

As at the end of 2022, 201 residents have resettled in Aghally village of Zangilan district following the completion of demining and rehabilitation as part of the implementation of the first stage of the programme.¹⁴⁵

ANAMA has said that due to the extent of the problem it remains severely underfunded. It is seeking international support and funding to deal with the contamination, especially along the former LoC and in other parts of the area regained in 2020.¹⁴⁶ In its statement as an observer at the APMBC intersessional meetings in June 2022, ANAMA identified the following needs: data and technology, including for aerial survey; scaling up RAMS capacity as a method for gathering data; increased demining capacity through national NGOs; support for the institutional capacity building of ANAMA; increasing ANAMA's mechanical demining capacities and MDDs; establishing and supporting female demining teams; and demarcation and permanent fencing.¹⁴⁷

Table 6: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2022	3.52
2021	18.38
2020	0.10
2019	1.01
2018	0.35
Total	23.36

Azerbaijan has yet to join the APMBC. It should do as a matter of priority. Azerbaijan has participated as an observer in the Twentieth Meeting of States Parties (20MSP) in November 2022, and in the APMBC intersessional meetings in June 2023. In its statement to the Intersessional Meetings in June 2023, Azerbaijan called on the States Parties to the Convention, as well as the UN agencies, to help it to mobilise international support for demining in Azerbaijan.¹⁴⁸ But Azerbaijan has stated that "the continued conflict prevents Azerbaijan from acceding to the [APMBC]" and that it "would only accede to the Convention once all of its territories are liberated from occupation by Armenia and all IDPs and refugees return to their lands."¹⁴⁹ In September 2023,

Azerbaijan regained full control of all remaining areas of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵⁰

Azerbaijan submitted voluntary APMBC Article 7 transparency reports in 2008 and 2009 but has not submitted a report since. Accuracy of reporting of contamination, survey, and clearance data continues to be an issue in Azerbaijan. So too are the effectiveness and efficiency of land release methodology, with many areas being cleared that prove to have little or no contamination.

ANAMA is making impressive progress in rapidly scaling up clearance efforts, and the process is nationally led, drawing on international expertise, such as UNDP and MAG, for capacity development. Systems to support the huge upscaling of the mine action programme in Azerbaijan, such as elaboration of a national mine action strategy and of revised national mine action standards, are being put in place. Applying efficient, evidence-based survey and clearance methodology, supported by strong national standards and an effective information management and QM system, will be pivotal for the success of demining efforts in Azerbaijan. ANAMA is also seeking to increase demining capacity through establishment of additional national NGOs accredited to conduct demining. ANAMA believes they could play a vital role in managing a residual risk to support safe repatriation of IDPs.¹⁵¹

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Azerbaijan has a national capacity which could be deployed to deal with residual risk post-completion. In July 2020, ANAMA reported that the elaboration of a plan for the management of residual risk is contingent upon the liberation of contaminated areas that are currently occupied by Armenia.¹⁵² In September 2023, Azerbaijan regained full control of all remaining areas of Nagorno-Karabakh.¹⁵³

145 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023, and "Great Return: First Group of Azerbaijanis Once Expelled by Armenians Returns Back Home", *Caspian News*, 19 July 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/470nKKf>.

146 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

147 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 20–22 June 2022; and ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Baku, May 2022.

148 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 19–21 June 2023.

149 APMBC, "Azerbaijan and Ottawa Process", undated but published on 13 June 2005, at: <https://bit.ly/3KLDbNV>.

150 "Azerbaijan halts Karabakh offensive after ceasefire deal with Armenian separatists", *BBC*, 21 September 2023.

151 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 10.

152 Email from Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 30 July 2020.

153 "Azerbaijan halts Karabakh offensive after ceasefire deal with Armenian separatists", *BBC*, 21 September 2023.

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: UNKNOWN

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

UNKNOWN

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- China should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- China should clear all remaining anti-personnel (AP) mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No national mine action authority
- No national mine action centre

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- None

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The precise extent of mine contamination remaining in China is not known. While very significant demining has occurred over the last two decades, some use of AP mines around military infrastructure remains.

In the 1990s, the United States reported that China had emplaced mines along its borders with India, the Russian Federation, and Vietnam.¹ China's military estimated that around two million mines of a wide variety of types were emplaced on the Vietnam border alone.² China has not reported on mine contamination along its borders with Russia and India or on operations to clear them.

1 US Department of State, "Hidden Killers 1994", Washington, DC, September 1998, p. 18, and Table A-1.

2 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008, at: <https://on.china.cn/31F8D7u>.

China conducted clearance operations along its border with Vietnam between 1992 and 1999,³ between 2005 and 2009,⁴ and between 2015 and 2018.⁵ In 2009, China said it had completed demining along the Yunnan section of its border with Vietnam and that this “represents the completion of mine clearance of mine-affected areas within China’s territory.”⁶ This was followed by a statement in 2011 when a Foreign Ministry official reported that China maintains a small number of minefields “for national defence”.⁷ Two months later, at the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the APBMC, China said that large-scale demining activities had “on the whole eliminated the scourge of landmines in our territories”.⁸

At the Third Review Conference of the APBMC in 2014, China said it had “basically eradicated landmines on its own territory”.⁹ At the Fourth Review Conference in 2019, China said that, since the 1990s, it has carried out large-scale demining operations on the border many times. In the past three years, China has cleared approximately 58km² of mined area on its borders with Vietnam and Myanmar and “enclosed” 25km² of minefields (permanently perimeter-marking, fencing, and closing down mined areas).¹⁰ China began demining its border with Myanmar at the end of 2018 with a team of more than 300 deminers.¹¹

Demining of the Vietnam border was conducted in three “campaigns” in Yunnan province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The first was in 1992–94 and the second in 1997–99.¹² However, these two campaigns did not deal with

minefields located in disputed areas of the border, where 500,000 mines covered an estimated 40km². After a technical survey of mined areas, China embarked on a third clearance campaign in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan province in 2005. China stated in 2009 that it had completed clearance of this border after clearing a total of 5.15km².¹³

In early November 2015, however, China embarked on a further demining operation along the border with Vietnam.¹⁴ Official victim numbers are not publicly available but civilian casualties were common in the bordering villages throughout the three decades that preceded the clearance.¹⁵ A physical rehabilitation centre in Kunming operated by the Yunnan branch of the Chinese Red Cross Society reported having produced prostheses to 400 mine victims between 2004 and 2019.¹⁶

In its Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II Article 13 transparency report submitted in March 2017, China reported that in November 2015–February 2017, the Chinese army cleared 18.4km² of minefields on the Yunnan border.¹⁷ According to media reports, Yunnan province contained 113 minefields and accounted for more than 95% of the total mined areas on the Chinese-Vietnamese borders. Mines were often laid in very hard-to-access mountainous areas. Online media reported that the last cleared field was handed over to the community by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) marking the official completion of the third and last clearance operation in Yunnan province in November 2018.¹⁸

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no formal mine action programme in China. Any mine clearance is conducted by the PLA as a military activity.

According to China, the military is building international humanitarian mine clearance classrooms and conducting research on the application of virtual reality technology in humanitarian mine clearance training.¹⁹ China has reportedly completed its upgrade of humanitarian demining classrooms and the construction of supporting facilities, so as to provide

good teaching conditions for conducting foreign aid demining training.²⁰ China also reported that it had carried out technical research related to mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance and destruction, and research on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) survey technology for mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and on a multi-parameter real-time monitoring and effect evaluation system for mine detection training.²¹

3 Ministry of Defence, “Post-war Demining Operations in China”, December 1999, p. 11. Before the clearance operations, there were said to be more than 560 minefields covering a total area of more than 300km².

4 Interview with Shen Jian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, 1 April 2008; and L. Huizi and L. Yun, “Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border”, *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.

5 “Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border”, *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2yYXXnL>.

6 Statement of China, Second Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

7 Email from Lai Haiyang, Attaché, Department of Arms Control & Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 2011.

8 Statement of China, APBMC Eleventh Meeting of States Parties, Phnom Penh, 29 November 2011.

9 Statement of China, Third APBMC Review Conference, Maputo, 26 June 2014.

10 Statement of China, Fourth APBMC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.

11 J. Li, “Minesweeping operations along China-Myanmar border kick off”, *China Military Online*, 28 December 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3f7P3qy>.

12 “Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed”, *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.

13 Statement of China, Second APBMC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

14 P. Scally, “Huge land mine clearance underway in Wenshan, Honghe”, Blog post, Gokunming, 5 November 2015.

15 “Guardians of the Extreme Realm: Life and Death Demining in the Southwest Frontier”, *CCTV*, 11 September 2019.

16 “From breadwinners to dependents, how can mine victims heal?”, *CGTN*, 4 April 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3hiwt2f>.

17 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2016), Form B. Unofficial translation.

18 “Soldier loses both hands and eyes from a blast while clearing mines along Vietnam border”, *The Global Times*, 6 December 2018.

19 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2019), Form B.

20 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form B. Unofficial translation.

21 *Ibid.*, Forms B and C.

In 2019, China said that it has continuously improved its demining capabilities and has developed a complete set of mine clearance equipment and technologies that meet international mine action standards and high cost-efficiency. It claimed to have achieved breakthroughs in research and development, including in unmanned mine detection and laser demining (use of directed energy weapons to destroy landmines).²² China reported that in 2021 the PLA Army Engineering University has set up special teaching content on landmine compliance in 20 professional teaching classes, with a total of 783 trainees.²³ In 2022, the PLA Army Engineering University conducted training on the detection and elimination of ERW and UXO found underwater.²⁴ China said that it sent experts to participate in the review and revision of international mine action standards (IMAS)²⁵ and that "China subscribes to the purposes of the Ottawa

Convention and supports the ultimate goal of comprehensive landmine ban".²⁶

In its reporting under CCW Amended Protocol II covering 2021, China said it donated US\$200,000 to the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Centre (ARMAC) for co-hosting relevant regional meetings. It also reported that it had provided mine detection equipment and humanitarian supplies to Cambodia and Lao PDR to help them strengthen their mine clearance capacity building. On 28 July 2021, China and Cambodia jointly held a video consultation meeting of the co-chairs of the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus Mine Clearance Expert Group, and on 14 September 2021, China and Cambodia co-hosted the tenth meeting of this group. On 23 December 2021, representatives from China participated in the online meeting of the ASEAN Technical Expert Group on Mine Clearance organized by ARMAC.²⁷

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTIONS

It is not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of mines in China in order to minimise potential harm from clearance.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

China has completed the compilation of the "Standard for Disposal of Improvised Explosive Devices" and promoted the application of this standard in related fields in China.²⁸

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Media accounts reported that mine clearance resumed in November 2017 in the Yunnan border area and in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.²⁹ Clearance was reportedly completed in November 2018, with 2,300 explosive items found and destroyed across 1.5km² in Guangxi province.³⁰ In Yunnan province an estimated 200,000 explosive items were found and destroyed in over 50km² of mined area between November 2015 and November 2018.³¹

As of writing, China has not submitted an Amended Protocol II report covering 2022 but China did report in its Protocol V Article 10 Report that in 2022 Chinese public security organisations had been working closely with the military to dispose of ERW such as artillery shells, aerial bombs, grenades, and landmines with a total of 17,035 items

destroyed.³² In its Amended Protocol II report covering 2021, China reported the destruction of 866 landmines (together with 11,151 artillery shells, 505 aerial bombs, 13,217 grenades, and 2,893 other ERW), but did not provide additional details and it is not known whether the mines destroyed were AP mines or anti-vehicle mines.³³ In its Amended Article II Article 13 report (covering 2020), China reported that, working in close cooperation, its military and public security departments disposed of 436 mines in 2020 without providing further details.³⁴ In September 2021, it was reported by an online media source that Chinese authorities had begun clearance operations along the Chinese side of the border between Yunnan province and Myanmar, near Yunnan's Nansan township and near the Mengdui township.³⁵

22 Statement of China, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.

23 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form A. Unofficial translation.

24 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2022), Form A.

25 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form E. Unofficial translation.

26 Statement of China, Security Council Open Debate on Mine Action, 8 April 2021.

27 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form E. Unofficial translation.

28 Ibid.

29 "Land mine removal resumes on border", *China Daily*, 29 November 2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2ZXUwtr>; and "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", *China Daily*, 26 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/33xCdNT>.

30 "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", *China Daily*, 26 November 2018.

31 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018.

32 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2022), Form A.

33 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form A. Unofficial translation.

34 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2020), Form E.

35 "China Begins Landmine Removal Operation Along Border With Myanmar", *Radio Free Asia*, 13 September 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3D3IhQB>.