

CAMEROON



ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 MARCH 2013
(NEEDS TO REQUEST EXTENSION)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Cameroon should urgently clear any anti-personnel mines or other victim-activated explosive devices on its territory and take immediate steps to minimise harm to civilians, including through the provision of risk education.
- Cameroon should inform states parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) of the discovery of any anti-personnel mine contamination, including victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and report on the location of all suspected or confirmed mined areas under its jurisdiction or control and on the status of programmes for their destruction.
- As soon as security conditions permit, non-technical survey should commence in the Extrême-Nord (Far North) region, which has been reportedly most affected by conflict in 2016–17.
- As necessary, Cameroon should seek, encourage, and facilitate assistance and expertise from humanitarian demining organisations.

CONTAMINATION

In 2016–17, there continued to be a number of reports of casualties and incidents from “landmines”, including victim-activated IEDs, reportedly laid by the non-state armed group, Boko Haram, primarily in the north of Cameroon along its border with Nigeria. These have followed Cameroon’s increased involvement in joint military offensives against Boko Haram as part of a Multi-National Joint Task Force launched in 2015.¹ Most of the reports appeared to describe the use of victim-activated IEDs made by Boko Haram, which functioned as either anti-personnel mines or anti-vehicle mines.

In 2016, according to the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS), there were 43 reported explosive incidents in the Far North region of Cameroon, causing 411 casualties: 171 killed and 240 injured. Body-borne IEDs have targeted primarily civilians while roadside IEDs are targeted mainly at military vehicles.² The two most affected departments are Mayo-Sava and Logone-et-Chari, though after four incidents involving locally produced mines causing 14 casualties in Logone-et-Chari, no incidents on roads were reported after February 2016.³

According to military sources, the roadside IEDs deployed in 2016 were largely unsophisticated victim-activated pressure-plate devices, mainly using fertilizer-based explosive charges or other locally produced explosives.⁴ There are no legacy minefields in Cameroon, and incidents relating to explosive remnants of war (ERW) are reported infrequently.⁵

While the extent of contamination from locally produced mines and IEDs is not known, a report by a Cameroonian analyst in 2016 claimed that mines had been used extensively around roads, houses, and vehicles, and that “damage caused by these homemade mines is becoming ever more frequent”.⁶ Cameroonian military officials reported in 2015 that “huge” numbers of landmines had been planted by Boko Haram along Cameroon’s Nigerian border, posing a threat to civilians, livestock, and soldiers, and reported recurrent use of locally produced mines and explosive charges along the road between Kerawa and Kolofata, targeting army vehicles.⁷

In 2016–17, there continued to be numerous reports of casualties from mines and IEDs, both civilian and military. In June 2017, two Cameroonian soldiers were killed and five others were injured when their truck hit a mine on the Homaka road, near to the Nigerian border.⁸ In May 2017, six civilians were reportedly injured outside the village of Homaka when one stepped on a landmine while looking for straw to use for roofing.⁹ In February 2017, four soldiers were killed and several others injured in the Mayo-Tsanaga department, Far North region, after their vehicle detonated a mine.¹⁰ In June 2016, three other Cameroonian soldiers were said to have been seriously wounded when their vehicle detonated a mine planted by Boko Haram along the Kolofata-Gancé road, again in the Far North region.¹¹ In March 2016, it was reported that 34 people, including at least 11 soldiers, had been killed and another 40 injured in seven landmine explosions over the previous five days in the same region.¹²

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Cameroon does not have a functioning mine action programme. It has not submitted an Article 7 transparency report concerning the newly laid contamination, as is required of each state party to the APMBC. Its last Article 7 report was submitted in 2009.

LAND RELEASE

It is not known to what extent mine clearance or explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) has been undertaken in affected areas. UNMAS reported in April 2017 that Cameroon’s Military Engineer Corps has official responsibility for clearing munitions and an EOD capacity within the gendarmerie was under development to address the mine/IED threat. A capacity for battle area clearance and EOD spot tasks was also needed, it said.¹³

In June 2017, the United States (US) was reported to have donated significant quantities of demining equipment to Cameroon, including metal detectors.¹⁴ In March 2016, it was reported that US military advisors and officers were training Cameroonian soldiers on detection and destruction techniques for mines and other explosive devices.¹⁵ Previously, in 2015, Cameroon was reported to have received demining/EOD training and equipment from the United States and Russia and armoured mine-detection vehicles were provided by the US Army Africa Command.¹⁶

In April 2017, UNMAS confirmed that the military and gendarmerie had benefitted from substantial and ongoing specialised capacity support from international actors, including France and the United States, but noted a shortage of equipment, and called for further IED awareness and EOD training.¹⁷

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Cameroon is a state party to the APMBC. Its Article 5 deadline to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control expired on 1 March 2013.

Under the APMBC’s agreed framework, Cameroon should immediately inform all states parties of any newly discovered anti-personnel mines following the expiry of its Article 5 deadline and ensure their destruction as soon as possible. If necessary, it should also submit a request for a new Article 5 deadline, which should be as short as possible and not more than ten years. Cameroon must continue to fulfil its reporting obligations under the convention, including 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 anti-personnel mines within them.¹⁸

- 1 M. P. Moore, "This Month in Mines, February 2015", Landmines in Africa blog, 12 March 2015, at: <https://landminesinafrica.wordpress.com/2015/03/12/the-month-in-mines-february-2015/>; and "Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF)", *GlobalSecurity.org*, 2017, at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/int/mnjtf.htm>.
- 2 Jean-Guy Lavoie, Chief of Operations, UNMAS, "Mission Report: UNMAS explosive hazard mitigation response in Cameroon, 9 January – 13 April 2017", 30 April 2017, p. 1. In January–April 2017, UNMAS carried out an "explosive hazard threat mitigation response" in Cameroon, where it delivered risk education to humanitarian personnel, compiled and analysed available data on the threat, and assessed the needs for medium and long-term explosive threat mitigation measures to support the delivery of humanitarian assistance and relevant defence and security forces.
- 3 UNMAS, "Mission Report: UNMAS explosive hazard mitigation response in Cameroon, 9 January – 13 April 2017", 30 April 2017, p. 10.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 6 "Boko Haram Landmines Inflict Heavy Toll on Cameroon", *Latin American Herald Tribune*, 25 June 2016, at: <http://laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=2415012&CategoryId=12395>.
- 7 M. E. Kindzeka, "Land Mines Hamper Cameroon, Chad in Fight Against Boko Haram", *Voice of America News*, 3 March 2015, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-chad-team-up-to-fight-boko-haram/2665815.html>; and M. E. Kindzeka, "Boko Haram Surrounds Havens with Land Mines", *Voice of America News*, 24 May 2015, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/boko-haram-surrounds-havens-with-land-mines/2787598.html>.
- 8 "Landmine explosion kills 2 soldiers in north Cameroon", *Andolu Agency*, 24 April 2017, at: <http://aa.com.tr/en/africa/landmine-explosion-kills-2-soldiers-in-north-cameroon/804001>.
- 9 "Six villagers injured in Boko haram landmine explosion", *Journal du Cameroun*, 17 May 2017, at: <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/six-villagers-injured-boko-haram-landmine-explosion/>.
- 10 P. Kum, "Landmine kills 4 Cameroonians soldiers", *Andolu Agency*, 17 February 2017, at: <http://aa.com.tr/en/africa/landmine-kills-4-cameroonians-soldiers/752448>.
- 11 "Fighting Boko Haram: Landmine seriously injures 3 Cameroonians service men", *Cameroon Concord*, 8 June 2016, at: <http://cameroon-concord.com/headlines/item/6191-fighting-boko-haram-landmine-seriously-injures-3-cameroonians-service-men>.
- 12 M. E. Kindzeka, "Cameroon Vigilantes Hunt for Boko Haram Landmines", *Voice of America News*, 4 March 2016, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-vigilantes-hunt-for-boko-haram-landmines/3219444.html>.
- 13 UNMAS, "Mission Report: UNMAS explosive hazard mitigation response in Cameroon, 9 January – 13 April 2017", 30 April 2017, pp. 12 and 14.
- 14 "US donates mine-clearing devices to Cameroon", *Journal du Cameroun*, 24 April 2017, at: <https://www.journalducameroun.com/en/us-donates-mine-clearing-devices-to-cameroon/>.
- 15 M. E. Kindzeka, "Cameroon Vigilantes Hunt for Boko Haram Landmines", *Voice of America News*, 4 March 2016, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-vigilantes-hunt-for-boko-haram-landmines/3219444.html>.
- 16 M. E. Kindzeka, "Land Mines Hamper Cameroon, Chad in Fight Against Boko Haram", *Voice of America News*, 3 March 2015, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-chad-team-up-to-fight-boko-haram/2665815.html>; and "US Helps Cameroon in Fight Against Boko Haram", *Voice of America News*, 17 October 2015, at: <http://www.voanews.com/a/us-provides-cameroon-military-equipment-troops-to-fight-boko-haram/3011730.html>.
- 17 UNMAS, "Mission Report: UNMAS explosive hazard mitigation response in Cameroon, 9 January – 13 April 2017", 30 April 2017, p. 1.
- 18 Final Report of the 12th Meeting of States Parties, Geneva, 21 January 2013, p. 10.