

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:
MASSIVE, BUT NOT QUANTIFIED

AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2023

10km²

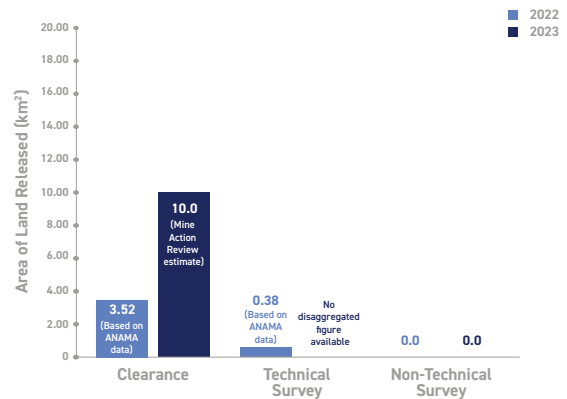
(MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE)

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2023

3,495

(BASED ON ANAMA DATA)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Following a 24-hour large-scale military offensive by Azerbaijan on 19 September 2023, Azerbaijan regained full control of Nagorno-Karabakh (the Karabakh Economic Region), adding to existing anti-personnel (AP) mined area already under Azerbaijan's jurisdiction and control. A massive effort to survey and clear areas containing mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continued in 2023. The Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA) reported clearance in 2023 of 18.1km² of mined area containing solely AP mines and a further 26.23km² of land that contained a mix of AP and anti-vehicle (AV)

mines, for a total of 44.33km² of AP mined area. Operations involved the destruction of 3,495 AP mines.¹ These figures, however, are based on manually extracting AP mine release data from release of all explosive ordnance as ANAMA does not currently disaggregate AP mine tasks from AV mine clearance or battle area clearance (BAC). It also does not disaggregate clearance from release through technical survey (TS). In order to avoid overestimating clearance data, Mine Action Review has estimated that the amount of area containing AP mines that was released through clearance in 2023 at 10km².

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Azerbaijan should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- ANAMA should prioritise efforts to conduct evidence-based survey to better define the location and extent of the contamination and enhance planning and prioritisation of clearance.
- ANAMA should ensure that survey, clearance, and contamination data related to AP mines are disaggregated from data relating to AV mines and ERW.
- Azerbaijan should adopt its revised National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) without delay to allow cancellation of areas through non-technical survey (NTS), where appropriate, which is not permitted under the existing standards.
- ANAMA should finalise and adopt its new mine action strategy (the last one expired in 2018), reflecting the significant increase in contamination now under Azerbaijan's control.
- ANAMA should continue to capitalise on use of available technologies to reduce the size of its suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), particularly through NTS.

¹ Emails from Nariman Gasimov, Deputy Head of International Relations Department, ANAMA, 9 and 11 September 2024; and interview with Nariman Gasimov, 10 September 2024.

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- ANAMA
- Demining Battalion of the Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Emergency Situations
- State Border Service
- Four national commercial demining companies (two of which have an international commercial sub-contractor):
 - Qaya Safety Solutions partnering with SafeLane Global
 - Safe Point
 - Alpha Demining
 - Azerbaijan Demining Company partnering with Piper
- International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF), an Azerbaijan-based NGO

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Türkiye Armed Forces

OTHER ACTORS

- APOPO
- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
- Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI)
- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The precise extent of contamination from AP mines in Azerbaijan is currently unknown but is certainly massive, especially along the approximately 254km-long, 5km-wide former Line of Contact (LoC) between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The defensive belts of berms, anti-tank ditches, and barbed wire along the LoC contain huge quantities of both AP and AV mines, and the zone is now recognised as one of the largest mined areas in the world.² The areas along the LoC were heavily mined over the three decades after 1990 by all parties to the conflict.³ Further minefields and other explosive ordnance (EO), including abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO), are found in areas previously occupied by Armenia outside Nagorno-Karabakh.

The full extent of contamination across Azerbaijan will only be better understood after completion of a countrywide survey that includes the areas it has newly regained. ANAMA has been surveying areas that came back under Azerbaijani control since November 2020, deploying a variety of methodologies including mine detection dogs (MDDs) and technical survey dogs (TSDs).⁴ Remote Aerial Minefield Survey (RAMS) capacity was used in 2023, but the project has since ended.⁵ In August 2023, ANAMA was also testing the use of mine detection rats (MDRs) to help identify SHAs as part of the baseline survey.

The ongoing NTS and TS in the territories regained after the Second Karabakh War identified a total of 8,234km² of SHAs contaminated with mines and other EO by the end of 2022, according to preliminary data. Of this, 1,479km² of hazardous areas were classified as high threat and 6,755km² as medium to low threat areas.⁶ Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, national operator International Eurasia Press Fund (IEPF) surveyed 2,162km² of land on both sides of the former LoC and estimated 782km² of SHAs.⁷ As at May 2024, the only actors conducting NTS were ANAMA and the IEPF, which was being supported in its work by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). ANAMA performs NTS of all polygons prior to tasking operators on clearance.⁸

ANAMA has reported that areas with the highest mine contamination include a mix of AP and AV mines. ANAMA has found several cases of AP mines improvised with AV mines, or Armenian-produced OZM-type bounding fragmentation mines with booby-traps. Some of the cases of improvised mines were found in areas beyond the former LoC, including in cemeteries, along riverbanks, or in destroyed settlements. Improvised mine contamination is believed to cover approximately 5% of the total mined area.⁹ Demining conducted over an area of 3.41km² across 21 fields in high threat areas revealed a density of more than 3,000 mines per square kilometre.¹⁰

2 Online interview with Steiner Essen, Senior Mine Action Consultant, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Guy Rhodes, Chief Technical Advisor, UNDP, 29 April 2021; and email from Guy Rhodes, UNDP, 23 June 2021.

3 Statement of Armenia, APMBC Intersessional Meetings (online), 22–24 June 2021.

4 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

5 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 2; and email from Ramil Azizov, Head of Risk Education, International and Public Relations Department, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

6 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 3.

7 Email from Donald Macdonald, Survey Advisor, UNDP, 21 August 2023.

8 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

9 Email from Ramil Azizov, then Operations Manager, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

10 ANAMA, Quarterly Report "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", January 2023, p. 3.

In 2023, AP mines were discovered during TS and clearance of polygons totalling 530km².¹¹ This figure, however, is based on the total size of area for task polygons in which AP mines were found during land release as ANAMA does not currently disaggregate AP mine tasks from purely AV mine clearance or BAC. Only a small proportion of this overall area actually contained AP mines. Following an exercise to manually extract AP mine data from other EO data, ANAMA calculated that 18.1km² of purely AP mined area was cleared in 2023, together with 26.23km² of mixed AP and AV mined area.¹² In a report at the end of 2023, ANAMA indicated that just under 2,480km² of contaminated area were classified as highly contaminated with AP mines and ERW, 7,806km² were estimated to be of medium and low threat. ANAMA has also estimated there to be approximately 1.5 million mines.¹³ These figures exclude AP mined area identified in territory regained from the *de facto* authorities of Nagorno-Karabakh following Azerbaijan's September 2023 offensive.¹⁴ At the end of 2023, ANAMA reiterated that contamination spans diverse terrain, with 60% flat on agricultural land, 30% on grassy hills, and 10% in mountainous regions.¹⁵

According to ANAMA, Armenia laid mines in haste, including while retreating in 2020. Mines have been found in recently cultivated land, with mine ploughs abandoned nearby. Armenia denied the claims. Between August 2022 and January 2023, ANAMA said that it detected and neutralised 3,166 mines that were made in Armenia in 2021, including types PMN-E, PMN-2, and TM-62.¹⁶ This, Azerbaijan claims, indicates that Armenia continued to emplace mines even after the Trilateral Statement of 9 November 2020.¹⁷

Azerbaijan requested that Armenia immediately release information on the location of the remaining minefields.¹⁸ Armenia, however, maintains that most of the mines were emplaced by Azerbaijan in the early years of the conflict to deter Nagorno-Karabakh forces.¹⁹ Following extensive international mediation, Armenia released some minefield records, providing information on 263,067 AP mines and

127,427 AV mines as well as other explosive devices. According to ANAMA, these records constitute only 5% of the regained areas and less than one third of the high-threat areas.²⁰ The accuracy of the maps provided by Armenia has yet to be fully determined, but Azerbaijan maintains that only some 25% of the data provided has proven to be reliable.²¹ It has been argued, including by officials from Armenia and the former Nagorno-Karabakh, that accurate mine maps do not exist.²² Analysts argue that mines were scattered as Armenian forces retreated in 2020 without time for precise record-keeping.²³ Following reports in early 2024, that Armenia would provide additional mine maps to Azerbaijan,²⁴ Armenia presented eight new maps of minefields of the Karabakh region (regained by Azerbaijan following the war in 2020).²⁵ ANAMA stated that the maps are "inaccurate, unreliable, and incomplete".²⁶

Since the end of the 2020 conflict, ANAMA has undertaken massive clearance in the regained territories, prioritising residential areas, agricultural areas, areas of ecological importance, social infrastructure, roads, and water sources.²⁷ According to ANAMA, evidence-based TS is conducted prior to clearance and according to the national work plan.²⁸ In November 2022, the President of Azerbaijan signed a decree approving the "First State Programme on the Great Return to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan" (the "Great Return" programme), which aims to resettle 34,500 families between 2022 and 2026 in three stages. The first of these involves the rebuilding of social infrastructure in 105 cities, towns, and villages in the regained areas, contingent on clearance of 709.6km² for residential areas by the end of 2024 (the target was previously reported as 227 cities, towns and villages contingent on clearance of 147km², but some villages were subsequently merged and counted as one and the clearance area was subsequently expanded), as well as clearance of land for agriculture and infrastructure to support residential areas.²⁹ The second and third stages are expected to draw on the lessons learned from the first.³⁰

11 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 25 July 2024.

12 Emails from Nariman Gasimov, Deputy Head of International Relations Department, ANAMA, 9 and 11 September 2024; and interview with Nariman Gasimov, 10 September 2024.

13 Email from Ramil Azizov, then Operations Manager, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

14 Email from Ramil Azizov, then Operations Manager, ANAMA, 28 July 2023.

15 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 3; and ANAMA, Quarterly Update, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", October–December 2023, undated, p.4.

16 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, pp. 2 and 4; and Statement of Azerbaijan, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–21 June 2023.

17 Statement of Azerbaijan on Universalisation, APMBC Twenty-First Meeting of States Parties (21MSP), Geneva, 23 November 2023.

18 Statement of Azerbaijan, APMBC Intersessional Meetings (online), 22–24 June 2021.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid; "Armenia and Azerbaijan exchange detainees for mine maps", *Eurasianet*, 23 June 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3gXYWdx>; and ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 4.

21 Statement of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19–21 June 2023; and Statement of Azerbaijan on Universalisation, 21MSP, Geneva, 23 November 2023.

22 International Crisis Group (ICG), "Post-War Prospects for Nagorno-Karabakh", 9 June 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/4dclod8>.

23 "Azerbaijan demands 'mine maps' from Armenia", *Euroasianet*, 11 June 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3ScA30X>.

24 "Azerbaijan 'takes note' of Armenia's decision to provide new minefield maps", *PanArmenian.net*, 26 January 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4bZawzw>.

25 "Azerbaijan Urges Armenia for Accurate Minefield Maps", *Caspian News*, 27 January 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4deZVBH>.

26 "Azerbaijan says Armenia presented 8 new maps on minefields in Karabakh", *Asia-Pacific*, 13 February 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3LuZF5l>.

27 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; and: Centre for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication of the Republic of Azerbaijan, "State Program on the Great Return to the liberated territories of Azerbaijan", 17 November 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3DDz9D1>.

28 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022 and 22 July 2024.

29 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024; and Action on Armed Violence (AOAV), "Landmines in Azerbaijan continue to pose a lethal threat to peace and development", 22 June 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3DCZxgD>.

30 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

The endorsement of the “Great Return” programme came one month after the President of Azerbaijan stated that Azerbaijan needed nearly 30 years and a staggering US\$25 billion to “solve the issues related to demining”.³¹ ANAMA has been amassing international support through various fora, including the organisation of several international conferences in Baku, and attending APMBC meetings to mobilise international support.³²

Mine contamination in Azerbaijan is predominantly the consequence of the 1988–94 armed conflict with Armenia, which saw landmines laid by both sides. During the 2020 armed conflict, media reported that the retreating Armenian forces planted mines in civilian infrastructure, lamp posts, canals, road junctions, rural and urban paths, courtyard entrances, cemeteries, and riverbanks.³³ The fighting that started in September 2020³⁴ was brought to an end by a Russian-brokered ceasefire agreement, which came into effect on 10 November 2020. Under the agreement, Azerbaijan regained full control in the seven districts adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh: Aghdam, Fuzuli, Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Lachin, Qubadli, and Zangilan.³⁵

In 2018, ANAMA had estimated that mine contamination in areas occupied by Armenia covered between 350km² and 830km², and contained between 50,000 and 100,000 mines.³⁶ Surveys conducted in areas where Azerbaijan subsequently gained access has, as suggested by the data presented above, proved the 2018 estimate to significantly understate the explosive threat.

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Azerbaijan is also heavily contaminated with CMR and other ERW: both unexploded ordnance (UXO) and AXO, the extent of which is not known (see Mine Action Review’s *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2024* report on Azerbaijan for further information).

THE KARABAKH ECONOMIC REGION (FORMERLY REFERRED TO AS NAGORNO-KARABAKH)

As a result of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020, territory under the control of the *de facto* authorities in Nagorno-Karabakh decreased by about one third³⁷ and most mined areas transferred back to Azerbaijan’s control. Territory not regained by Azerbaijan continued to be governed by the *de facto* Nagorno-Karabakh authorities and was patrolled by Russian peacekeeping forces, until Azerbaijan’s 24-hour offensive of 19 September 2023 when it regained the remainder of the territory.³⁸

Prior to September 2023, The HALO Trust (HALO) had been the main organisation conducting land release in Nagorno-Karabakh, and from the end of 2020, HALO’s priorities switched from mine survey and clearance to addressing the threat posed by cluster munition remnants (CMR) resulting from the 2020 conflict. In 2021, HALO reported the discovery of just one confirmed AP mined area of 11,035m², in Martakert district (known as Aghdere in Azerbaijan).³⁹ HALO was not aware of any change to the overall recorded extent of AP mined area in the territory in 2022, and did not discover any new mine contamination or release any mined area.⁴⁰ Following Azerbaijan’s offensive on 19 September 2023, HALO ceased all operations in Nagorno-Karabakh and all staff left the region four days later.⁴¹

31 “Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining – President Ilham Aliyev”, *Trend News Agency*, 13 October 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3qe8edY>.

32 “Armenia completes demining of Azerbaijan-boundary village”, *Trend News Agency*, 30 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3zAjXYz>; and “Azerbaijan, Armenia continue joint border demining efforts”, *News.Az*, 10 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3L3ErVw>.

33 “Mines, Karabakh and Armenia’s Crisis”, *New Eastern Europe*, 16 April 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3vezeaC>.

34 W. Landgraf and N. Seferian, “A Frozen Conflict Boils Over: Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023 and Future Implications”, Report, Foreign Policy Research Institute, January 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3wWwsgj>, p. 12.

35 See, e.g., ICG, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer”, Last updated 7 May 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3ui0ou2>; on 7 July 2021, the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, signed a decree increasing the number of economic regions in Azerbaijan from 11 to 14. The capital, Baku, became its own separate economic region and two new regions were created: Karabakh (encompassing Khankendi city, as well as the regions of Aghjabadi, Aghdam, Barda, Fuzuli, Khojali, Khojavend, Shusha, and Tartar), and East Zangazur (encompassing Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Gubadli, Lachin, and Zangilan).

36 ANAMA, “Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action 2018”, p. 5.

37 T. de Waal, “Unfinished Business in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict”, Carnegie Europe, 11 February 2021.

38 ICG, “The Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: A Visual Explainer”, Last updated 16 September 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3ui0ou2>; and “Azerbaijan halts Karabakh offensive after ceasefire deal with Armenian separatists”, *BBC*, 21 September 2023, at: <https://bbc.in/3rCVK0e>.

39 Email from Miles Hawthorn, Programme Manager, HALO, 5 May 2022.

40 Email from Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper, Head of Region – Europe (South Caucasus), HALO, 16 March 2023.

41 Email from David Crawford, Programme Manager, HALO Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia, 17 May 2024.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

ANAMA was established by Presidential Decree 854 in 1998. It initiated demining in 2000. In February 2021, again by presidential decree, ANAMA was restructured and given the status of a public legal entity as the Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan.⁴² The rebranded ANAMA has the mandate to plan, coordinate, and oversee humanitarian demining by national and international operators.⁴³ ANAMA has a national headquarters in Baku and two regional offices in Horadiz and Goygol, and mobile base camps operating in all regions.⁴⁴ Goygol Regional Training Centre is the main demining training centre.⁴⁵ In 2021, a national mine action law was drafted with the support of UNDP. As at May 2024, approval was still pending, with the possibility that it might be formally adopted by the year's end.⁴⁶

Prior to the 2020 conflict, ANAMA had been conducting demining operations with two contracted national operators: Dayag-Relief Azerbaijan (RA) and IEPF. In March 2020, RA's field personnel were incorporated within ANAMA while RA as an organisation continued to provide logistical support to ANAMA.⁴⁷ Since the end of the 2020 conflict, both ANAMA and clearance operations in Azerbaijan have been rapidly scaled up to address the significant mine and ERW contamination newly under Azerbaijan's control. An interministerial mine action working group, chaired by ANAMA, continued to meet regularly in 2023 (meeting a total of 19 times) and included Azerbaijan's most significant ministries, including of defence, interior, and emergency situations, as well as the State Border Service.⁴⁸ The working group has overall responsibility for coordination of mine action, while ANAMA coordinates mine action operators.⁴⁹

Mine action is considered a national priority by the government of Azerbaijan.⁵⁰ It is integrated into the Azerbaijan Socio-Economic Development plan 2019–2023 and is considered a key contributor to meeting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁵¹ Azerbaijan has adopted national SDG 18 for mine action for safe return, settlement, recovery,

prosperity and peace,⁵² and is proposing a dedicated global SDG as part of the Agenda 2030 process.⁵³

The Azerbaijani government has funded most of ANAMA's running costs along with survey and clearance of hazardous areas. In 2023, it was reported that the government funded more than 95% of the mine action programme's operating costs.⁵⁴ Similarly, in 2024, ANAMA reported that mine action, including survey and clearance efforts, is predominantly government-funded, except for a small amount of funding (less than 5%) from international donors such as the European Union (EU), UNDP, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).⁵⁵ The Marshall Legacy Institute (MLI) has provided 81 mine detection dogs (MDDs) to ANAMA since 2005, with 16 dogs being given in 2023 and another 12 dogs due to be given in 2024.⁵⁶ ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF) donated two MDDs.⁵⁷ UNHCR and UNICEF have also funded explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) to support the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁵⁸

In May 2024, ANAMA held its third international conference together with UNDP, on "Mitigating the Environmental Impact of Landmines: Resource Mobilisation for a Safe and Green Future", a forerunner to Azerbaijan hosting of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) in November 2024.⁵⁹

UNDP provides strategic and technical capacity development to ANAMA⁶⁰ and has supported the creation of an enabling mine action environment, including by drafting a national mine action law and a generic mine action strategy for ANAMA's consideration, and revising the NMAS. UNDP also elaborated a gender needs assessment, leading to the adoption of a gender policy and strategy and a workshop on gender in March 2023. UNDP continued to provide support on technical matters relating to land release.⁶¹ In 2024, UNDP developed a concept document on landmine impact on

42 "Azerbaijan establishes Mine Action Agency", APA, 15 January 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/35MhtEu>.

43 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 7.

44 UNDP, "Gender Organisational Assessment of Mine Action Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan (ANAMA)", Report, February 2023, p. 12; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

45 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

46 Ibid.

47 Email from Nijat Karimov, ANAMA, 28 July 2020.

48 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023 and 20 May 2024; interview with Vugar Suleymanov, Chairman of the Board, ANAMA; and Samir Poladov, Deputy Chair, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022; and presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022.

49 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

50 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 3.

51 UNDP, "Gender Organisational Assessment of ANAMA", Report, February 2023, p. 10.

52 Presentation by Huseyn Huseynov, Head of Department for Sustainable Development and Social Policy, Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Aghdam, 24 May 2023.

53 ANAMA, Quarterly Update, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", October–December 2023, undated, p. 14.

54 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024..

55 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

56 Email from Indre Sabaliunaite, Program Director, MLI, 30 May 2024.

57 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

61 Emails from Mark Buswell, Strategic Advisor, UNDP, 20 March 2023; and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

the environment while the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) was developing a report on climate-change considerations and priority setting in mine action.⁶² On the sidelines of its third international conference on 30 May 2024, UNDP and ANAMA signed a statement of intent to establish the ANAMA-UNDP International Centre of Excellence in Training for Mine Action in Azerbaijan; to provide national, regional, and international training and capacity building in mine action; and to promote research and innovation to develop the latest technologies and methodologies in demining.⁶³ In a separate initiative, it has been reported that Azerbaijan and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) are exploring the possibility of using nuclear applications for detecting landmines.⁶⁴

In another development, on 7 February 2024, UNDP and ANAMA launched a new demining project with €4.25 million of EU funds, covering 20 villages. The project will enhance the capacity of local institutions, fostering partnerships between local and international NGOs. It aims to strengthen ANAMA's information management (IM) systems and apply innovative solutions in demining operations. UNDP will support ANAMA with training, equipping, and deploying emergency response teams to detect and destroy mines and UXO; develop maps for mine detection; and help procure special equipment, including personal protective equipment.⁶⁵

Further EU support for demining was announced on 3 May 2024 with the launch of the "Team Europe Initiative on Mine Action in Azerbaijan", with the EU and its Member States expected to increase funding to around €13 million in coming years.⁶⁶ Funding is to support capacity-building and institutional strengthening of ANAMA, risk education, and victim assistance.⁶⁷ Additional international funding was pledged at the end of 2023 for demining: \$3 million from Saudia Arabia and €1.5 million from Italy via UNDP.⁶⁸ Belgium pledged €250,000 in 2024 through the Belgian NGO APOPO, to

continue its work with dogs and rats in Aghdam and Tartar in collaboration with the Azerbaijan military, UNDP, and Mines Advisory Group (MAG); see further details below.⁶⁹

MAG has provided a range of capacity-building support to Azerbaijan in recent years. This has included providing a 10-month technical and practical supervisory training which 16 ANAMA trainees successfully completed, and a separate two-week course for 19 ANAMA supervisors.⁷⁰ In 2023, MAG coordinated the training of women deminers, and APOPO supported ANAMA on the use of MDRs. A new pledge of €250,000 from Belgium enabled APOPO to continue its activities in 2024 to locate and clear at least 1,130,000m² of AP mined area.⁷¹ The GICHD installed Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core at ANAMA in 2022 and continued its support, including training, in 2023 and 2024.⁷² In April 2024, ANAMA staff participated in a mine action management course in Serbia, which the GICHD organised in cooperation with the Serbian Mine Action Centre.⁷³

ANAMA has also received capacity development support from the United Kingdom (UK), the United States (US) Department of State, and the ICRC.⁷⁴ The US Department of State was providing \$2.5 million in 2023 and 2024 to train ANAMA supervisors, for technical supervision of mixed gender teams, and to support the national NGO.⁷⁵ The ICRC provides training for ANAMA site paramedics⁷⁶ and conducts EORE and other activities.⁷⁷ The Counter Explosive Defence Engagement office of UK Ministry of Defence provided technical support on EOD to ANAMA in 2022.⁷⁸

Türkiye reportedly trained the Azerbaijan armed forces in 2023 in mine clearance and improvised explosive device (IED) demolition techniques. In addition, four Turkish military demining teams conducted mine clearance in Azerbaijan.⁷⁹ In 2024, it was reported that Russian peacekeepers were to be involved in demining operations in Khojaly.⁸⁰

62 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2023 and 25 June 2024.

63 "ANAMA, UNDP to set up Center of Excellence for combating mine threats", *News.Az*, 30 May 2024, accessed 3 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4b1tePcx>; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

64 "Azerbaijan, IAEA explore possibility of using nuclear applications in detecting landmines: Minister", *Azerbaycan 24*, 21 March 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4cUFnxU>.

65 "Azerbaijan faces huge de-mining challenge with little help from West", *Azernews*, 20 March 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4aCxs7c>.

66 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

67 EU, "Launch of Team Europe Initiative on Mine Action in Azerbaijan", 3 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3R2QEUE>.

68 ANAMA, Quarterly Update, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", October–December 2023, undated, p. 12.

69 "Envoy: Belgium helping Azerbaijan solve serious problem - clearing Karabakh from mines", *Report Azerbaijan*, 31 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3zLrCTZ>; and "Belgium contributes to mine clearance activities in Azerbaijan by allocating 250,000 euros", *News.Az*, 5 July 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3zxP0JA>.

70 Email from Jeanette Dijkstra, Programme Manager, MAG, 16 May 2023.

71 Envoy: Belgium helping Azerbaijan solve serious problem - clearing Karabakh from mines", *Report Azerbaijan*, 31 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3zLrCTZ>.

72 Email from Tinatin Maurer-Shengelia, Programme Officer, GICHD, 11 June 2024.

73 Ibid.

74 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

75 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

76 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 8.

77 ICRC, "Azerbaijan: Activity highlights for 2022", February 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3PmE07w>.

78 Presentation by Bert Appleton, Head of the Counter Explosive Defence Engagement Office, UK MoD, on "Building capacity through Government to Government (G2G) Initiatives", 25 May 2023.

79 Türkiye APMBC Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Forms D and I.

80 "Russian peacekeepers to involve in demining operations in Khojaly", *AZERTAC - Azerbaijan State News Agency*, 4 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4cTho2q>.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The Azerbaijani Code of Labour denounces any type of discrimination in labour relations, including between men and women. It does, however, include so-called “protective measures”, which legally prohibit women from being hired into a wide array of jobs. Traditional norms and gender stereotyping also lead to women and men not being equally included in the different organisational levels. UNDP’s assessment underlines the fact that concerns over women’s reproductive health (for example, regarding pregnancy) are deeply rooted in cultural norms intended to protect women rather than exclude them. Despite being well-intentioned, these norms create barriers to women’s participation in the labour force.⁸¹

In the mine action sector, a Gender Policy and Strategy, developed by UNDP since 2022 with UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) funding, had been accepted by ANAMA and was being implemented as at May 2024.⁸² A UNDP gender consultant has supported ANAMA in implementing the strategy by preparing an inception report, monitoring implementation, organising gender equality training for female deminers, and creating a gender marker for the mine action programme. The consultant has

also developed a dashboard for gender equality monitoring and produced communication and visibility materials. Despite challenges such as logistical issues and cultural barriers, substantial progress was reported in raising awareness and building capacity among ANAMA staff and mine action stakeholders. UNDP organised a hybrid workshop, “International Exchange of Good Practices on Gender Mainstreaming in Mine Action” on 17 April 2024, with online participation from Lebanon, Ukraine, and Vietnam.⁸³

According to ANAMA, gender and diversity are integrated into mine action in Azerbaijan, and ANAMA is keen to increase female demining team capacity and to employ injured people and people with disabilities.⁸⁴ As at May 2024, however, women made up less than 7% of ANAMA’s total workforce and held less than 3% of managerial or supervisory positions.⁸⁵ There were, though, 24 women in operational positions in 2024 (including IEPF team members) and a further six field paramedics. While this is still less than 2% of all operational staff, it is nonetheless a considerable improvement on the situation in 2022, when no women were trained in demining in Azerbaijan.⁸⁶ Women have historically been concentrated in administrative roles at ANAMA’s Baku headquarters.

Table 1: Gender composition of ANAMA (in May 2024)⁸⁷

Total staff	Women staff	Managerial or supervisory staff	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Operational staff	Women in operational positions*
2,414	167 (7%)	275	7 (3%)	1,425 (including IEPF all-female team)	24 (2%)

* Another six women work as paramedics in field support teams.

Through the EU-UNDP funded project, in 2023, MAG, in partnership with IEPF, began supporting ANAMA in deploying two fully equipped women-only multi-task teams conducting clearance, BAC, TS, animal detection systems (ADS), EORE, and NTS. Two demining teams comprising a total of 24 people, including 18 female deminers were accredited under the project in November 2023.⁸⁸ MAG and IEPF were also to establish two gender balanced/mixed teams using US Department of State Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) funding. As at August 2024, all four teams were already in place.⁸⁹ APOPO is developing the MDD capacity of the four teams.⁹⁰

81 UNDP, “Gender Organisational Assessment of ANAMA”, Report, February 2023, p. 4.

82 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023 and 20 May 2024.

83 Email from Qadeem Tariq, Programme Specialist (Mine Action), UNDP, 9 September 2024.

84 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

85 Ibid.

86 ANAMA, “Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs”, Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 11; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

87 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

88 “I have no regrets: the Azerbaijani women trained to clear mines”, EU Neighbours East, 18 March 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3UY0Lv8>.

89 Email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

90 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023; Jeanette Dijkstra, MAG, 16 May and 3 July 2023; online interview with Greg Crowther, Director of Programmes, MAG, 26 July 2023; and UNDP, “Gender Organisational Assessment of Mine Action Agency of ANAMA”, Report, February 2023, p. 11.

According to ANAMA, survey and community liaison personnel are mostly from affected communities and there are no restrictions on the basis of ethnic group or religious affiliation. ANAMA has highlighted that EORE teams are particularly inclusive and mixed-gender, to facilitate access and participation by all groups in the community.⁹¹ Operations data are disaggregated by sex, and disaggregation by age has been implemented in EORE reporting.⁹²

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

ANAMA has stated that it recognises the paramount importance of environmental management in demining.⁹³ By 2022, Azerbaijan had revised its national standards (ANMAR) to cover all demining with a dedicated chapter on Environmental Protection.⁹⁴ As at May 2024, however, the ANMAR were still under review⁹⁵ and had yet to be formally adopted. ANAMA said it plans to develop an environmental management policy.⁹⁶

According to the ANMAR, "it is the intent of the National Mine Action Programme (MAP) of the Republic of Azerbaijan that these requirements shall be complied with to ensure that the environment is not degraded by mine action work and land is returned in a state that is similar to, or where possible better than, before mine action operations commenced, and that permits its intended use." The Environmental Protection chapter includes information on Azerbaijan's mine action environmental management system and requirements for the identification, assessment, and mitigation of environmental aspects. These include waste disposal, water supplies, burning and removal of vegetation, animals, open burning and demolition, environmental aspects of mechanical operations, emergency preparedness, monitoring, cultural and historical sites, and completion and remediation.

ANAMA has developed a standard operating procedure (SOP) incorporating guidelines from the relevant International Mine Action Standard (IMAS 07.13), which reflect its environmental commitments.⁹⁷ During TS and clearance, demining experts consider the specific risks associated with EO, collaborating with environmental specialists to assess environmental impact operations and minimise harm.⁹⁸ ANAMA's approach combines environmental risk assessment, training, technology, waste management, monitoring, community engagement, and rehabilitation, to prevent and minimise environmental damage.⁹⁹ According to ANAMA, demining experts consider the specific risks associated with EO during technical survey and clearance operations, and collaborate with environmental specialists to assess the environmental impact of demining operations and develop strategies to minimise harm, including by filling in excavated areas.¹⁰⁰

The Government of Azerbaijan may also require the conduct of a formal environmental impact assessment in relation to large or publicly significant mine action projects, or ones that will take place in areas of known environmental vulnerability.¹⁰¹ As noted above, ANAMA's third international conference, held at the end of May 2024, focused on the environmental impact of landmines and resource mobilisation.¹⁰²

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Azerbaijan's newly revised, but as yet unadopted, national mine action standards include the establishment of a single, unified, information management system, which ANAMA is implementing.¹⁰³ In 2022, UNDP and the GICHD began supporting ANAMA's IM efforts. By May 2023, an IMSMA charter on mine action procedures had been signed by the Prime Minister, and ANAMA was subcontracting a local company to house its IMSMA database. As at May 2024, ANAMA was still working with the company regarding technical support. However, the transition to IMSMA Core was almost complete.¹⁰⁴

91 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Emails from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

95 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid.

101 ANMAR, Section IV Management Systems, Chapter 9 Environmental Protection.

102 ANAMA "3rd International Mine Action Conference", accessed 22 May 2024 at: <https://bit.ly/4auWcxR>.

103 Presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March–1 April 2022.

104 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

Other efforts to improve data quality are ongoing.¹⁰⁵ Verification occurs initially at the regional level and then at headquarters, and ANAMA plans to generate daily progress reports once it has migrated to IMSMA Core.¹⁰⁶ All data on clearance operations, including those of the military, are reported centrally to ANAMA.¹⁰⁷ But despite improvements being made in IM, ANAMA does not yet fully disaggregate survey, clearance, and contamination data related to AP mines from data on other EO.

PLANNING AND TASKING

ANAMA is guided by the following key documents, issued at cabinet level, which together influence clearance and EORE priorities: "The Great Return Program"; "Azerbaijan-2030: National Priorities for Socio-Economic Development"; and "The Socio-Economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan 2022-2026".¹⁰⁸ The last mine action strategy, however, covered 2013-18. ANAMA has reported that it is developing a new strategy, but did not specify when it expected to finalise and launch it.¹⁰⁹

In January 2023, ANAMA reported that area cleared of landmines and ERW had reached around 6.9% of the overall high-, medium-, and low-threat areas. The work plan for 2023 foresaw a massive (and highly improbable) 500km² of release through "clearance", while the draft strategy was to further increase clearance capacity to achieve output of 650km² annually.¹¹⁰ This included all forms of EO clearance, but also visual search of battle areas. According to ANAMA, all tasks are subject to TS.¹¹¹ ANAMA predicted that, over the long term, this level of output would not be maintained once high-priority areas had been cleared and only low threat/priority areas remained.¹¹² ANAMA said that it met its target of releasing more than 500km² of EO contamination in 2023. In line with its annual work plans, which focus on residential, agricultural and ecological sites, and roads and other infrastructure, ANAMA planned to release more than 605km² of hazardous area in 2024, and then 650km² each year thereafter.¹¹³

ANAMA coordinates the mine action activities of several State implementing agencies, NGOs, and commercial contractors to implement its work plans.¹¹⁴ ANAMA performs NTS of each

project area/polygon prior to tasking operators for TS and clearance.¹¹⁵ As part of NTS, ANAMA collates information through interviews with locals and with the personnel of construction companies, although generally only limited data can be obtained from members of newly resettled communities. ANAMA also works in close collaboration with the military and consults minefield records, survey and clearance data, and incident data when available.¹¹⁶ While the results of NTS do inform decisions on clearance methodologies for each task, NTS is not typically used to prioritise the tasking of polygons for TS and clearance. Instead, polygons are mostly selected and prioritised by the Cabinet of Ministers based on rehabilitation and reconstruction plans. NTS capacity was increased from only one IEPF team (supported by UNDP), being tasked by ANAMA to conduct NTS and generate hazardous area polygons in 2022,¹¹⁷ to three IEPF teams by July 2024.¹¹⁸

The Cabinet of Ministers, as the highest level executive body in the country, determines which polygons are cleared, with priorities set in accordance with rehabilitation and reconstruction plans in the regained territories.¹¹⁹ According to ANAMA's quarterly report on progress of January 2023, in accordance with its policy of ensuring the return of IDPs, the government prioritises the demining of areas of high importance such as main access roads, key infrastructure (highways, railroads, and electricity lines), agriculture, and planned residential areas.¹²⁰ Accordingly, highly contaminated areas do not necessarily equate to areas that are a high priority for clearance. According to ANAMA, much of the former LoC will not be cleared for years, with the exception of areas where construction of infrastructure is required.¹²¹

105 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023 and 20 May 2024.

106 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

107 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov, Chair of the Board, ANAMA; and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

108 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

109 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 25 July 2024.

110 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 10.

111 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

112 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 10; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

113 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May and 24 June 2024; and Presentation by ANAMA, "National Achievements in Mine Action: Inclusive Approach and SDGs", 27th International Meeting of Mine Action National Directors and UN Advisers, Geneva, 30 April 2024; and email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

114 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 9.

115 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

116 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

117 Interview with UNDP, Baku, 24 May 2023.

118 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 22 July 2024.

119 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023; presentation by ANAMA, International Conference on Humanitarian Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals, Baku, 31 March-1 April 2022; and email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

120 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, pp. 3, 5, and 8.

121 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2021, all chapters of the ANMAR were fully revised in line with IMAS.¹²² However, while the revised ANMAR had been provided to all operators,¹²³ as at May 2024 they were still under review,¹²⁴ yet to be formally adopted. It is important that this occurs swiftly as the existing standards do not allow for land for cancellation of uncontaminated areas through NTS.

One of the challenges of conducting NTS in the regained territories is that many of the areas are unpopulated and therefore no local communities are present who can be asked about contamination.¹²⁵ According to ANAMA, all incidents (including those involving military personnel) are plotted in maps, which can serve as evidence points. According to the International Crisis Group, data on ordnance explosions should be a crucial component of NTS in Azerbaijan, pointing to the experience in Cambodia where survey helped shrink the area earmarked for clearance by one third.¹²⁶

Drones were accredited as an NTS tool and were being used to identify areas suspected of contamination, despite their limitation in areas covered with vegetation, followed by TS due to the limitation. When no evidence of contamination was found, areas were cancelled. This process was not formalised into a standard and in May 2024 ANAMA reported that RAMS was no longer being used,¹²⁷ though ANAMA had previously reported that drones discovered minefields in very unexpected areas where contamination was unlikely to be found by any other means.

ANAMA takes into account planned land use in its prioritisation and tasking, and clearance is conducted to four metres' depth in the plots where foundations will be laid for construction.¹²⁸ In its January 2023 report, ANAMA referenced an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) technical assessment visit report, which

suggested that to speed up clearance and reduce the risk to deminers, "a mix of mine-resistant heavy plant (bulldozers, backhoe loaders, and similar protected earth moving machinery)" was needed.¹²⁹

At present, only hazard signs and not also fencing are placed at the edge of each polygon, even when EO contamination is known to continue beyond the edge of the cleared polygon. ANAMA has said it is considering using fencing, in addition to hazard signs, for polygons in which people will be returned and communities established. In addition, at least 50m² is cleared from the polygon boundary.¹³⁰ Around 70% of injuries and fatalities take place in areas outside the LoC, including in cemeteries, agricultural areas, buildings, forests, and around water sources, so preventive actions are also being considered in these areas.¹³¹

UNDP considered that the ANMAR revised in 2023 (not yet adopted) were in line with IMAS and suitable to the context. However, more work is required for implementing NTS and to disaggregate data.¹³² In 2022, data on the survey and clearance of AP mined area was disaggregated for the first time from other types of explosive ordnance, although disaggregation did not extend to district-specific survey and clearance or the numbers of AP mines destroyed. For 2023, data provided by ANAMA by district were based on the polygons in which AP mines were found,¹³³ rather than TS and clearance of specific areas suspected or confirmed to contain AP mines.

Together with ANAMA and UNDP, MAG was supporting the evaluation and revision of 29 mine action SOPs for the revised national standards. As at May 2023, 10 of the 30 SOPs had been updated, and ANAMA subsequently reported that the SOPs were revised under the technical adaptation process.¹³⁴

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

ANAMA has undergone a significant restructuring and upscaling following the conflict with Armenia in 2020.¹³⁵ It significantly invested in capacity building again in 2023 and met its target of 630 new recruits taking basic demining and

BAC courses in 2023.¹³⁶ As at May 2024, 807 new recruits had taken basic demining and BAC courses in 2024, while 421 staff members attended in-service training at the ANAMA Goygol Training Centre.¹³⁷

122 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

123 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

124 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

125 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 6 June 2022.

126 ICG, "Defusing Azerbaijan's Landmine Challenge", 31 May 2023.

127 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May and 22 July 2024.

128 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 19 July 2023.

129 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 7.

130 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

131 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

132 Email from Mark Buswell, UNDP, 20 March 2023.

133 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 12; and email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

134 Email from Jeanette Dijkstra, MAG, 16 May 2023; and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 25 June 2024; and interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

135 "Dying To Go Home: Displaced Azerbaijanis Risk Mines, Munitions To See Homeland", *Radio Free Europe*, 18 February 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3vgaKh5>; and "Following war, Armenia and Azerbaijan Reckon with Unexploded Ordnance", *EurasiaNet*, 23 December 2020.

136 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023 and 20 May 2024; and ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 8.

137 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

UNDP had reported that ANAMA had initially planned to train, equip, and deploy an additional 100 deminers per month in order to respond to the surge in need following the 2020 conflict. However, this upscaling could not be sustained and ANAMA has been encouraging the expansion of other operator capacities instead.¹³⁸ Nonetheless, the number of deminers continued its upward trajectory in 2023. At the end of the year, Azerbaijan's total operational capacity for clearing EO consisted of 2,281 deminers, 151 MDDs, and 70 mine clearance machines (see Table 5),¹³⁹ another sharp

increase from the 1,672 deminers, 59 MDDs, and 55 demining machines at the start of the year.¹⁴⁰ In addition, at the end of 2023, there were 12 NTS and 402 TS operational staff (see Table 2).¹⁴¹ ANAMA planned to increase NTS capacity further in 2024, using national operators. It also planned to increase TS capacity.¹⁴² In May 2024, it was reported that ANAMA had deployed ten additional domestically-produced "Revival P" minesweepers, produced by Improtex Industries headquartered in Baku.¹⁴³

Table 2: Operational NTS and TS capacities deployed for all explosive ordnance in 2023¹⁴⁴

Operator	NTS teams	Total personnel*	TS teams	TS personnel*
ANAMA	0	0	36	267
IEPF	3	12	2	15
Qaya Safety Solutions	0	0	2	8
Azerbaijan Demining Company	0	0	7	40
Alpha Demining	0	0	2	15
Safe Point	0	0	3	57
Totals	3	12	52	402

* ANAMA states that NTS is conducted in each project area.

ANAMA is responsible for accrediting and monitoring all humanitarian mine action operators, including state actors involved in demining process in Azerbaijan.¹⁴⁵ As at December 2023, two of four national commercial demining companies were working with an international commercial sub-contractor, to assist with operational planning and help build capacity. These were: Qaya Safety Solutions, partnering with SafeLane Global, and the Azerbaijan Demining Company,

partnering with Piper.¹⁴⁶ One national NGO, IEPF, conducted NTS in 2023.¹⁴⁷

All actors are accredited and trained by ANAMA and all data are reported and entered into ANAMA's IMSMA database. ANAMA conducts monitoring and quality assurance (QA) for operators and issues handover certificates after quality control (QC).¹⁴⁸

Table 3: Operational clearance capacities deployed for all explosive ordnance (at end 2023)¹⁴⁹

Operator	Operational staff	MDDs	Machines
ANAMA (including IEPF)	1,591	91	36
Ministry of Defence	250	4	20
Ministry of Emergency Situations	50	10	4

138 Email from Guy Rhodes, UNDP, 23 June 2021.

139 Ibid.

140 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 7.

141 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

142 Ibid.

143 "Azerbaijan Deploys More Minesweepers to Expedite Demining in Liberated Lands", *Caspian News*, 28 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/460LFK8>.

144 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

145 ANAMA, "Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs", Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 7.

146 Ibid; and interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

147 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May and 22 July 2024.

148 Email from Samir Poladov, ANAMA, 7 July 2022; and email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

149 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

Table 3 Continued

Operator	Operational staff	MDDs	Machines
State Border Service	45	0	0
Alpha Demining	80	20	2
Qaya Safety Solutions	80	6	3
Safe Point	136	10	2
Azerbaijan Demining Company	49	10	3
Totals	2,281	151	70

The Turkish Armed Forces have been conducting mine and ERW clearance in Azerbaijan since December 2020. As indicated above, four military demining teams conducted demining operations in 2023.¹⁵⁰ In 2021, Türkiye sent Azerbaijan six demining machines (MEMATT-I) and was planning to bring this to a total of 20 MEMATT-II machines to Azerbaijan in coming years.¹⁵¹

Azerbaijan continued using RAMS in 2022 to identify suspected areas as part of establishing a baseline survey,¹⁵² collecting information on mines and ERW, and other information, such as the location of trenches and military positions.¹⁵³ As at May 2023, there were two RAMS teams which could cover approximately 300km² per year. ANAMA was planning to increase RAMS capacity, though the technology is of limited use in areas with thick vegetation.¹⁵⁴ As indicated above, however, in May 2024, ANAMA declared

that no RAMS teams were operating any more as the project had ended.¹⁵⁵ ANAMA has also acquired MDR capacity and following a pilot, APOPO has been working with 11 MDRs since the end of 2023.¹⁵⁶

ANAMA has an established quality management (QM) division with QM capacity increased threefold, reflecting the significant upscaling of clearance in the reclaimed territories. In 2023, ANAMA had 63 external monitoring QM staff: seven at headquarters (with three also conducting monitoring missions in the regions), four monitoring mine action organisations, and the remainder conducting post-clearance inspections. Previously, QC was conducted on 10% of land, but this has been reduced to 5%, although frequent site visits have been maintained.¹⁵⁷ ANAMA reported conducting inspections of 6.13% of released minefields and battle areas in 2023.¹⁵⁸

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

ANAMA reported a total area of 530.33km² where AP mines were found and land released through technical survey and clearance in 2023, with the destruction of 3,495 AP mines.¹⁵⁹ ANAMA did not provide disaggregated data for land released through TS and land released through clearance for 2023. The 530.33km² of AP mined area released in 2023 corresponds to the total size of tasks (polygons) in which AP mines were found. Therefore, the size of the actual AP mine contamination addressed is far smaller. The reported 530.33km² of AP mined area released in 2023 was more than 99% of the total of 530.82km² for all contaminated polygons

(containing all types of EO, including mines, CMR, and other ERW) identified and released in 2023, during which a reported combined total of 31,578 items of EO were destroyed.¹⁶⁰

By manually extracting release data, ANAMA calculated that 44.33km² of AP mined area was cleared in 2023 (18.1km² of mined area containing only AP mines and a further 26.23km² of mixed AP and AV mine contamination).¹⁶¹ To avoid overestimating AP mine clearance output, Mine Action Review has estimated that 10km² was clearance of mined area containing AP mines, including in mixed minefields. No AP mined area was cancelled through NTS in 2023.¹⁶²

150 Statement of Turkey to the 8th International Pledging Conference to the APMB, 24 March 2023; and Türkiye APMB Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Forms D and I.

151 Türkiye APMB Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Forms D and I.

152 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

153 Ibid.; and interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

154 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

155 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

156 Presentation of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 19–21 June 2023; and email from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024.

157 Interview with Vugar Suleymanov and Samir Poladov, ANAMA, Baku, 29 March 2022.

158 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May and 25 June 2024.

159 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 24 July 2024.

160 Emails from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May and 24 July 2024.

161 Emails from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 and 11 September 2024; and interview with Nariman Gasimov, 10 September 2024.

162 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 20 May 2024.

Survey and clearance data for Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, prior to Azerbaijan regaining control of the territory in September 2023, were not available.

SURVEY IN 2023

While ANAMA did conduct TS in 2023, it did not disaggregate land released through TS from land released through clearance in 2023.¹⁶³ This compares to 2022, when ANAMA reported 380,720m² of AP mined area reduced through TS.¹⁶⁴ No AP mine-contaminated area was cancelled through NTS in 2023 or 2022 in Azerbaijan.

CLEARANCE IN 2023

ANAMA reported clearance in 2023 of 18.1km² of mined area containing solely AP mines and a further 26.23km² of mined area that contained a mix of AP and AV mines, for a total of 44.33km² of AP mined area. These figures are not consistent with the mine patterns and density. Accordingly, Mine Action Review has estimated conservatively that **10km²** was clearance of mined area that actually contained AP mines. According to ANAMA, a total of 3,495 AP mines were destroyed in 2023.¹⁶⁵

Table 4 summarises reported release through combined TS and clearance in 2023 of area (task polygons) where AP mines were found, disaggregated by district. As already noted, reported land release through clearance and TS in both years was based on the total size of task polygons in

which AP mines were found during land release, as ANAMA does not currently disaggregate AP mine clearance tasks from AV mine clearance or from BAC tasks. An additional 41 AV mines and 539 items of UXO were found in polygons which did not contain AP mines.

This compares to the previous year, when ANAMA reported a total of just over 3.5km² of AP mined area cleared in 2022, with 9,165 AP mines (including 385 of an improvised nature) destroyed. Of the total area cleared in 2022, 2,260m² was contaminated with victim-activated IEDs or booby traps that meet the definition of an AP mine. In addition, ANAMA destroyed 25 AP mines during spot tasks.¹⁶⁶ This level of detail was not provided for 2023 data.

Table 4: Reported land release through clearance and TS of polygons containing AP mines in 2023¹⁶⁷

Districts/Location	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	CMR destroyed	UXO destroyed
Aghdam*	79,561,643	1,304	1,676	194	1,515
Aghstafa	38,550	2	0		6
Askeran**	0	6	1		0
Fuzili*	59,515,782	1,239	1,211	707	4,819
Gazakh	30,435	7	36		4
Gubadly*	70,070,484	62	205	2	641
Jabrayil*	143,257,872	200	750	723	2,002
Kalbajar*	64,798,568	26	163		1,398
Khankendi**	1,619,740	112	172	21	4,762
Khojaly	1,659,897	43	0	28	415
Khojavend* **	44,113,307	71	139	113	4,024
Lachin*	14,543,346	73	3	1	76
Shusha*	5,938,261	65	12	27	470

163 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 25 July 2024.

164 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

165 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 24 July 2024.

166 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023.

167 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 24 July 2024.

Table 4 Continued

Districts/Location	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	AV mines destroyed	CMR destroyed	UXO destroyed
Tartar	12,861,062	170	606		478
Zangilan*	32,320,038	115	19	1	82
Totals	530,328,985	3,495	4,993	1,817	20,692

* Previously inaccessible territory which Azerbaijan regained in 2020, plus parts of Khojavend.

** Previously inaccessible territory which Azerbaijan regained following the September 2023 offensive, including the remainder of Khojavend.

THE KARABAKH ECONOMIC REGION (FORMERLY REFERRED TO AS NAGORNO-KARABAKH)

Clearance data for Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, prior to Azerbaijan regaining control in September 2023, was not available.

DEMINE SAFETY

There were three demining accidents in 2023 in which three staff from demining companies were injured. One involved a fuze exploding while the other two related to AP mine detonations. An ANAMA joint commission investigated the accidents and operators were informed. The Labour Protection Agency then investigated the cases.¹⁶⁸ The outcome of the investigations is not known.

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Following the armed conflict with Armenia in 2020, the extent of AP mined area falling under Azerbaijan's control has increased hugely. ANAMA adapted rapidly to restructure itself and upscale operations to address the increased contamination and workload. In 2022, ANAMA ambitiously estimated that it would take approximately 10 years to complete AP mine clearance in Azerbaijan.¹⁶⁹ By November 2022, Azerbaijan had trebled its estimate of the time it needed to complete mine clearance,¹⁷⁰ and in June 2024, ANAMA again indicated that it could take decades to clear all mines.¹⁷¹

In order to plan and address AP mine contamination effectively, ANAMA must first quantify the problem. NTS is proceeding slowly, as the main focus is on clearing land to enable the return of IDPs to the regained territories. The establishment of an accurate baseline of AP mine contamination is, therefore, still a long way off and there is currently no prioritisation of clearance tasks based on the type of contamination (e.g. prioritising AP mine clearance, over clearance of other types of EO). In addition, ANAMA struggles to disaggregate mined areas from battle areas, in both data on the extent of contamination and data on the amount of land released. This is something that ANAMA has said that it will seek to improve as it strengthens its IM system and reporting.¹⁷² Some 600,000 IDPs were poised to return to the 2020 liberated territories under the "Great Return" programme which, ANAMA has confirmed, planned to release 2,800km² of land in three stages by the end of 2026.¹⁷³ The initial stage of the programme predicted the

demining of 147km² for construction of homes in more than 80 settlements of Aghdam, Fuzuli, Gubadly, Jabrayil, Kalbajar, Khojavend, Lachin, Shusha, and Zangilan districts.¹⁷⁴

Table 5: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2023	*10.00
2022	3.52
2021	*18.38
2020	0.10
2019	1.01
Total	33.01

* Clearance estimated by Mine Action Review

Azerbaijan has yet to join the APMB. It should do so as a matter of priority. Azerbaijan participated as an observer in the Meetings of States Parties in November 2022 and November 2023, and in the intersessional meetings in June 2023 and June 2024. In statements at Convention meetings, Azerbaijan has called on the States Parties as well as UN agencies to help it to mobilise international support for demining Azerbaijan.¹⁷⁵ ANAMA has said, on account of the extent of contamination, that it remains severely underfunded.¹⁷⁶

168 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 24 July 2024.

169 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

170 "Azerbaijan needs nearly 30 years and \$25 billion to solve issues related to demining – President Ilham Aliyev", *Trend News Agency*, 13 October 2022.

171 "3rd Global Mine Action Conference Concludes In Baku", *MENAFN*, 1 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4bEZqjS>.

172 Interview with Samir Poladov and Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, Baku, 24 May 2023.

173 Emails from Nariman Gasimov, ANAMA, 9 September 2024 and 16 October 2024.

174 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 17 May 2023, and "Great Return: First Group of Azerbaijanis Once Expelled by Armenians Returns Back Home", *Caspian News*, 19 July 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/470nKKf>.

175 Statements of Azerbaijan, Intersessional Meetings, 19–21 June 2023 and 20 June 2024; and Statement of Azerbaijan on Universalisation, 21MSP, Geneva, 23 November 2023.

176 Email from Ramil Azizov, ANAMA, 16 August 2022.

Azerbaijan previously stated that it “would only accede to the Convention once all of its territories are liberated from occupation by Armenia and all IDPs and refugees return to their lands.”¹⁷⁷ At the end of May 2024, Armenia returned four border villages to Azerbaijan following a joint process to demarcate the border.¹⁷⁸ However, according to online sources, there are four enclaves in Armenia that Azerbaijan wants returned to its sovereignty,¹⁷⁹ and it now says it cannot join the APMBBC due to the “military posture of neighbouring Armenia”.¹⁸⁰

Azerbaijan submitted voluntary APMBBC Article 7 transparency reports in 2008 and 2009 but has not submitted a report since. Accuracy of reporting of contamination, survey, and clearance data continues to be an issue in Azerbaijan. So too are the effectiveness and efficiency of land release methodology, with many areas being cleared that prove to have little or no mine contamination. In a statement at the Intersessional meetings in June 2024, Azerbaijan requested a wide range of assistance for its mine action programme, including:

technical surveys and feasibility studies, data management and technological advancements, implementing geo-spatial methodologies and technology layering to refine clearance needs, support for female demining teams, mechanical demining enhancement, and MDD training.¹⁸¹

ANAMA continues to make impressive progress in rapidly scaling up clearance efforts, and the process is nationally led, drawing on international expertise, such as UNDP and MAG, for capacity development. Systems to support the huge upscaling of the mine action programme in Azerbaijan, such as elaboration of a national mine action standards (albeit yet to be formally approved), are being put in place. Applying efficient, evidence-based survey and clearance methodology, supported by strong national standards and an effective information management and QM system, will be pivotal for the success of demining efforts in Azerbaijan. ANAMA is also seeking to increase demining capacity by adding new national demining NGOs. ANAMA believes they could play a vital role in managing a residual risk to support safe repatriation of IDPs.¹⁸²

177 “Azerbaijan and Ottawa Process”, undated but published on 13 June 2005, at: <https://bit.ly/3KLDbNV>.

178 “Armenia returns four border villages to Azerbaijan”, *Le Monde*, 24 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3WRdx09>.

179 The Jamestown Foundation, “Azerbaijan Calls for Return of Contested Villages”, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, Vol. 21, No. 59, 17 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3AcruJ>.

180 Statement of Azerbaijan on Universalisation, 21MSP, Geneva, 23 November 2023.

181 Statement of Azerbaijan on Universalisation, Intersessional Meetings, 20 June 2024.

182 ANAMA, “Mine Action in Azerbaijan: Priorities and Needs”, Quarterly report, January 2023, p. 10.