

# VIETNAM

## MINE ACTION PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2016

For 2015

Problem understood	5	5
Target date for completion of mine clearance	2	2
Targeted clearance	4	5
Efficient clearance	3	3
National funding of programme	5	5
Timely clearance	4	4
Land release system in place	4	4
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	4	5
Improving performance	5	5
<b>PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>

## PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Vietnam has created additional structures to strengthen civilian oversight of mine action but has not demonstrated progress in defining the extent and location of its mine contamination or reporting the progress of action to address it.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Vietnam should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Vietnam should provide a detailed assessment of remaining mined areas.
- The Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) should draw up a strategic plan for completing mine clearance.
- VNMAC should provide regular detailed reporting on the progress of mine clearance.

## CONTAMINATION

Vietnam's mine problem is small compared with its explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination, but the extent is similarly unknown. Most mines were left by conflicts in the 1970s with neighbouring Cambodia and China, and affect areas close to its borders with those countries.<sup>1</sup> Some mines have also been found around former United States (US) military installations.<sup>2</sup>

Vietnam cleared an area up to 1km deep along its northern border in the 1990s under an agreement with China, but areas further inland from the border are believed to be still contaminated with mines emplaced by the military of both countries. Since 2004, military engineers have reportedly cleared around 95km<sup>2</sup> of contaminated land in the northern provinces of Cao Bang, Ha Giang, Lai Chau,

Lang Son, and Quang Ninh bordering China under a project known as "Programme 120", destroying mainly Type 72, K58, and PPM-2 anti-personnel mines.<sup>3</sup> Chinese troops launched a two-year operation to clear more than 50 minefields reportedly remaining on its side of the border in 2015<sup>4</sup> but Vietnam has made no disclosure on the extent of remaining contamination in recent years.

Cambodian border areas were affected by randomly placed mines reflecting the more irregular nature of the fighting there,<sup>5</sup> but Engineering Command reported in 2013 that the problem had been eliminated.<sup>6</sup> Many ports and river deltas were mined extensively during the war and were not completely cleared when it ended and some sea mines have been found on the coast.<sup>7</sup>

## PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Vietnam's mine action programme has moved from military management to civilian oversight, but operations continue to depend largely on the armed forces. A Prime Minister's Decision in 2006 assigned the Ministry of National Defence to oversee mine action at the national level with clearance undertaken by the Army Engineering Corps of the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN).<sup>8</sup> BOMICEN, part of the Ministry of National Defence, has acted as a central coordinating body for clearance and survey by national operators.<sup>9</sup>

In 2013, Vietnam announced a Prime Minister's decision to establish a national mine action centre (VNMAC) to strengthen the direction of mine action and provide a focal point for mine action operations.<sup>10</sup> A decree issued in 2014 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 centre became officially operational in February 2015.<sup>12</sup>

Although VNMAC reports to the Prime Minister's office, the decision assigned responsibility for managing and coordinating the national mine action programme to the Ministry of Defence. Provincial authorities also work with a high level of autonomy in managing local mine action activities. In 2016, VNMAC and government ministries

worked on a decree intended to clarify its mandate and define the role of all state agencies involved in mine action to eliminate overlap. The decree was submitted to the Prime Minister's Office for consideration in December 2016.<sup>13</sup>

### Strategic Planning

Decision 504 approved by the Prime Minister in April 2010 set out a National Mine Action Plan for 2010 to 2025 and called for clearance of 8,000km<sup>2</sup> of ERW contamination between 2016 and 2025 but did not lay out a detailed strategy for addressing landmines.<sup>14</sup>

### Operators

Most mine clearance in Vietnam is conducted by the PAVN Army Engineering Corps, whose officials have previously reported operating some 250 mine/unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance teams, including the teams of around 50 military companies.<sup>15</sup>

International humanitarian operators active in survey and clearance operations in 2016 included Danish Demining Group (DDG), Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), which also managed clearance operations for Project Renew, and PeaceTrees Vietnam. International operators addressed all forms of ERW but focused mainly on clearing submunitions and other UXO.

## LAND RELEASE

VNMAC reported that BOMICEN-managed demining teams continued to operate in Cao Bang and Lang Son provinces in 2015 and cleared 1km<sup>2</sup> but gave no details of what items were destroyed. The Ministry of Defence had announced a two-year VND74 billion (US\$3.5 million)<sup>16</sup> project to clear a 6.6km<sup>2</sup> area of mines and ERW in Cao Bang and Lang Son provinces, starting in November 2013. VNMAC said mine clearance operations in these provinces would continue in 2016 but has provided no further information.<sup>17</sup>

Among international operators, DDG reported destroying three anti-personnel mines in the course of conducting non-technical survey in two districts of Quang Nam province. MAG, working in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces, and NPA, conducting cluster munition remnants survey in Quang Tri and BAC in Thu Thien Hue province, did not report any clearance of landmines.<sup>18</sup>

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## ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Vietnam is not a state party to the APMBC. However, it has obligations under international human rights law, particularly by virtue of its duty to protect life, to clear anti-personnel mines as soon as possible.

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- 1 Interview with Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, Deputy Commander, Military Engineering Command, People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
  - 2 Landmine Action, *Explosive remnants of war and mines other than anti-personnel mines*, London, March 2005, p. 181.
  - 3 Information provided by Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, PAVN, in email received from Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA), Hanoi, 24 September 2012; and in interview in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
  - 4 X. Wei, "Mine clearance mission on China-Vietnam border", *China Daily*, 3 November 2015, at: [http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-11/03/content\\_22359369.htm](http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-11/03/content_22359369.htm); and Z. Tao, "China launches 3rd mine clearance mission along China-Vietnam border", *China Military Online*, 2 December 2015, at: [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2015-12/02/content\\_4631304.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2015-12/02/content_4631304.htm).
  - 5 Interview with Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, PAVN, in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
  - 6 Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Head of Bomb and Mine Department, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013.
  - 7 Landmine Action, *Explosive Remnants of War and Mines Other than Anti-personnel Mines*, London, March 2005, p. 181.
  - 8 Prime Minister's Decision No. 96/2006/QĐ-TTg, 4 May 2006.
  - 9 Email from Col. Nguyen Trong Duc, Ministry of National Defense, 6 August 2006.
  - 10 Interview with Maj.-Gen. Pham Quang Xuan, Director, VNMAC, in Geneva, 31 March 2014.
  - 11 Prime Minister's Decision 319/QĐ-TTg, 4 March 2014.
  - 12 Information provided by Do Van Nhan, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, received by email from VVAF, 19 June 2015.
  - 13 Interview with Dang Van Dong, Deputy Director General, VNMAC, in Geneva, 7 February 2017.
  - 14 Prime Minister, "Decision on Approval of the National Mine Action Plan Period 2010–2025", Hanoi, 21 April 2010.
  - 15 Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013; and email from Executive Office of the National Steering Committee, 6 August 2012.
  - 16 Exchange rate of US\$1 = VND21,129 on 1 January 2015, at: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>.
  - 17 Information provided by Dang Van Dong, Deputy Director, VNMAC, received by email from the International Centre, VVAF, Hanoi, 23 June 2016; T. Van, "Bomb and mine clearance starts in Cao Bang and Lao Song starts", VNMAC website, 13 March 2014, at: <http://www.vnmac.gov.vn/en/activities-of-national-steering-committee/chuan-bi-hoan-thanh-ban-do-o-nhiem-bom-min>.
  - 18 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, Country Director, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, Country Director, MAG, 11 April 2017; and Clinton Smith, Country Director –Vietnam, DDG, 23 March 2017.