

IRAQ

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 FEBRUARY 2018
 (NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2015

For 2014

Problem understood	4	4
Target date for completion of mine clearance	3	3
Targeted clearance	5	5
Efficient clearance	4	4
National funding of programme	5	6
Timely clearance	3	3
Land release system in place	5	5
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	4	3
Improving performance	3	3
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.1	4.1

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Iraq's national mine action programme performed poorly again in 2015, beset by low rates of clearance, little transparency, and set back by conflict and the impact of declining oil revenues. Even the process of elaborating an extension request to its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline is proving a major challenge for the national authority. In the northern Kurdistan Region, the Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Authority (IKMAA) was perceived to have performed more creditably during the latest reporting period, responding effectively to new use of improvised mines by Islamic State.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iraq should strengthen the mandate, management, personnel, and resources of the Department of Mine Action (DMA).
- The DMA and IKMAA should formulate multi-year plans setting out policy, priorities, and objectives for mine clearance.
- The DMA should streamline registration and accreditation procedures and take action to facilitate the import of demining equipment.

CONTAMINATION

Iraq ranks among the world's most heavily mine-affected countries, much of it a legacy of the 1980–88 war with Iran, the 1991 Gulf War, and the 2003 invasion by the United States (US)-led Coalition. The already serious contamination left from these conflicts has been made significantly worse by the present fighting in Iraq and enormous quantities of improvised mines and booby-traps in areas recaptured from Islamic State, including many pressure-plate and other victim-activated devices that are prohibited anti-personnel mines under the APMBC. It is to be expected that areas still under Islamic State control are or will be similarly affected.

Estimates by the DMA and IKMAA put Iraq's total explosive contamination at the end of 2015 at 1,573km² compared with 1,604km² at the end of the previous year, but these year-end totals, although similar, do not include IED contamination (see below) and also mask some significant shifts in regional estimates of contamination. Suspected and confirmed mined areas in central and southern Iraq remained largely unchanged at 1,286km² (see Table 1).

Table 1: Central and Southern Iraq contamination by device at end 2015¹

Contamination	SHAs	Area (m ²)	CHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
AP mines	14	13,625,700	116	56,165,407	69,791,107
AV mines	0	0	5	164,092	164,092
Mixed AP and AV mines	18	3,042,221	165	1,213,385,282	1,216,427,503
Totals	32	16,667,921	286	1,269,714,781	1,286,382,702

SHA = Suspected hazardous area

CHA = Confirmed hazardous area

AP = Anti-personnel

AV = Anti-vehicle

¹ Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, Manager, Information Department, DMA, 22 May 2016.

As Table 2 illustrates, confirmed mined area containing anti-personnel mines in central and south governorates cover 56km².

Table 2: Anti-personnel mine contamination in central and south governorates at end 2015

Governorate	SHAs	Area (m ²)	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Basrah	0	0	7	29,154,826
Diyala	14	13,625,700	0	0
Missan	0	0	98	6,888,727
Muthanna	0	0	1	10,479,896
Wassit	0	0	10	9,641,958
Totals	14	13,625,700	116	56,165,407

In the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the estimate of overall contamination dropped by one quarter in 2015 to 218km², with confirmed mined area containing anti-personnel mines nearly 30% lower at almost 126km² after big reductions were recorded in Sulimaniya and Garmian governorates.² In the absence of significant survey or clearance activity, these reductions appeared to be a result of data revisions and corrections.

Table 3: Mine contamination by device in the KRG at end 2015³

Contamination	SHAs	Area (m ²)	CHAs	Area (m ²)	Total Area (m ²)
AP mines	635	92,685,963	2,016	125,931,570	218,617,533
AV mines	3	19,700	9	230,353	250,053
Mixed AP and AV mines	29	10,950,724	197	5,901,176	16,851,900
Totals	667	103,656,387	2,222	132,063,099	235,719,486

Table 4: Mined areas containing only anti-personnel mines in the KRG⁴

Province	SHAs	Area (m ²)	CHAs	Area (m ²)	Total area (m ²)
Dohuk	0	0	409	20,758,373	20,758,373
Erbil	1	230,000	343	48,634,647	48,864,647
Garmian	174	20,085,528	128	6,875,562	26,961,090
Sulimaniya (Sleman)	460	72,370,435	1,136	49,662,987	122,033,422
Totals	635	92,685,963	2,016	125,931,570	218,617,532

A key concern emerging for Iraq in 2015 was the production and use of improvised mines “on an industrial scale” by Islamic State, posing a major threat to the millions of people displaced by conflict.

The DMA reported new contamination in conflict areas in 2015 that consisted primarily of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), of which the majority were improvised mines, affecting 997km² (see Table 5). It reported that Diyala governorate’s Khanaqin district alone accounted for some 570 km².⁵

2 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 14 August 2016.

3 Ibid.

4 The table does not reflect mined areas containing a mix of AP and AV mines.

5 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 22 May 2016.

Table 5: Estimated IED contamination in conflict areas at end 2015

Governorate	Area (km ²)
Babylon	316.43
Diyala	572.82
Salahadin	107.99
Total	997.24

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Mine action in Iraq is managed along regional lines. Mine action in Iraq's northern governorates under the Kurdish Regional Government is managed by IKMAA. The DMA, set up by the Ministry of Environment in Baghdad in 2008, coordinates and manages the sector in central and southern Iraq.⁶ The DMA and IKMAA agreed in September 2015 to share operations in a so-called Gray Zone, an area of about 69,000km² overlapping their respective operating areas. A Joint Operations Centre in Erbil managed by iMMAP coordinates operations in the zone.⁷

The UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) established a presence in Iraq in mid-2015 to assess the extent of the threat of explosive hazard in areas retaken from Islamic State, and to help authorities develop and coordinate an emergency response, facilitating the return of displaced people. Under this programme, UNMAS is training and mentoring selected security service and mine action personnel in how to organise an explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) response and develop standards and procedures for IED clearance. By 2016, UNMAS had offices in Erbil with twelve national staff, and in Baghdad with four national staff, and expected to expand its capacity in 2017.⁸

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

IKMAA coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmian, and Sulimaniya (Slemani). It also operates 27 12-strong manual demining teams, 7 mechanical teams, 5 EOD teams, and 35 quality assurance (QA) teams responsible for accreditation and monitoring the work of all operators.⁹

Mines Advisory Group (MAG) remains the biggest of the international humanitarian operators in Iraq with a total staff of 255, including 169 deminers organised in ten mine action and seven multi-task teams, along with two mechanical teams, two mine detection dog (MDD) teams, and an EOD team.¹⁰ The only other humanitarian

non-governmental organisation (NGO) active in 2015 was Mines and UXO Impact Relief (MIR), but Danish Demining Group (DDG), the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), and Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) applied for accreditation to work in the KRG. In late 2015, Handicap International conducted a general contamination assessment in Kirkuk and Diyala governorates with a view to establishing full operations in 2016. Two NTS teams were deployed in Kirkuk governorate from March 2016, with four multi-task teams expected to be operational in the assessed governorates by the end of the year.¹¹ Commercial operators included Ararat, ASA, Chamy Razan, EODT, General Safety, Khabat, RONCO, Sardal Company for Demining, Shanica, and Valmara.

IKMAA does not have a strategic plan but reported in 2016 it was in the process of drafting one. IKMAA's priorities in drawing up annual plans include clearing agricultural land and infrastructure, tackling CHAs close to populated areas and areas reporting most mine incidents and casualties.¹²

Central and Southern Iraq

The DMA implements policy set by a Higher Council for Mine Action created by, and reporting to the prime minister, in which the ministries of defence, interior, and oil are major actors. The HCMA is supported by a Technical Committee, functioning as its secretariat.¹³

The DMA oversees four regional mine action centres (RMACs) for the north (covering the governorates of Anbar, Ninawa, Saladin and Kirkuk); the centre (for Baghdad, Diyala, and Wassit); an area identified as "ME" (for Babylon, Karbala, Najaf, and Qadisiyah); and the south (for Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar).¹⁴ The extent to which the RMACs were active in 2015 was unclear and appeared to vary. However, the DMA reported it has formed a committee to draw up a strategic plan for the sector for 2017–22.¹⁵

However, the DMA's role has been weakened in recent years by the lack of any legislation or regulatory framework establishing its mandate. Mine action stakeholders continued to report obstacles to management and regulation of the sector arising from division of responsibilities between different government institutions; poor communication and coordination between ministries; lack of transparency; convoluted bureaucracy; and corruption. Operators cite a litany of obstacles to working in Iraq from accreditation to importing and registering vehicles and equipment, access to reliable or consolidated data, demolitions, and obtaining official sign-offs for land release.¹⁶

6 Interview with Kent Paulusson, Senior Mine Action Advisor for Iraq, UNDP, in Geneva, 27 May 2009.

7 Email from Isam Ghareeb, iMMAP, 1 August 2016.

8 Email from Lauren Cobham, Programme Officer, UNMAS Iraq, 7 September 2016.

9 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 20 May 2016.

10 Email from Jacqueline Brownhill, Middle East Programme Support Coordinator, MAG, 11 July 2016.

11 Information provided by Catherine Smith, Programme Manager and Deputy Desk Officer, Humanitarian Mine Action, HI, 17 October 2016.

12 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 20 May 2016.

13 DMA presentation to 2015 Mine Action Country Planning Workshop for Iraq, Istanbul, 13 May 2015; "Capacity Development Support to National Mine Action Authorities in Iraq, Phase 1: Initial Assessment Mission", Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, February 2012.

14 DMA presentation to 2015 Mine Action Country Planning Workshop for Iraq, Istanbul, 13 May 2015.

15 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 10 June 2016.

16 Interviews with mine action stakeholders in Geneva, 10 March 2015; and by telephone, 3 June 2015; and information received by emails, April to July 2015.

The DMA reported mine clearance by nine organisations in 2015, including the army and civil defence. NPA was the only international humanitarian organisation actively demining in 2015, though MAG started the process of applying for registration with the DMA in 2016 and hoped to complete the process by the end of the year.¹⁷ The other organisations included Arabian Gulf Company, BACTEC, Green Land, Canary Mine Action, Peace Land Company, and Al Khibra Al Faniya for Mine Action & ERW. The army and civil defence were also active conducting EOD and battle area clearance (BAC).¹⁸

In addition to managing the Joint Operations Centre, iMMAP, a US NGO, provided information management technical support to IKMAA in Erbil and the DMA in Baghdad and Basrah.¹⁹

LAND RELEASE

Iraq's two mine action authorities, IKMAA and the DMA, reported release of a total of 50.6km² in 2015 through a combination of cancellation (only in the KRG) and technical survey/clearance. Available data did not cover the activities of commercial companies clearing explosive remnants of war (ERW) from oilfields under contract to the Ministry of Oil.

Survey in 2015

IKMAA cancelled 25.4km² in 2015 and said it confirmed 228 mined areas covering 7.96km².²⁰ The DMA did not cancel any land through non-technical survey (NTS) in 2015, but said it confirmed 57 hazardous areas covering 211km².²¹

Clearance in 2015

The amount of mined area the KRG released through clearance fell sharply in 2015 to 2km² (see Table 6), little more than half the area released the previous year, although data provided by NGOs suggested the total release was actually higher. IKMAA, which cleared 1.45km² in 2015 compared with 2.92km² in 2014, attributed the drop partly to funding constraints resulting from the drop in oil prices, but a key factor was the new threats resulting from recapture of large areas of Iraq previously controlled by Islamic State.²²

MAG, the biggest and longest-established humanitarian operator, was not immune to funding constraints, reducing the number of mine action teams by two to finish the year with ten. This resulted in lower clearance rates. MAG reported release of 1.62km² of mined area, triple the amount recorded by IKMAA, but still less than half the 3.58km² it reported clearing in 2014. In mid-2015, MAG was able to increase the number of multi-task teams from three to seven to deal with increasing emergency requirements, particularly for support to the needs of people displaced by conflict; the teams became fully operational in the last quarter of the year. MAG increased the area covered by operations in 2015 deploying manual deminers, mechanical assets, and community liaison teams in five governorates, and hoped that its \$8.6 million budget for 2015 would increase in 2016 as a result of international attention to the humanitarian crisis in Iraq.²³

FSD set up operations in the KRG in the last quarter of 2015, received accreditation in February 2016, and started operating in March with three international staff and 24 national operations staff in Kirkuk governorate clearing improvised mines and IEDs from recaptured areas.²⁴

Table 6: Release of mined areas in the KRG in 2015²⁵

Operator	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
IKMAA	26	1,448,201	6,752	3	3,646
MAG ²⁶	18	494,705	157	0	1,548
MIR	1	73,849	111	0	0
Totals	45	2,016,755	7,020	3	5,194

17 Email from Jacqueline Brownhill, MAG, 11 July 2016.

18 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 22 May 2016.

19 Email from Isam Ghareeb, Country Representative, iMMAP, 8 July 2015.

20 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 15 August 2016.

21 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 10 June 2016.

22 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 15 August 2016.

23 Email from Jacqueline Brownhill, MAG, 11 July 2016.

24 Email from Alex van Roy, Programme Manager, FSD, 11 August 2016; "Australian NGO worker killed while defusing Islamic State bomb in Iraq", Reuters, 17 May 2016.

25 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 15 August 2016.

26 MAG reported 1,620,365m² cleared with 538 AP mines and 2 AV mines destroyed. Email from Jacqueline Brownhill, MAG, 11 July 2016.

Clearance operations in central and southern Iraq released 23.18km² of mined area in 2015, 77% more than the previous year, according to DMA data, but resulting in the destruction of 463 anti-personnel mines. The increase was attributed mainly to the work of Civil Defence teams which accounted for close to 70% of the total. This is not considered clearance even though it is reported as such. Release of cleared land continued to be hampered by delays in demolitions. These can only be conducted by the army which was heavily preoccupied with campaigns to take back control of areas occupied by Islamic State.²⁷

DMA data also attributed mine clearance to NPA, which reported working only on survey and battle area clearance in 2015.²⁸ DDG closed its operations in Basrah towards the end of 2014 and although it received funding to resume operations in the south in October, long drawn out negotiations over equipment meant it was unable to begin work in that year.²⁹ IMCO, one of the biggest demining NGOs was unable to resolve long-running issues over registration and accreditation with the DMA. As a result, in May 2015, it received a grant termination order from the US, its key donor, and ceased operating at the end of June 2015.³⁰

Table 7: Mine clearance in central and southern Iraq in 2015³¹

Operator	Areas released	Area reported as cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
Arabian Gulf	2	254,489	52	0	0
BACTEC	36	1,233,152	0	0	0
Civil Defence	127	16,364,828	0	1	4
Green Land	1	38,887	0	0	0
Kanary Mine Action	1	15,287	6	0	0
Ministry of Defence	7	2,241,516	0	0	0
NPA	8	2,630,453	77	1	0
Peace Land	1	41,387	0	0	0
Al Khibra Al Faniya	13	361,979	328	7	0
Totals	196	23,181,978	463	9	4

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC, Iraq is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 February 2018. It will not meet this deadline.

Incomplete reporting on mine clearance makes it impossible to quantify accurately the extent of Iraq's progress towards fulfilling its treaty obligations, but officials have said since 2012 that it would not fulfil its treaty obligations by 2018.³² The conflict of the last two years with Islamic State has presented further obstacles by diverting national resources from mine clearance and adding massive additional explosive contamination at a point when low oil prices have reduced national funding available for the sector. The DMA reports it has set up a committee to prepare an extension request.³³

27 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 30 May 2016.

28 Email from Bjørn Skodvin Hannisdal, NPA, 3 June 2016.

29 Email from Bazz Jolly, Programme/Operations Manager, DDG (KRG), 26 April 2016.

30 Emails from Per Breivik, Chief Operating Officer, IMCO, 5 May, 4 June, and 22 October 2015.

31 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 22 May 2016.

32 "Iraq: Mine free 2018 target will be missed", *IRIN*, 22 May 2012, at: <http://www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=95500>.

33 Email from Ahmed Al Jasim, DMA, 22 May 2016.