

VIETNAM

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

2017 2016

Problem understood	6	5
Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance	4	4
Targeted clearance	6	5
Efficient clearance	5	6
National funding of programme	6	6
Timely clearance	5	5
Land-release system in place	6	6
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	3	3
Improving performance	6	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	5.2	5.0

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

The government is restructuring mine action management in a bid to improve coordination, efficiency, and standards. In the meantime, the lack of reporting by Vietnam's army engineers and affiliated companies, which constitute by far the greatest clearance capacity, remains a key weakness and obscured any evidence of progress. The proposed Mine Action Partnership Group, which might have helped to address some of the issues, has yet to start substantive work.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Vietnam should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Vietnam should develop a national strategic plan and workplan, detailing the role of national and international implementing partners.
- Vietnam should accelerate development of a national database and make data available to operators on a timely basis.
- Vietnam should publish comprehensive annual reports on the results of survey and clearance by all operators.
- Vietnam should activate the Mine Action Partnership Group.

CONTAMINATION

Vietnam is massively contaminated by cluster munition remnants (CMR) but no accurate estimate of the extent exists, even to the nearest hundred square kilometres. The United States (US) dropped 413,130 tons of submunitions over Vietnam between 1965 and 1973, reportedly striking 55 provinces and cities, including Haiphong, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Hue, and Vinh.¹ An explosive remnants of war (ERW) impact survey, started in 2004 and completed in 2014, was only published in 2018. It found that 61,308km² or 19% of Vietnam's land surface area was affected by ERW but did not specify the area affected by CMR. It said, though, that CMR affected 32 of Vietnam's 63 provinces and cities.²

In Quang Tri, reputedly Vietnam's most contaminated province, estimates of the CMR-contaminated area are increasing sharply with the progress of survey. On the basis of partial survey results in one district, international operators had estimated in 2015 that total CMR contamination would affect around 57km². By the start of 2018, operators estimated total ERW contamination at more than 130km², and with survey still to be conducted in three districts they expected the total would rise to between 150km² and 200km².³ The higher estimate would represent less than 5% of Quang Tri's total area of 4,470km². The impact of clearance is evident in sharply reduced ERW casualties. The Legacy of War Coordination Center of Quang Tri Province (LWCC) reported 2017 as the first year without a fatal casualty since the end of the war.

Vietnam's Military Engineering Command has recorded finding 15 types of US-made submunitions. Most submunition types used by the United States were air-dropped, but artillery-delivered submunitions were also used in central Quang Binh and provinces to the south of it.⁴

Most of the CMR international operators encounter in Quang Tri province are BLU 26, 29, and 61, and occasionally M 20 Rockeyes.⁵ In Quang Nam, almost all the CMR cleared by Danish Demining Group (DDG) were M83 submunitions.⁶ The Military Engineering Command has in the past encountered substantial amounts of cluster munitions abandoned by the US military, notably at or around old US air bases, including eight underground bunkers found in 2009, one of them reportedly covering an area of 4,000m² and containing some 25 tons of munitions.⁷

Other Explosive Remnants of War and Landmines

Vietnam has huge unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination and an unquantified, mine problem (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Vietnam for further information). The ERW impact survey identified the most heavily contaminated regions as central coastal provinces, the Central Highlands, the Mekong River delta, and the Red River delta.⁸ The experience of international operators in central Vietnam points to wide variations in the types of contamination from district to district. International operators report encountering mainly projectiles, mortars, grenades and some aircraft bombs.⁹

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Vietnam's mine action programme is undergoing a process of restructuring but management and operations continue to depend largely on the armed forces. A Prime Minister's Decision in 2006 assigned responsibility to the Ministry of National Defence for the national oversight of mine action, with clearance to be undertaken by the Army Engineering Corps of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).¹⁰ BOMICEN, part of the Ministry of National Defence, acted as a central coordinating body for clearance and survey by national operators.¹¹

Vietnam set up Steering Committee 504 in 2010 under the Prime Minister and with the ministers of Defence and Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs as deputies with responsible for overseeing the national mine action programme for 2010–25. In March 2018, the government merged Steering Committee 504 and Steering Committee 33 (in charge of responses to the impact of toxic chemical defoliants dropped by the United States) into Steering Committee 701 on the Settlement of Post-war Unexploded Ordnance and Toxic Chemical Consequences.

Under a Prime Minister's decision (738) in 2013, Vietnam set up a national mine action centre (VNMAC) to strengthen the direction of mine action and provide a focal point for mine action operations.¹² A decree issued in 2014 assigned responsibility for managing and coordinating the national mine action programme to the Ministry of National Defence and gave VNMAC responsibility to propose policy, draw up plans, serve as the focal point for international cooperation, lead fundraising, and "preside over" mine action information management. It is also responsible for organising and implementing quality assurance.¹³

VNMAC has four departments (Planning, Coordination, Technical Affairs and Finance) and three subordinate centres (Training, National Database, and Consulting Centre for Quality Monitoring and Management). The government appointed VNMAC's director and two deputy directors in 2014 and the centre became officially operational in February 2015.¹⁴

A further decree on management of mine action under preparation since 2016 is intended to clarify VNMAC's mandate and define the role of all state agencies involved in mine action to eliminate overlap.¹⁵ A draft of the decree circulating in 2018 stated the Ministry of Defense will preside over, and coordinate with other relevant ministries and sectors, to develop the national mine action programme. It also identified the Ministry of Defense as the focal point for international cooperation in mine action. The decree stated instructed "VNMAC, under the direction of the Prime Minister and managed by Ministry of Defense, to monitor, coordinate and implement mine action tasks."¹⁶ By April 2018, the draft had received endorsement of 20 ministries and was awaiting the Prime Minister's approval. VNMAC believed the decree would be issued by 1 July 2018.¹⁷

A Mine Action Partnership Group (MAPG), whose formation was approved by the Prime Minister in 2016 to strengthen coordination between national and international stakeholders, had its first Executive Committee meeting in June 2017. The committee agreed to set up four thematic working groups to take up priority issues in the second half of the year. These included i) contributing comments on the long-awaited decree on mine action management, updating national standards; ii) evaluating the status of victim assistance and risk education; iii) reviewing the status of information management and plans for a national database and iv) reviewing resource mobilisation. Delays in setting up a steering committee, however, stalled further activity.

Strategic Planning

Vietnam does not have a strategy specifically targeting cluster munition remnants. Decision 504 approved by the Prime Minister in April 2010 set out a National Mine Action Plan for 2010 to 2025. The plan aimed to "mobilize domestic and international resources in making efforts to minimize and finally create impact-free environment for social economic development." It called for clearance of 8,000km² of ERW contamination between 2016 and 2025.¹⁸

A VNMAC action plan for 2018 included three main targets¹⁹:

- Finalise legislation, decrees, and guidelines for the mine action sector in order to provide a unified framework for the sector country-wide.
- Clarify estimates of contamination through the release of the landmine impact survey and develop risk education.
- Clearance of some 300km² of ERW affected land.

Quang Tri Province²⁰

Provincial authorities approved the creation of the LWCC in February 2015 to coordinate mine action in the province. The Centre, funded by the United Kingdom (UK) Department of International Development (DFID) until March 2018 and supported by NPA, has developed a system of task dossiers, draws up an annual workplan, and coordinates survey, clearance, and EOD by international operators. A hotline for the community to report the presence of ERW receives an average of four calls a day.

The LWCC maintains an Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database set up by NPA in 2013 and taken over by provincial authorities in 2016. The database holds results of survey and clearance by international organisations, providing a basis for planning and tasking, as well as victim data. It has also received some data on clearance activity undertaken by the Provincial Military Command for the years 2000 to 2013. Casualties, averaging more than 60 a year between 2000 and 2008, fell to three in 2017, the first year the province recorded no fatal ERW-related accidents.

In 2015, international operators had projected completing clearance of Quang Tri province by 2020, but the sharp rise in estimates of the extent of its ERW contamination as a result of survey has made clear those targets are unattainable. In response, the LWCC is prioritizing tasks in consultation with operators. It is also seeking to integrate mine action into provincial socio-economic planning. A steering committee, which brings together representatives of the LWCC and the provincial authority, meets quarterly. The LWCC has been consulted by VNMAC and held workshops for authorities of other provinces raising awareness on programme and information management.

Information Management

On a national level, data remains a challenge. VNMAC is in the process of setting up an information management unit that is intended to combine data on operations and victim assistance held by other national agencies. The project is supported by NPA, which provided software, hardware, and training in 2016. VNMAC also started drafting national legislation that would provide for the sharing of information, and was revising the national standards for information management.

Priority tasks in 2017 included populating the database with results of survey and other operations and getting the draft legislation approved.²¹ VNMAC's release in 2018 of the results of an impact survey was welcomed by mine action stakeholders as an important step towards information sharing. With the exception of Quang Tri, Vietnamese provinces with active mine action programmes do not have databases, and operators maintain their own.²²

Operators

Most clearance in Vietnam is conducted by the Army Engineering Corps and military-owned commercial companies. Its current strength and deployment are unknown. Officials have previously reported that it had 250 mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) teams. Vietnam reportedly has more than 70 military-owned companies undertaking clearance related to infrastructure and commercial and development projects.²³

International operators conclude agreements to work in Vietnam with the People's Aid Coordinating Committee, but negotiate their programme of operations separately with the authorities of each province. Humanitarian operators were concentrated in central provinces on either side of the demilitarised zone (DMZ), which are among the most heavily contaminated. International operators active in 2017 included DDG (in Quang Nam and Thua Tien Hue provinces); Mines Advisory Group (MAG) (in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces); Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) (in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue provinces); and PeaceTrees Vietnam (who have been working in Quang Tri province since 1995).

Under an agreement with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), VNMAC, KOICA, and UNDP are collaborating on a US\$20 million project for ERW survey and clearance, information management, mine risk education, and victim assistance in two central provinces (Binh Dinh and Quang Binh) for three years in 2018–20. A Joint Project Management Unit (JPMU), with representatives of each of these three organisations, will be responsible for the daily and coordinated project management, supported by a UNDP chief technical adviser who joined in March 2018. A Joint Project Coordination Committee (JPCC), comprising representatives from the Ministry of Defence, VNMAC, UNDP and KOICA, will provide overall strategic guidance and oversight.

The project, which was expected to become operational in the summer of 2018, calls for ERW survey and clearance in the two provinces to be carried out by 73 provincial military teams, (21 survey and 52 clearance teams), targeting survey of 200km² and clearance of about 80km². The project also provides for the development of information management resources and for capacity development in VNMAC and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in support of risk education and victim assistance.²⁴

Golden West, with offices in Hanoi and three provinces, is providing explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) training to Provincial Military Commands in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh, and Quang Tri provinces, as well as advising VNMAC on technologies and training and supporting US military-to-military EOD training. Golden West is also partnering the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) in a Management of Residual Explosive Remnants of War project to study the ageing of ERW, develop standards for the collection, cutting, and dissection of ERW, and to draw up and pilot a long-term risk management model.²⁵

LAND RELEASE

The total extent of land released through survey and clearance in 2017 is unknown. VNMAC provided no information on operations conducted by BOMICEN, the Army Engineering Corps, provincial military commands, and military-owned commercial companies, which together have by far the most capacity in the country.

The ERW impact survey report released in 2018 noted that "regulations on reporting demining activities have not been strictly followed" and authorities had received clearance data for only two provinces, Ha Tinh and Quang Tri, where international donors have supported operations. The report said that between completion of the survey in 2014 and the end of 2017 the estimate of contamination in Ha Tinh fell by 111km² and 321km², respectively.²⁶

Four international NGOs cleared a total of almost 16.75km² of CMR-contaminated area in 2017,²⁷ approximately 0.5km² less than the previous year.²⁸

Survey in 2017

In Quang Tri, ranked as Vietnam's most heavily contaminated province, NPA continued to work in a partnership with MAG, under which NPA conducted its cluster munitions remnants survey (CMRS) and

MAG cleared the resulting confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs).

NPA, with a total staff of 183 in Vietnam, confirmed almost 54km² of hazardous area in Quang Tri province in 2017, 15% more than the previous year. It attributed the increase to improvements in the CMRS methodology developed with MAG and to greater efficiency in information management. Impact and evidence points are first assessed and then investigated by technical survey teams, which define CHAs for clearance. As part of the process of refining CMRS, NPA adopted a more systematic investigation of search boxes and in the last three months of 2017, trialled new procedures that have significantly accelerated the process of defining CHA boundaries.²⁹ NPA aims to complete survey of Quang Tri in 2019 and will then deploy survey teams for clearance.

In Quang Binh province, MAG conducts clearance of CHAs identified from a process of mapping evidence points. The area confirmed in 2017 dropped to a little over 0.3km² from 5.47km² the previous year as a result of reduced capacity caused by a drop in donor funding for its work in the province.³⁰ DDG confirmed CMR contamination affecting 0.2km² of Quang Nam and almost 0.5km² of Thua Tien Hue province in 2017.³¹

Table 1: Non-technical and Technical Survey in 2017³²

Operator	Province	Areas confirmed	Area confirmed (m ²)
DDG	Quang Nam	26	225,085
	Thua Tien Hue	46	465,394
MAG	Quang Binh	26	345,343
NPA	Quang Tri	91	53,675,545
Totals		189	54,711,367

Clearance in 2017

Most clearance is undertaken by army engineers but neither VNMAC nor the Ministry of National Defence provided information on the scope or results of clearance operations. In Quang Tri province, incomplete data provided by the Provincial Military Command to the LWCC database showed clearance of 1.5km²,³³ but it is not known whether this refers to general UXO clearance or specifically clearance of CMR so it is not included in the national total.

International operators cleared 16.75km² in 2017, a little more than half a square kilometre less land overall than the previous year, mainly reflecting lower funding for clearance in Quang Binh. In Quang Tri, two operators cleared a total of almost 15km², an increase of more than 1km² (see Table 2). This was in particular the result of progress of the US-funded collaboration in Quang Tri province between NPA (conducting technical survey), and MAG (clearing the resulting polygons).

Table 2: Clearance of CMR in 2017³⁴

Operator	Province	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
DDG	Quang Nam	39	569,226	136	200
MAG	Quang Binh	20	1,090,208	831	83
	Quang Tri	35	14,328,140	3,570	3,636
NPA	Thua Thien Hue	7	658,353	441	196
PTVN	Quang Tri	5	103,552	61	46
Totals		106	16,749,479	5,039	4,161

DDG more than doubled the area it cleared in Quang Nam province compared with the previous year, despite the necessity of reducing clearance capacity to one BAC team at the start of 2017 due to funding constraints. In September 2017, it started operating in Thua Thien Hue province's A Luoi district with funding from Japan, working with three non-technical survey teams. In April 2018, it increased capacity in the province, adding two EOD teams and two BAC teams.³⁵

MAG received less funding for operations in Quang Binh province in 2017, which resulted in reduced clearance capacity and clearance of only one-third of the area cleared the previous year. By contrast, in Quang Tri province, where it conducted only evidence-based clearance of polygons identified by NPA survey, MAG cleared 7% more area in 2017, though it destroyed fewer items. Since 2015, MAG had conducted clearance in the province's central Cam Lo district but in 2018 it started taking on tasks in neighbouring Trieu Phong and Hai Lang districts.³⁶ In 2018, MAG added four mine

action teams funded by the US Department of State and specifically tasked with clearing CHAs defined by NPA's latest version of CMRS with a view to identifying whether further amendments could enhance the methodology's efficiency and effectiveness.³⁷

PeaceTrees, working with four clearance teams in 2017, cleared 0.1km² of CMR-affected areas tackling NPA polygons in Da Krong district, as well as 0.44km² of requested community-related development clearance, mostly in Hoang Hoa district.³⁸ LWCC data showed PTVN more than doubled the amount of land it cleared in 2017 compared with the previous year.³⁹

NPA focuses on survey in Quang Tri but worked with two clearance teams in two of seven districts in Thua Thien Hue province. It cleared 18% more area in 2017 but funding that was due to expire in 2018, leaving a question mark against the future of its operations in the province. Most of NPA's EOD operations were conducted in Quang Tri and continued at much the same level in 2018 as the previous year.⁴⁰

Table 3: Spot/Roving Clearance and EOD in 2017⁴¹

Operator	Province	Roving tasks	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
DDG	Quang Nam	255	0	391
MAG	Quang Binh	3,166	685	2,231
	Quang Tri	1,552	141	4,073
NPA	Quang Tri	1,079	99	4,076
	Thua Thien Hue	109	36	350
PTVN	Quang Tri	1,667	157	2,469
Totals		7,828	1,118	13,590

ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Vietnam is not a state party or signatory to the CCM. Nonetheless, Vietnam has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires that CMR be cleared as soon as possible.

- 1 "Vietnam mine/ERW (including cluster munitions) contamination, impacts and clearance requirements", Presentation by Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, People's Army of Vietnam, in Geneva, 30 June 2011; Handicap International, Fatal Footprint, the Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions, Brussels, November 2006, p. 15.
- 2 Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC), "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam Based on the "Vietnam Explosive Remnants of War Contamination Survey and Mapping – Phase 1 Project", Hanoi, 2018, p. 38.
- 3 Interviews with Resad Junuzagic, Country Director; Jan Eric Stoa, Operations Manager; and Magnus Johansson, Operations Manager, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Hanoi, 17 April 2018; and with Simon Rea, Country Director; and Michael Raine, Technical Operations Manager, Mines Advisory Group (MAG) Quang Tri, 19 April 2018.
- 4 "Vietnam mine/ERW (including cluster munitions) contamination, impacts and clearance requirements", Presentation by Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, People's Army of Vietnam, in Geneva, 30 June 2011; Handicap International, Fatal Footprint, the Global Human Impact of Cluster Munitions, Brussels, November 2006, p. 15.
- 5 Interview with Magnus Johansson, NPA, Hanoi, 17 April 2018, and Michael Raine, MAG, Quang Tri, 18 April 2018.
- 6 Email from Clinton Smith, Country Director –Vietnam, DDG, 23 March 2017.
- 7 Interview with Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
- 8 VNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam", Hanoi, 2018, pp. 33–36.
- 9 Interviews with Resad Junuzagic, NPA, Jan Eric Stoa, NPA, and Magnus Johansson, NPA, Hanoi, 17 April 2018, and with Simon Rea, MAG, and Michael Raine, MAG, Quang Tri, 19 April 2018; and emails from Clinton Smith, Country Director –Vietnam, DDG, 23 March 2017 and 19 April 2018.
- 10 Prime Minister's Decision No. 96/2006/QD-TTg, 4 May 2006.
- 11 Email from Col. Nguyen Trong Dac, Ministry of National Defence, 6 August 2006.
- 12 Interview with Maj. Gen. Pham Quang Xuan, Director, VNMAC, in Geneva, 31 March 2014.
- 13 Prime Minister's Decision 319/QD-TTg, 4 March 2014.
- 14 Information provided by Do Van Nhan, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, received by email from Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAF), 19 June 2015.
- 15 Interview with Dang Van Dong, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2017.
- 16 Draft Decree on the "management and implementation of mine action activities", Hanoi, April 2018.
- 17 Interview with Nguyen Hang Phuc, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, Hanoi, 18 April 2018.
- 18 Prime Minister, "Decision on Approval of the National Mine Action Plan Period 2010–2025", Hanoi, 21 April 2010.
- 19 Interview with Nguyen Hang Phuc, VNMAC, Hanoi, 18 April 2018.
- 20 Meeting with Christopher Ramsden, Senior Technical Adviser, LWCC, Nguyen Duc Thien, Manager, LWCC; Nguyen Van Duc, Data Processing Officer, LWCC; and Snr Lieutenant Tran Van Hai, Operations Officer, Provincial Military Command, in Dong Ha, Quang Tri, 19 April 2018.
- 21 Interview with Dang Van Dong, VNMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2017; and email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017.
- 22 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, Country Director, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, Country Director, MAG, 11 April 2017; and Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017.
- 23 Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013; email from Executive Office of the National Steering Committee, 6 August 2012; and interviews with mine action stakeholders, Hanoi, 16–20 April 2018.
- 24 Interview with Nguyen Hang Phuc, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, Hanoi, 18 April 2018; telephone interview with Nils Christiansen, Chief Technical Adviser, UNDP, 23 April 2018; and emails, 3 May and 11 June 2018.
- 25 Emails from Lee Moroney, Vietnam Country Director, Golden West Humanitarian Foundation, 22 April 2018; and Rob White, Adviser, Strategic Management and Residual Contamination, GICHD, 25 April 2018.
- 26 VNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam", Hanoi, 2018, pp. 36–37.
- 27 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2017; Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017; and Nguyen Van Duc, LWCC, Quang Tri, 15 May 2017.
- 28 Mine Action Review reported DDG, MAG, and NPA cleared a total of 17.41km² in 2016. The LWCC database reported PeaceTrees Vietnam cleared an additional 0.22km² in 2016.
- 29 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017 and 2 April 2018.
- 30 Email from Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2018.
- 31 Email from Clinton Smith, DDG, 19 April 2018.
- 32 Ibid.; and emails from Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2018; and Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 2 April 2018.
- 33 Email from Nguyen Van Duc, LWCC, Quang Tri, 27 April 2018.
- 34 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2017; Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017; Nguyen Van Duc, LWCC, Quang Tri, 15 May 2017; and Claire Yunker, Executive Director, PeaceTrees Vietnam, 21 May 2018.
- 35 Emails from Clinton Smith, DDG, 19 and 23 April 2018.
- 36 Interviews with Simon Rea and Michael Raine, MAG, Quang Tri, 18 April 2018.
- 37 Ibid.; and email from Simon Rea, MAG, 12 June 2018.
- 38 Interview with Ha Pham, Project Manager, PeaceTrees Vietnam, Quang Tri, 19 April 2018; email from Claire Yunker, PeaceTrees Vietnam, 21 May 2018.
- 39 Email from Nguyen Van Duc, LWCC, Quang Tri, 27 April 2018.
- 40 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 2 April 2018.
- 41 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2017; and Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017.