

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- China should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- China should clear all remaining anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The precise extent of mine contamination remaining in China is not known. While very significant demining has occurred over the last two decades, some use of anti-personnel mines around military infrastructure remains.

In the 1990s, the United States reported that China had emplaced mines along its borders with India, the Russian Federation, and Vietnam.¹ China's military estimated that around two million mines of a wide variety of types were emplaced on the Vietnam border alone.² China has not reported on mine contamination along its borders with Russia and India or on operations to clear them.

China conducted clearance operations along its border with Vietnam between 1992 and 1999,³ between 2005 and 2009,⁴ and between 2015 and 2018.⁵ In 2009, China said it had completed demining along the Yunnan section of its border with Vietnam and that this "represents the completion of mine clearance of mine-affected areas within China's territory."⁶ This was followed by a statement in 2011 when a Foreign Ministry official reported that China maintains a small number of minefields "for national defence".⁷ Two months later, at the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties, China said that large-scale demining activities had "on the whole eliminated the scourge of landmines in our territories".⁸

At the Third Review Conference of the APMBC in 2014, China said it had "basically eradicated landmines on its own territory".⁹ At the Fourth Review Conference in 2019, China said that, since the 1990s, it has carried out large-scale demining operations on the border many times. In the past three years, China has cleared approximately 58km² of mined area on its borders with Vietnam and Myanmar and "enclosed" 25km² of minefields (permanently perimeter-marking, fencing, and closing down mined areas).¹⁰ China began demining its border with Myanmar at the end of 2018 with a team of more than 300 deminers.¹¹

Demining of the Vietnam border was conducted in three "campaigns" in Yunnan province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. The first was in 1992–94 and the second in 1997–99.¹² However, these two campaigns did not deal with minefields located in disputed areas of the border, where 500,000 mines covered an estimated 40km². After a technical survey of mined areas, China embarked on a third clearance campaign in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and Yunnan province in 2005. China stated in 2009 that it had completed clearance of this border after clearing a total of 5.15km².¹³

In early November 2015, however, China embarked on a further demining operation along the border with Vietnam.¹⁴ Official victim numbers are not publicly available but civilian casualties were common in the bordering villages throughout the three decades that preceded the clearance.¹⁵ A physical rehabilitation centre in Kunming operated by the Yunnan branch of the Chinese Red Cross Society reported having produced prostheses to 400 mine victims between 2004 and 2019.¹⁶

In its Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II Article 13 transparency report submitted in March 2017, China reported that in November 2015–February 2017, the Chinese army cleared 18.4km² of minefields on the Yunnan border.¹⁷ According to media reports, Yunnan province contained 113 minefields and accounted for more than 95% of the total mined areas on the Chinese-Vietnamese borders. Mines were often laid in very hard-to-access mountainous areas. Online media reported that the last cleared field was handed over to the community by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) marking the official completion of the third and last clearance operation in Yunnan province on November 2018.¹⁸

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no formal mine action programme in China. Any mine clearance is conducted by the PLA as a military activity.

According to China, the military is building international humanitarian mine clearance professional classrooms and conducting research on the application of virtual reality technology in humanitarian mine clearance training. China also reported that it had carried out technical research related to mine clearance and destruction, and completed research on mine detection dog training, operational procedures, and on the impact of post-war mine clearance methods on the environment.¹⁹ In 2019,

China said that it has continuously improved its demining capabilities and has developed a complete set of mine clearance equipment and technologies that meet international mine action standards and high cost-efficiency. It claimed to have achieved breakthroughs in research and development, including in unmanned mine detection and laser demining (use of directed energy weapons to destroy landmines).²⁰

China said that it sent experts to participate in the review and revision of international mine action standards (IMAS) and that "China subscribes to the purposes of the Ottawa Convention and supports the ultimate goal of comprehensive landmine ban".²¹

LAND RELEASE

Media accounts reported that mine clearance resumed in November 2017 in the Yunnan border area and in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.²² Clearance was reportedly completed in November 2018, with 2,300 explosive items found and destroyed across 1.5km² in Guangxi province.²³ In Yunnan province an estimated 200,000 explosive items were found and destroyed in over 50km² of mined area between November 2015 and November 2018.²⁴

In its 2020 CCW Amended Protocol II report (covering 2019), China reported that Chinese military and public security departments cooperated closely to dispose of 600 mines in 2019.²⁵

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- 1 US Department of State, "Hidden Killers 1994", Washington, DC, September 1998, p. 18, and Table A-1.
 - 2 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008, at: <https://on.china.cn/31F8D7u>.
 - 3 Ministry of Defence, "Post-war Demining Operations in China", December 1999, p. 11. Before the clearance operations, there were said to be more than 560 minefields covering a total area of more than 300km².
 - 4 Interview with Shen Jian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, 1 April 2008; and Huizi and Yun, "Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.
 - 5 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2yYXXnL>.
 - 6 Statement of China, Second Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.
 - 7 Email from Lai Haiyang, Attaché, Department of Arms Control & Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 2011.
 - 8 Statement of China, APMBC 11th Meeting of States Parties, Phnom Penh, 29 November 2011.
 - 9 Statement of China, Third APMBC Review Conference, Maputo, 26 June 2014.
 - 10 Statement of China, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.
 - 11 J. Li, "Minesweeping operations along China-Myanmar border kick off", *China Military Online*, 28 December 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3f7P3qy>.
 - 12 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.
 - 13 Statement of China, Second APMBC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.
 - 14 P. Scally, "Huge land mine clearance underway in Wenshan, Honghe", Blog post, *Gokunming*, 5 November 2015, at: <https://bit.ly/20WbdVe>.
 - 15 "Guardians of the Extreme Realm: Life and Death Demining in the Southwest Frontier", *CCTV*, 11 September 2019, (Chinese), at: <https://bit.ly/35XtJ5f>.
 - 16 "From breadwinners to dependents, how can mine victims heal?", *CGTN*, 4 April 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3hiwt2f>.
 - 17 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2016), Form B. Unofficial translation.
 - 18 "Soldier loses both hands and eyes from a blast while clearing mines along Vietnam border", *The Global Times*, 6 December 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/35YRIke>.
 - 19 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2019), Form B.
 - 20 Statement of China, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.
 - 21 Statement of China, Security Council Open Debate on Mine Action, 8 April 2021.
 - 22 "Land mine removal resumes on border", *China Daily*, 29 November 2017, at: <https://bit.ly/2ZXUwtr>; and "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", *China Daily*, 26 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/33xCdNT>.
 - 23 "China's Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border", *China Daily*, 26 November 2018.
 - 24 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2yYXXnL>.
 - 25 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2019), Form B.