

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Tajikistan lowered its estimate of cluster munitions contamination by almost half in 2020. Teams from national operator Union of Sappers Tajikistan (UST) conducted Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS)/technical survey for the first time in a joint operation with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Tajikistan should accede to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) as a matter of priority.
- Tajikistan should comply with its obligations under international human rights law to clear cluster munition remnants (CMR) on territory under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- The Tajikistan National Mine Action Center (TNMAC) should conduct survey to clarify the extent of remaining CMR and ensure timely clearance and release of the contaminated areas.

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Tajikistan identified limited contamination totalling 0.8km² at the end of 2020 (see Table 1), little more than half the estimate of CMR contamination a year earlier, and believes its baseline is now about 80% complete.¹

The reduction is mainly a result of reclassification of confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs). TNMAC said end-2019 estimates of CMR contamination estimates mistakenly included 11 CHAs covering 965,040m² that were battle areas contaminated by other explosive remnants of war (ERW).² In 2020, TNMAC added a new CHA in Vahdat province adding 200,000m² to the CMR database. TNMAC also identified another area of 300,000m² as CMR contamination in 2020 but the task area was released without discovery of any submunitions. Most of what remains appears to be concentrated in the mountainous Darvoz district in central Tajikistan.³

Tajikistan traces its CMR contamination back to the civil war of 1992–97 but has not clarified who was responsible for using cluster munitions.⁴ Most of the submunitions cleared are from the Russian RBK 500 series, model AO 2.5RT/RTM.⁵

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area (at end 2020)⁶

Province	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Vahdat	1	200,000
Darvoz	2	588,191
Totals	3	788,191

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Commission for the Implementation of International Humanitarian Law (CIIHL), chaired by the first deputy of the Prime Minister, and containing key representatives from relevant line ministries, acts as Tajikistan's national mine action authority, responsible for mainstreaming mine action in the government's socio-economic development policies.⁷

TNMAC is the executive arm of CIIHL and the body coordinating mine action, responsible for issuing task orders, information management and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC).⁸ It was set up by government decree in January 2014 replacing the Tajikistan Mine Action Centre and taking over the process of managing transition to a fully nationally-owned programme.⁹ Tajikistan's Parliament adopted a Law on Humanitarian Mine Action in 2016 which covers all

aspects of mine action, and in 2017 it approved a national mine action strategy for 2017–20.¹⁰ TNMAC has also submitted a humanitarian mine action strategy for 2021–2030 and an action plan for its implementation which had government approval but had yet to be endorsed by parliament.¹¹

The government provided modest funding for mine action, reportedly including \$480,000 in "technical and non-technical assistance" as well as financing TNMAC and paying salaries of personnel of a range of state organisations supporting mine action.¹² The Ministry of Defence plays a major role in the mine actor sector through the Humanitarian Demining Company (HDC), the biggest national operator funded by the United States.¹³ HDC is not engaged in CMR clearance.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Programme Office in Dushanbe (OSCE POiD) has supported the Ministry of Defence to update its multiyear plan, entitled "Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan Co-operation Plan for Humanitarian Demining 2018-2023."¹⁴ In 2020, it

provided funding of approximately €250,000 to the mine action sector to finance three demining teams and TNMAC support staff and expected to maintain that level of support in 2021. The OSCE is also supporting the recruitment and appointment of an adviser for residual risk management.¹⁵

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

TNMAC adopted a gender programme in October 2018 that was prepared by the Geneva Mine Action Programme (GMAP, now a programme of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, GICHD) and is committed to improving the situation of women in the mine action sector.¹⁶

A UNDP evaluation at the end of 2019 concluded TNMAC had made progress mainstreaming gender and diversity in mine action but the strategy had not yet been systematically implemented. Areas for further action included ensuring that training of trainers for risk education was gender balanced, introducing women QA/QC officers, and developing a code of conduct and complaints mechanisms.¹⁷ Those issues remained outstanding in 2020.

TNMAC said it encourages women to apply for employment and planned to diversify survey teams to help reach a wider audience and more sources of information but progress appears to be slow.¹⁸ TNMAC employed a total of 11 women in 2020 and expected the number to remain the same in 2021. They included one woman in a supervisory role as a project coordinator, but all served in administrative or support roles, none were employed in survey or field operations.¹⁹ Relevant mine action data are disaggregated by sex and age.²⁰

TNMAC acknowledged it would be a challenge to achieve gender balance in view of the predominance of men in the military, where service is compulsory for men and voluntary for women. TNMAC said where it could identify key positions

that can be filled by female candidates, such as paramedics and/or QA/QC officers, this will be discussed and prioritised. In addition, TNMAC will seek to increase female civilian capacity in coordination with other implementing partners.²¹ The OSCE, which funds three demining teams, also seeks to promote gender awareness by collecting comprehensive relevant information.²² Meantime, the Ministry of Defence's HDC multi-task teams reportedly consult with all groups, including women and children, during survey and community liaison.²³

NPA has a gender and diversity policy integrated into its Tajikistan operations. It employed a total of 18 female staff in 2020, who included three of NPA's seven management and support staff (43%) and 15 female staff making up 17% of its operations personnel, including 11 deminers. It expected the number of female employees to remain the same in 2021. NPA's two non-technical survey teams operating in 2020 were not gender balanced. NPA's staff are diverse, employing staff from every region.²⁴

NPA and TNMAC revived meetings of a gender working group in early 2020. Its meetings were interrupted by measures to control the COVID-19 pandemic but resumed in 2021. Despite continuing cultural constraints that inhibit women from employment in mine action, particularly in field positions, NPA has found that greater knowledge about the activities of its female deminers has made it easier to recruit female staff.²⁵

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

TNMAC completed an upgrade of its national mine action database from Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) version 6.0 to IMSMA Core in May 2019 making it easier to input, edit, and retrieve data.²⁶ TNMAC hired an information technology (IT) specialist for the newly created post of IMSMA officer in 2020 to further improve data management and continued to fine-tune the system.²⁷ TNMAC introduced new data collection forms intended to simplify data entry and, in collaboration with NPA, drew on the experience of using the system in 2020 to make small adjustments to reporting forms in 2021.²⁸

PLANNING AND TASKING

Tajikistan does not have a strategic plan that addresses cluster munitions but TNMAC said in May 2020 it targeted completion of CMR clearance by 2023.²⁹ NPA is tasked by TNMAC after discussions that take account of humanitarian impact, national planning priorities and seasonal access constraints.³⁰

Tajikistan's Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline extension request submitted in March 2019, which sought a new deadline of 31 December 2025, forms the basis of its operational planning. The request said land release would concentrate on the Central region and the Tajik-Afghan border, especially the Shamsiddin Shohin district as the area most contaminated with anti-personnel mines.³¹ A General Land Release Operational Plan for 2021-25 details areas targeted for clearance each year and the required funding.³² TNMAC has also submitted a humanitarian mine action strategy for 2021-2030 and an action plan for its implementation. These had government approval but were still to be endorsed by parliament.³³

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Tajikistan's revised National Mine Action Standards (TNMAS) were approved by Decree No. 162 on 1 April 2017. The revised standards have been translated into Russian and English.³⁴

TNMAC agreed to an NPA proposal to introduce the CMRS/technical survey methodology to Tajikistan and conducted a pilot project in the central region of the country in July 2019.³⁵ It has approved NPA's CMRS standing operating procedures (SOPs) for use by all operators.³⁶

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Tajikistan significantly expanded its national mine action capacity increasing the number of personnel from 71 the previous year to 150 by the end of 2020. The Ministry of Defence's HDC provided the main national capacity and in 2020 added two demining teams raising the number of demining teams to seven, employing a total of 81 staff.³⁷

UST, a national not-for-profit organisation accredited for risk education, survey, and victim assistance, added two non-technical and technical survey teams, raising the total number of teams to four with a total of 32 personnel. UST started to conduct CMRS in 2020, working with NPA on a task in Darvoz district's Sagidasht municipality.³⁸ TNMAC planned to expand its activities to include manual mine clearance and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and expected UST

would take on clearance of any residual CMR contamination identified after it completes release of known hazards.³⁹

NPA remains the only international operator undertaking clearance in Tajikistan, operating in 2020 with two survey teams with a total of eight staff and five manual clearance teams with forty-one deminers. One of NPA's teams was deployed for CMRS in central Darvoz district for three summer months in 2020. NPA carried out the task in Darvoz as a joint initiative with UST with a view to building the organisation's capacity to conduct CMRS. NPA, in cooperation with HDC, reactivated a mini MineWolf mechanical asset. NPA also cooperates with the Border Guard Forces, working in 2020 with 13 seconded guards. It expected to continue that cooperation at the same level in 2021.⁴⁰

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2020

Tajikistan released a total of 0.3km² through a combination of survey and clearance in 2020, less than half the area released in 2019.

Cluster munitions survey and clearance operations in 2020 were confined to a single CMRS task in Darvoz covering 300,000m² that was conducted jointly by NPA and UST. The operations did not find any submunitions and nearly three-quarters of the area was reduced by technical survey (see Table 2).⁴¹

Clearance was undertaken only on 83,839m², resulting in destruction of two items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) but no submunitions.

Table 2: Reduction through technical survey in 2020

Province	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
Darvoz	UST	93,525
Darvoz	NPA	122,636
Total		216,161

TNMAC said in 2020 it hoped to complete CMR clearance by 2023.⁴² It has also made clear that progress towards achieving that target depended on availability of funding and weather conditions that did not prevent operations in the short summer season when clearance is possible.⁴³

Table 4: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Area released (km ²)
2020	0.08
2019	0.52
2018	0.41
2017	0.25
2016	0
Total	1.26

Table 3: CMR clearance in 2020

Operator	Province	Areas released	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
NPA	Darvoz	1	45,749	0	2
UST	Darvoz		38,090	0	0
Totals		1	83,839	0	2

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- 1 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, Director, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 2 Emails from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April and 4 May 2021. The areas eliminated as CMR hazards were in Darvoz (174,000m²), Rasht (531,000m²), Sh. Shohin (60,000m²), and Sangvor (200,000m²).
- 3 Emails from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April and 4 May 2021.
- 4 Statement of Tajikistan, Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) 14th Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 1 December 2015.
- 5 Email from Melissa Andersson, Country Director, NPA, 29 April 2020.
- 6 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 7 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 20.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 20–21.
- 9 Ibid., p. 1; and TMAC, "About TMAC", 2012, accessed 10 March 2014 at: <http://bit.ly/2LvPub1>.
- 10 Email from Aubrey Sutherland-Pillai, NPA, 18 October 2016; 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, pp. 20–21.
- 11 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 12 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 13 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 23.
- 14 Email from Luka Buhin, OSCE Tajikistan, 9 October 2017.
- 15 Email from Johan Dahl, Head of Arms Control and Mine Action, OSCE Programme Office, Dushanbe, 9 April 2021.
- 16 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 14 June 2019.
- 17 R. Roberts, "Final Evaluation of Support to the Tajikistan Mine Action Programme", UNDP, 30 December 2019, pp. 17–18.
- 18 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 25 July 2019.
- 19 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 20 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 25 July 2019.
- 21 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, Additional Information received 3 August 2019.
- 22 Email from Johan Dahl, Acting Head, Political-Military Department, OSCE Programme Office, Dushanbe, 13 May 2020.
- 23 Email from Johan Dahl, with information provided by Khurram Maksudzoda, Head of the MoD HDC, 27 August 2019.
- 24 Email from Melissa Andersson, Country Director, NPA, 21 April 2020.
- 25 Emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 21 April and 4 July 2021.
- 26 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 28 May 2020.
- 27 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 28 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 21 April 2020.
- 29 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 28 May 2020.
- 30 Emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 21 April 2020 and 21 April 2021.
- 31 2019 APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 35.
- 32 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 May 2017; and Second APMBC Article 5 deadline Extension Request (draft), 31 March 2019, p. 21.
- 35 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 29 April 2020.
- 36 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 27 August 2020.
- 37 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021.
- 38 Emails from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 29 April and 27 August 2020.
- 39 Emails from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April and 4 May 2021.
- 40 Email from Melissa Andersson, NPA, 21 April 2021.
- 41 Emails from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 22 April 2021; and Melissa Andersson, NPA 21 April 2021.
- 42 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 28 May 2020.
- 43 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, TNMAC, 4 May 2021.