

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a State Party to the APMBC, Georgia has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Georgia should continue to engage in political dialogue with Azerbaijan, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should grant access to The HALO Trust to complete survey and clearance of the remaining mined areas.
- Georgia should develop a resource mobilisation strategy and engage with donors to secure the resources needed to complete clearance.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The full extent of mine contamination in Georgia is not known due to access restrictions and lack of survey. According to estimates, as set out in Table 1, Georgia has more than 2.7km² of contamination across six mined areas in the Tbilisi Administered Territory (TAT),¹ although the size of four areas is not reported. Contamination comprises both anti-personnel and, in one area, also anti-vehicle mines.²

Table 1: Mined area in the TAT (at end 2019)³

Region	District/ Municipality	Village	Contamination	Mined areas	Area (m ²)
Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kirach-Muganlo (Red Bridge)	AP/ AV mines	1	2,738,730
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho	AP mines	2	28,058
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Kadoeti	AP mines	1	N/K
Shida Kartli	Kashuri	Osiauri (Military zone)	AP mines	1	N/K
Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali	AP mines	1	N/K
Totals				6	2,766,788

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle N/K = Not known

In 2019, The HALO Trust was given permission to conduct survey and clearance in the Kadoeti and Khojali minefields but it does not currently have the funding to do so. In Barisakho, two mined areas are close to a police station on the Russian border, which were laid to prevent entry from Ingushetia during the Second Chechen War. In Osiauri, a military base, mines were laid around the perimeter of an ammunition depot.

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long minefield consisting of densely packed lines of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines at the "Red Bridge" border crossing between Azerbaijan and Georgia. Laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is Georgia's largest minefield and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. As at May 2020, there had been 88 incidents: 22 involving humans and 66 involving livestock.⁴

There may also be mined areas in South Ossetia as a result of the 1990–92 Georgian-Ossetian war, and the more recent 2008 conflict with Russia. The HALO Trust has planned to conduct non-technical survey in South Ossetia, but, to date, has not been granted access. South Ossetia is effectively subject to Russian control and is inaccessible to both Georgian authorities and international non-governmental organisation (NGO) demining operators.

There are four suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) and one confirmed hazardous area (CHA) totalling 9,600m² in Abkhazia which came to HALO Trust's attention in 2019. It is expected that these tasks will each require deployment of a four-person demining team and will take, on average, two months to complete. However, the HALO Trust does not currently have sufficient funding to carry out this clearance.⁵

Georgia is believed to be free of cluster munition remnants (CMR), with the possible exception of South Ossetia, which is occupied by Russia and inaccessible to both the Georgian authorities and international mine action NGOs (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2020* report on Georgia for further information).⁶ Georgia remains contaminated by other unexploded ordnance (UXO), likely in South Ossetia and also within Georgia in former firing ranges.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD), renamed after a reorganisation in January 2019, sits under the State Military Scientific Technical Centre, known as DELTA, within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).⁷ The primary task of the HDCD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including overseeing the national mine action strategy and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC), and facilitating the development and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards, in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).⁸

For all mine action-related issues, The HALO Trust communicates with DELTA.⁹ The Georgian authorities are supportive of the granting of visas for international staff and the importation of demining equipment. The HALO Trust submitted several requests to the MoD seeking access to the remaining minefields, the last of which was submitted in April 2018. As at May 2020, the HALO Trust had received permission to begin clearing two of the six remaining minefields, at Khojali and Kadoeti, respectively, but does not have sufficient funding to complete these tasks. Permissions for the remaining three minefields have not yet been granted and the HALO Trust has reported that it may be forced to permanently close its programme in the TAT if permissions is not granted by 2021.¹⁰

The Georgian government funds the running costs of the HDCD as well as the Engineering Brigade, which carries out some survey and battle area clearance (BAC).¹¹ The HALO Trust is funded by international donors.

The national authority has received capacity development support from HALO Trust and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). The HALO Trust has provided training on IMAS, geographic information systems (GIS), clearance and survey techniques, and, in 2018, donated a mine action vehicle to the HDCD.¹² The GICHD has provided training for HDCD staff on the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core database, ammunition storage, and technical survey.¹³

In 2019, the Georgian government joined the Landmine Free South Caucasus Campaign (LMFSC), which brings together governments and civil society from all three states in the South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia) on an annual basis to encourage cooperation and dialogue on the clearance of mines and UXO in the region.¹⁴

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

DELTA and The HALO Trust each has gender and diversity policies in place. HALO Trust supports use of mixed-gender teams to conduct survey, which allows for greater engagement with women and children.¹⁵ If HALO Trust is given permission to work in the remaining minefields in the TAT, community liaison and survey teams will be mixed gender and inclusive of ethnic minorities.¹⁶ HALO Trust's EOD teams in Abkhazia are mixed ethnic Georgian and ethnic Abkhaz.¹⁷

There is equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance teams in Georgia, including for managerial level/supervisory positions although proportionately the number of women remains low. In Abkhazia, The HALO Trust works with local women's organisations to increase the visibility of its work to a female audience. As at May 2020, 30% of its operational and management staff were female and at the end of 2019 the HALO Trust employed its first female BAC team leader.¹⁸

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The HDCD uses the IMSMA database and, according to The HALO Trust, the data is accurate. Data archives go back to 2009 and are regularly updated, based on HALO Trust's operations reports and on work by the Engineering Brigade. The IMSMA database is updated regularly and is administered by a certified specialist within the HDCD, trained by the GICHD, who receives regular refresher training in the latest procedures.¹⁹ In 2019, HDCD personnel attended an IMSMA Core workshop, hosted by the GICHD and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in Kiev (Ukraine).²⁰

The data in the national information management system is accessible to the HALO Trust.²¹ HALO Trust uses its own IMSMA-compatible data collection forms that DELTA has approved while the HDCD QA/QC team also have its own forms.²²

PLANNING AND TASKING

Georgia has a national mine action strategy. Its main aims and targets are focused on clearing the remaining mined areas and other areas contaminated with explosive remnants of war (ERW).²³ The annual work plans for 2019 centred on BAC within the TAT.²⁴

In 2019, due to access not being granted to the remaining minefields, The HALO Trust had suspended all operations in TAT, apart from one two-month task clearing abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) at Chonto, near the Administrative Boundary Line with South Ossetia, which it completed in July. The Abkhazia programme continued operations at Primorsky and HALO also responded to explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) call-outs.²⁵

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

As at May 2020, Georgian National Mine Action Standards and National Technical Standards and Guidelines were still under development. The IMAS and International Ammunition Technical Guidelines are being translated into Georgian.²⁶

The HALO Trust has standing operating procedures (SOPs) in place for all its activities, including survey, mine clearance, and EOD. No modifications or enhancements were made to these SOPs in 2019.²⁷

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

The HALO Trust, which is the only international operator working in the country, conducts survey and both BAC and mine clearance.²⁸ In 2019, the HALO Trust did not conduct and survey or clearance of anti-personnel mined areas in TAT. In Abkhazia, the HALO Trust re-tasked two EOD teams to conduct non-technical survey of five mined areas for four weeks. As at July 2020, The HALO Trust was seeking funding for clearance of four of these tasks. In 2019, the HALO Trust deployed 33 personnel to conduct clearance at Primorsky.²⁹

DELTA retains a small demining and EOD capacity in TAT. In 2019, the Engineering Brigade carried out technical survey and BAC of a former military base in the Adjara region. The Engineering Brigade and the State Security Service of Georgia have capacity to carry out EOD spot tasks. In Abkhazia, the emergency services (EMERCOM) have a small EOD capacity, though HALO Trust is generally relied upon to deal with all items of UXO.³⁰

In 2019, the HALO Trust had two mechanical assets deployed at the explosion site around the Primorsky ammunition storage area in Abkhazia. The HALO Trust developed and deployed bespoke operational methods to clear heavy rubble and UXO. Innovations such as reinforced armouring of mechanical assets and the use of drones to map and identify hazardous items increased the programme's effectiveness and efficiency.³¹

The Engineering Brigade deployed four mechanical assets and 47 personnel for BAC in the Adjara region in 2019.³² The State Security Service of Georgia has several mine detection dog teams, which it uses for EOD spot tasks.³³

In TAT, quality management (QM) is conducted by DELTA. In Abkhazia, The HALO Trust is responsible for its own QM.³⁴

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

No mined areas were released through survey or clearance in 2019, but 37 anti-personnel mines were destroyed by HALO Trust during EOD spot tasks in Abkhazia. A further 332 unemplaced anti-personnel mines were destroyed by HALO Trust in Abkhazia during clearance of an unplanned ammunition storage area explosion.

The Engineering Brigade also released UXO-contaminated area in 2019, through survey and clearance in Tbilisi Administered Territory.

SURVEY IN 2019

No mined area was released through survey in 2019, but some UXO-contaminated area was. The Engineering Brigade reduced 160,823m² of UXO-contaminated area through technical survey in the Batumi village, Adjara region in Tbilisi Administered Territory.³⁵ In Abkhazia, the HALO Trust conducted initial non-technical survey of four SHAs and one CHA, totalling 9,600m².³⁶ This is an increase from the 37,758m² of UXO-contaminated area that was reduced through technical survey in 2018 by the HALO Trust in TAT.³⁷

CLEARANCE IN 2019

In 2019, the HALO Trust cleared 394,004m² of hazardous area in Primorsky, Abkhazia, destroying in the process 332 anti-personnel mines and 30,943 items of UXO. The anti-personnel mines destroyed in Primorsky were the result of BAC and mechanical clearance of an unplanned ammunition storage area explosion that occurred in August 2017; the mines were scattered across the landscape as a result of the explosion and had not been emplaced.³⁸ In addition, the HALO Trust destroyed 37 anti-personnel mines in Abkhazia during EOD spot tasks in 2019.³⁹

The Engineering Brigade conducted BAC and cleared 13,772m² destroyed 31 items of UXO from the Batumi village in the Adjara region in Tbilisi Administered Territory. In 2018, 389,204m² was cleared and 556 anti-personnel mines were destroyed.⁴⁰

No target date has been set for completion of anti-personnel mine clearance in Georgia. The Red Bridge minefield is Georgia's largest, clearance of which has been identified as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.⁴¹ Georgia previously reported plans to start clearing the Red Bridge minefield in 2015 but after discussions between Georgian and Azerbaijani representatives only survey was permitted.⁴² The HALO Trust conducted non-technical survey between 1 and 3 July, and then began technical survey on 4 July 2015. The following month, however, the Azerbaijani military demanded that technical survey operations be halted.⁴³

During 2018, Georgia reported further discussions with Azerbaijan regarding the clearance of Red Bridge minefield.⁴⁴ As at May 2020, however, The HALO Trust had not been granted permission to restart clearance there.⁴⁵ HALO has temporarily shut down operations in TAT as, while permissions have been granted to conduct clearance in Kadoeti and Khojali, the programme does not have the funding in place. If funding is not forthcoming, HALO may be forced to exit the TAT in 2021. If the HALO Trust leaves, it is unclear when the remaining anti-personnel mined areas will be cleared as there are no other operators with Georgia's Engineering Brigade having only limited resources and in need of training.⁴⁶

For The HALO Trust, the main priority in Abkhazia is the clearance of the site at Primorsky, where an explosion in 2017 contaminated the surrounding territory with mines and UXO. In 2019, HALO received additional funding from the European Union and Switzerland. Previously funding came from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Kingdom, and the United States. With adequate funding, HALO Trust hopes to finish the clearance of Primorsky by 2021.⁴⁷

PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

Georgia does not have a sustainable capacity in place to address previously unknown mined areas following completion.⁴⁸

- 1 The Tbilisi Administered Territory (TAT) does not include the autonomous republics of Abkhazia, and South Ossetia, which are outside of Georgia's effective control.
- 2 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 12 May 2020
- 3 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020; and from Michael Montañ, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 4 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020; and from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 7 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019; Decree 897 issued by the Minister of Defence, 30 December 2010; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016 and 10 June 2019; Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A.
- 8 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015.
- 9 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 21 June 2019.
- 10 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 11 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 12 Emails from Matthew Walker, 8 April 2019, and Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 10 June 2019.
- 13 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2020
- 14 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 15 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 21 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 22 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019; and from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 23 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 24 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March and 10 June 2019; and Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 25 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 26 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 27 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 28 Email from Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017.
- 29 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 20 July 2020.
- 30 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019 and 12 May 2020; and Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 31 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 32 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 33 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 34 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 35 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 36 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 37 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 38 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 39 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020; and Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 40 Email from Matthew Walker, HALO Trust, 8 April 2019.
- 41 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 42 Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and response to Mine Action Review questionnaire by Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.
- 43 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO Trust, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.
- 44 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
- 45 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 46 Ibid.; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.
- 47 Email from Michael Montañ, HALO Trust, 8 May 2020.
- 48 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.