

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MAY 2013

NEW EXTENDED DEADLINE NEEDED TO RETURN TO COMPLIANCE

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

LOW, EXTENT UNKNOWN

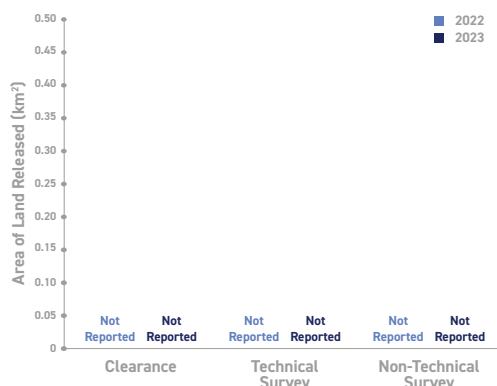
AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

NOT REPORTED

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

NOT REPORTED

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **NONE**

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

A national focal point for mine action was appointed at the Ministry of Defence of the Central African Republic (CAR) on 31 March 2023. In April 2024, the focal point announced that the government was actively working to establish a national mine action authority (NMAA), with the technical support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) through the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). A Mine Action Area of Responsibility (MA

AoR) was activated on 27 April 2023 within the protection cluster system, and operators now meet on a regular basis. MINUSCA strengthened its explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) capacity throughout the country, while UNMAS has limited contracted capacities through the international company, The Development Initiative (TDI), which can conduct non-technical survey (NTS) and EOD spot tasks. UNMAS has also supported MINUSCA with training, equipment, and post-blast investigations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- CAR should pursue its efforts to establish an NMAA and a national structure to coordinate mine action operations.
- CAR should put in place a monitoring and an information management capacity to support systematic collection of data and reporting, disaggregating anti-personnel (AP) mines, including of an improvised nature, from other explosive devices.
- Given the likely presence of mined areas containing explosive devices meeting the definition of an AP mine, CAR should seek a new Article 5 deadline to comply with the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC).
- CAR should seek international assistance to establish a sustainable national capacity to respond to all explosive contamination and engage in regional and international cooperation mechanisms.

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No NMAA but a national focal point was designated in 2023 in the Ministry of Defence

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Central African Armed Forces (FACA)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) EOD teams
- The Development Initiative (TDI) (UNMAS implementing partner)

OTHER ACTORS

- DanChurchAid (DCA) (accreditation ongoing)
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI) (risk education and capacity building)
- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The precise extent of AP mine contamination in CAR is not known but is small in scale and extent. In its most recent Article 7 report, which was submitted two decades ago in 2004, CAR had stated that there were no minefields under its jurisdiction or control.¹ However, since 2020, the threat from explosive ordnance has been escalating annually. This threat primarily involved anti-vehicle (AV) mines placed on roads and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), including those that are victim-activated, namely near premises of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and other security personnel (OSP), mainly the Russian paramilitary organisation.² The Wagner Group, which entered CAR in 2017 to act as military advisors and security for President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, is reported to have emplaced landmines around their bases³ and obstructed MINUSCA from conducting mine clearance.⁴

In 2023, UNMAS recorded 78 incidents involving explosive devices – a 47% increase from 2022. Of the 78 incidents, 53 were caused by explosive remnants of war (ERW) and 25 by other explosive ordnance: seven command-detonated IEDs and 18 victim-activated devices. Of the victim-activated devices, 13 were placed on roads and 3 met the definition of AP mines (booby-trapped munitions). The 78 incidents caused 81 casualties the majority of whom (62%) were

civilians. Nineteen were children. UNMAS warned that, due to under-reporting (especially in areas where MINUSCA is not present), casualty figures are not complete.⁵

The primary targets of incidents involving explosive devices appear to be FACA and The Wagner Group. MINUSCA patrols or forces have also been affected, though, as have humanitarian aid trucks. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) database, an IED detonated on a truck contracted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on 3 March 2022 in Ngoutere (Pende, Bocaranga), killing two and injuring two others.⁶

In April 2024, the national mine action focal point announced that CAR was “witnessing a significant increase in incidents involving mines and explosive devices, as well as the number of victims, in the west and north-west of the country.”⁷ The most affected regions over the past three years remain the west of the country, notably the prefectures of Mambéré-Kadei, Nana-Mambéré, Ouham, and Ouham-Pendé.⁸ In these four prefectures, nearly 770,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance face having the aid they need being delayed or even suspended because of the explosive threats.⁹

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

CAR is predominantly contaminated with ERW. In 2023, ERW represented the most common and increasing humanitarian threat, with 53 items of abandoned or unexploded ordnance reported. These incidents have primarily affected civilians, with children constituting 76% of all ERW casualties.¹⁰

1 Article 7 Report (covering 2003), p. 2.

2 MINUSCA, “Note d’information”, 3 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3YwNP2J>.

3 “Architects of Terror: The Wagner Group’s blueprint for state capture in the Central African Republic”, The Sentry, June 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3WYfttz>, p. 9.

4 “CAR Violence Grows With Addition of Russian Land Mines”, ADF, 13 October 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/46yCUaN>.

5 UNMAS Explosive Ordnance Threat, Non-Technical Overview, 2023; and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “Central African Republic: The ever-growing threat of explosive devices”, Last updated 12 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3MgSH4S>.

6 ACLED, “Filters: 01/01/2020-01/08/2024, Remote explosive/landmine/IED, CAR”, accessed 1 August 2024, at: www.acleddata.com.

7 MINUSCA, “La RCA bientôt dotée d’une autorité nationale de LAM avec le soutien de la MINUSCA et d’UNMAS”, 5 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3YwNP2J>.

8 OCHA, “2024 Humanitarian Needs Overview”, at: <https://bit.ly/3WTgu00>, p. 13.

9 OCHA, “CAR: The ever-growing threat of explosive devices”, Last updated 12 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3MgSH4S>.

10 UNMAS Explosive Ordnance Threat, Non-Technical Overview, 2023.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

CAR does not yet have a formal mine action programme. However, a national focal point for mine action was appointed at the Ministry of Defence on 31 March 2023. In April 2024, the focal point announced that "the government is actively working to establish the national mine action authority. To this end, MINUSCA through UNMAS is providing technical and logistical support. The regulations governing this authority are ready and will be submitted to the government."¹¹ The NMAA is expected to be placed under the Prime Minister's Office (Primature). UNMAS is assisting in drafting the legal instruments, structuring the future entity, and defining the initial roadmap for a mine action programme. The NMAA will be located in Bangui at a building allocated for the purpose by the government. The authority is expected to have departments in the regions.¹²

A self-assessment three-day workshop of mine action capabilities took place in June 2024 with the support of the NGO Humanity & Inclusion (HI). The methodology was inspired by the self-assessment tool for counter-IED capabilities developed by the UN Institute for Disarmament

Research (UNIDIR). The workshop brought together representatives from the armed forces, military engineers, national police and gendarmerie, the Primature, various ministries (Interior, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Education, and Humanitarian Action), UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and a private contractor.

The workshop aimed to assess the national framework and capacities for coordinating and implementing mine action, identify effective measures, and outline challenges to be addressed. It generated several main recommendations, including the establishment of the NMAA, the elaboration of a national strategy and work plan, and the development of national mine action standards (NMAS). The recommendations emphasised the importance of strengthening risk education and building the national capacity for counter-IED interventions. They also advised ratifying relevant international treaties and enhancing regional and international cooperation by increasing engagement in treaty meetings and regional exchange on IED issues.¹³

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

CAR, lacking a functioning mine action programme, has not taken up gender in the context of mine action. The national focal point informed Mine Action Review that the programmes implemented by the various operators take into account gender and diversity considerations, as does the work initiated on national mine action standards.¹⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Environmental constraints are reportedly taken into consideration during EOD in order to minimise potential harm from clearance. Environmental issues will also be integrated into the national standards that are in the process of being developed.¹⁵

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

UNMAS maintains an information management database collecting and sharing information on explosive ordnance incidents since June 2020. It uses the "Global UNMAS Information Management System" – the new name for the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) that UNMAS is using. UNMAS attempts to disaggregate incidents by type of contamination based on the information available but post-blast investigations cannot always be conducted considering the security situation and the lack of technical expertise. The classification involves landmine and similar victim-operated explosive ordnance, IEDs, and ERW, including booby-traps using ERW.¹⁶ Any munition that fits the definition of an AP mine under the APMBBC falls within the Convention.

11 MINUSCA, "Note d'information", 3 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3ywmeUM>.

12 Emails from Sophie Van Royen, Chief, Mine Action Programmes, UNMAS, 5 June and 18 August 2024.

13 Online interview with Seydou Gaye, Mine Action Specialist, HI, 7 June 2024; see also "Centrafrique: création d'une autorité nationale de coordination de l'action contre les mines", *Radio Guira*, 27 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3SFVwjh>.

14 Email from Lt.-Col. Edgar Ghazaka, National Mine Action Focal Point, Ministry of Defence, 2 September 2024.

15 Ibid.

16 Interview with Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

The UNMAS database is primarily based on data provided by MINUSCA and humanitarian operators. FACA do not yet systematically inform UNMAS when they remove items of explosive ordnance. Other military forces do not share information with UNMAS.¹⁷

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

The National Focal Point has indicated that preparatory work to develop national mine action standards was ongoing in 2024.¹⁸

In the absence of a national authority, UNMAS manages the accreditation and tasking processes. HI is accredited for risk education and has been building the capacities of two national organisations in Bocaranga.¹⁹ DanChurchAid (DCA) received temporary accreditation for NTS, risk education, and victim assistance in March 2024 and was expecting the final field review in September 2024.²⁰

The MA AoR was activated on 27 April 2023 within the protection cluster system.²¹ National and international operators are said to meet on a regular basis.²²

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

MINUSCA, through UNMAS, is engaged in capacity development of defence and security forces for EOD. In 2023, 42 members received at least EOD Level 1 training from UNMAS, and more than 17, including one woman, successfully completed the EOD Level 3 training. This has established a national capability that previously did not exist.²³ The objective is that by the middle of 2025, a national EOD team based in Bangui would be operational, trained, and equipped by UNMAS. Additionally, UNMAS started delivering training of trainers on ordnance threats and mitigation and helped to renovate training facilities. UNMAS also delivered risk education to the most at-risk local communities across the country.²⁴

MINUSCA was established in 2014. Its mandate includes assisting the authorities in preventing, mitigating, and combating the threat posed by explosive devices. This encompasses the removal and destruction of mines and other explosive devices, as well as strengthening the capacity of FACA. This effort is coordinated with other UN agencies and international operators, including UNMAS.²⁵ MINUSCA has dedicated teams for EOD response and spot tasks.²⁶

UNMAS employed 44 people in CAR at the end of 2023. Personnel were located in three offices – one in Bangui, one in Bouar, and the third in Bambari. UNMAS is entirely funded through the MINUSCA Assessed Budget. In 2023, UNMAS contracted two multi-task teams of the international operator, TDI, based in Bangui capable of carrying out NTS and EOD spot tasks. UNMAS also supports the enhancement of the MINUSCA Force's EOD capacity by providing technical expertise, explosive ordnance threat awareness training, search-and-detect training, convoy commander courses, and technical expertise for conducting post-blast investigations.²⁷

HI started a risk education programme in 2022 in the north-eastern Ouham-Pendé prefecture, a programme that has been ongoing since then. In June 2024, HI supported the holding of a workshop to help define the national mine action framework and priorities with funding from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.²⁸

DCA is not yet operational in mine action but is in process of accreditation and plans to start a project in Nana-Mambere (West), pending funding, involving NTS, risk education, and victim assistance.²⁹

17 Ibid.; online interview with Seydou Gaye, HI, 7 June 2024; and email from Lt.-Col. Edgar Ghazaka, Ministry of Defence, 2 September 2024.

18 Email from Lt.-Col. Edgar Ghazaka, Ministry of Defence, 2 September 2024.

19 Interview with Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, in Geneva, 1 May 2024; and email, 18 August 2024.

20 Email from Jerome Berson, Country Director, DCA, 19 August 2024.

21 OCHA, "CAR: The ever-growing threat of explosive devices", Last updated 12 June 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3MgSH4S>.

22 Interview with Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

23 MINUSCA, "Note d'information", 3 April 2024; and email from Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, 18 August 2024.

24 Email from Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, 5 June 2024.

25 MINUSCA webpage at: <https://bit.ly/4dbmJ5v>.

26 Interview with Sophie Van Royen, UNMAS, Geneva, 1 May 2024.

27 UNMAS, CAR webpage, last updated on January 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3SFWSun>.

28 Online interview with Seydou Gaye, HI, 7 June 2024.

29 Email from Jerome Berson, DCA, 19 August 2024.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

CAR did not report results of clearance and EOD conducted by the FACA. MINUSCA EOD teams, including Force teams and the UNMAS' contracted team, safely responded to 36 incidents which involved one AV mine and 35 ERW.³⁰

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE

APMBC ENTRY INTO FORCE FOR CAR: 1 MAY 2003

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MAY 2013

NEW ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE REQUEST REQUIRED

LIKELIHOOD OF COMPLETING CLEARANCE BY 2025 (OSLO ACTION PLAN COMMITMENT): NONE

CAR's Article 5 deadline to destroy all AP mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control expired on 1 March 2013. It has not sought to extend the deadline. CAR has not submitted an Article 7 report since November 2004, when it reported there were no mined areas on its territory.

Under the APMBC's agreed framework, CAR should immediately inform all States Parties of any newly discovered AP mines following the expiry of its Article 5 deadline in 2013 and ensure their destruction as soon as possible. It should request a new extended Article 5 deadline, which should be for no more than two years, affording it the opportunity to assess the extent of AP mine contamination. CAR must also

fulfil its reporting obligations under the Convention, including by reporting on the location of any suspected or confirmed mined areas under its jurisdiction or control and on the status of programmes for the destruction of all AP mines within them.

In view of the continuing casualties from landmines, including AP mines of an improvised nature, CAR should submit a request for a new deadline. UNMAS believes there are no uncleared mined areas in CAR, but cannot be certain of this as no national contamination assessment has been conducted. Indeed, OCHA describes the threat of explosive devices as "ever growing".³¹

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

CAR does not have plans in place to address residual contamination once its Article 5 obligations have been fulfilled. Nevertheless, it is taken into account in the justification and planning of the development of national mine action capacities.³²

30 Ibid.
31 OCHA, "CAR: The ever-growing threat of explosive devices", Last updated 12 June 2024.
32 Email from Lt.-Col. Edgar Ghazaka, Ministry of Defence, 2 September 2024.