

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP)
MINE CONTAMINATION:
UNKNOWNAP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

UNKNOWN

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



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 (AP) mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No national mine action authority
- No national mine action centre

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- None

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 AP 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. In a new development in August 2024, a media report stated that the Chinese authorities had warned that AP mines potentially

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>.

buried on the North Korean side of the Yalu River along the North Korean-Chinese border may have been displaced into China following heavy rains at the end of July 2024.³

China conducted clearance operations along its border with Vietnam between 1992 and 1999,⁴ between 2005 and 2009,⁵ and between 2015 and 2018.⁶ 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."⁷ 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".⁸ Two months later, at the Eleventh Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC, China said that large-scale demining activities had "on the whole eliminated the scourge of landmines in our territories".⁹

At the Third Review Conference of the APMBC in 2014, China said it had "basically eradicated landmines on its own territory".¹⁰ 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 three years to 2019, China said it had 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).¹¹ China began demining its border with Myanmar at the end of 2018 with a team of more than 300 deminers.¹²

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 1997–99.¹³ 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 5.15km².¹⁴

In early November 2015, however, China embarked on a further demining operation along the border with Vietnam.¹⁵ Official victim numbers are not publicly available but civilian casualties were common in the bordering villages throughout the three decades that preceded the clearance.¹⁶ 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 2019.¹⁷

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 to February 2017, the Chinese army cleared 18.4km² of minefields on the Yunnan border.¹⁸ 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 in November 2018.¹⁹

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

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

In 2019, China, reported that the military was building international humanitarian mine clearance classrooms and conducting research on the application of virtual reality

technology in humanitarian mine clearance training.²⁰ In 2021 and 2022, China said it had completed the construction of the international humanitarian mine clearance training site, which is reported to provide good-quality conditions for mine clearance training.²¹

- 3 Chinese authorities warn of possible North Korean landmine displacement due to floods, notify residents 'Do not go to the riverbank', *Rimjin-Gang*, 13 August 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3ST8ZnU>.
- 4 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.
- 5 Interview with Shen Jian, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing, 1 April 2008; and L. Huizi and L. Yun, "Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.
- 6 "Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border", *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/2yYXXnL>.
- 7 Statement of China, Second Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.
- 8 Email from Lai Haiyang, Attaché, Department of Arms Control & Disarmament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 7 September 2011.
- 9 Statement of China, APMBC Eleventh Meeting of States Parties, Phnom Penh, 29 November 2011.
- 10 Statement of China, Third APMBC Review Conference, Maputo, 26 June 2014.
- 11 Statement of China, Fourth APMBC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.
- 12 J. Li, "Minesweeping operations along China-Myanmar border kick off", *China Military Online*, 28 December 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3f7P3qy>.
- 13 "Landmine sweeping on Sino-Vietnam border nearly completed", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.
- 14 Statement of China, Second APMBC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.
- 15 P. Scally, "Huge land mine clearance underway in Wenshan, Honghe", Blog post, Gokunming, 5 November 2015, at: <https://bit.ly/2OWbdVe>.
- 16 "Guardians of the Extreme Realm: Life and Death Demining in the Southwest Frontier", *CCTV*, 11 September 2019.
- 17 "From breadwinners to dependents, how can mine victims heal?", *CGTN*, 4 April 2019, at: <https://bit.ly/3hiwt2f>.
- 18 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2016), Form B. Unofficial translation.
- 19 "Soldier loses both hands and eyes from a blast while clearing mines along Vietnam border", *The Global Times*, 6 December 2018.
- 20 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2019), Form B.
- 21 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Reports (covering 2021 and 2022), Form B. Unofficial translation.

China has also reported carrying out technical research related to mine and unexploded ordnance (UXO) clearance and destruction, and research on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) survey technology for mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and on a multi-parameter real-time monitoring and effect evaluation system for mine detection training.²²

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).²³ In 2023, the Chinese Army Engineering University delivered 22 professional teaching classes to 779 trainees,²⁴ while in 2022 it delivered 21 specialist courses on mine compliance to 1,064 trainees.²⁵ In addition, in 2023, the University ran training on the disposal of ERW in 15 professional teaching classes to 616 trainees.²⁶ In 2022, the PLA Army Engineering University conducted training on the detection and elimination of ERW and UXO found underwater.²⁷

At a regional level, China has been active in collaborating with other countries on mine action. In 2023, it co-chaired the ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus Mine Clearance Experts Group, co-hosting the 12th Experts Group which focused on regional cooperation (at a similar meeting co-hosted by China in 2022, the group discussed developing

operational mine clearance standards²⁸), and jointly holding training at the Army Engineering University for the Experts Group. China co-hosted the 2nd ASEAN high-level meeting on mine action in Nanjing which discussed best practice, the challenges of mine pollution, and future cooperation.²⁹ China participated in similar regional activities in 2022, including the second ASEAN mine clearance technical working group which discussed cross-sectoral cooperation, regional mine action methods, and innovative financing.³⁰

Beyond the ASEAN region, in 2022 China held bilateral video conferences with the Pakistani Military Engineering College and the Serbian Mine Action Centre, sharing information on mine clearance training and explosive destruction technology. Furthermore, Chinese experts continue to serve as members of the Review Committee of the United Nations International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) that reviews standards and guidelines.³¹ China also sent two technical experts to the ASEAN Mine Action Center (ARMAC) in Cambodia for the first time in 2023.³²

Furthermore, China participated in the “Pure Homeland 2023”, a multinational clearance operation in Cambodia involving more than 3,000 personnel from 14 nations and the destruction of over 3,000 items of ammunition.³³ In addition, in 2023, China provided more than US\$4 million in funds, mine detection equipment, and humanitarian supplies to Cambodia and Lao PDR,³⁴ having provided US\$500,000 in direct financial assistance to Cambodia and Laos in 2022, plus equipment and supplies to strengthen their clearance capacity.³⁵

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

It is not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of mines in China in order to minimise potential harm from clearance.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

China has completed the compilation of the “Standard for Disposal of Improvised Explosive Devices” and promoted the application of this standard in related fields in China.³⁶

22 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Forms B and C.
23 Statement of China, Fourth APMBRC Review Conference, Oslo, 27 November 2019.
24 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2023), Form A. Unofficial translation.
25 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2022), Form A. Unofficial translation.
26 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form F.
27 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2022), Form A.
28 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2022), Form E. Unofficial translation.
29 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2023), Form E. Unofficial translation.
30 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2022), Form E. Unofficial translation.
31 Ibid.
32 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Reports (covering 2023 and 2022), Form D. Unofficial translation.
33 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2023), Form D. Unofficial translation.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2021), Form E. Unofficial translation.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

China stated, at meetings of States Parties to the APMBC in 2017 and 2020, that it agrees with “the vision and goals” of the Convention, especially its humanitarian underpinnings, and that it appreciates “the convention’s humanitarian spirit, and recognizes its purpose and objective, and acknowledges and attaches importance to its role.”³⁷ At the United Nations Security Council in 2021 it stated that, “China subscribes to the purposes of the Ottawa Convention and supports the ultimate goal of comprehensive landmine ban”.³⁸ China has, in the past, reiterated that it cannot consider acceding to the treaty due to its ongoing national defence needs.³⁹

In June 2014, however, Chinese representatives indicated to the Monitor that no new AP mines had been used in the country during the previous decade, and acknowledged that AP mines no longer played a prominent role in China’s defence doctrine.⁴⁰ In 2012, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official confirmed that no new minefields had been laid, while in 2011, an official indicated that China only maintained a small number of minefields “for national defence”.⁴¹

Media accounts reported that mine clearance resumed in November 2017 in the Yunnan border area and in the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.⁴² Clearance was reportedly

completed in November 2018, with 2,300 explosive items found and destroyed across 1.5km² in Guangxi province.⁴³ In Yunnan province, an estimated 200,000 explosive items were found and destroyed in release of over 50km² of mined area between November 2015 and November 2018.⁴⁴

In its Amended Protocol II Article 13 reports covering 2022 and 2023, China did not report any AP mine clearance.⁴⁵ China did, however, report in its Protocol V Article 10 reports covering 2022 and 2023 that Chinese public security organisations had worked closely with the military to dispose of ERW, such as artillery shells, aerial bombs, and grenades, with a total of 11,857 items destroyed in 2023,⁴⁶ and 17,035 items destroyed in 2022.⁴⁷ China last reported destruction of AP mines in its Amended Protocol II report covering 2021, when it reported the destruction of 866 mines but it is not known whether the mines destroyed were AP mines or anti-vehicle mines.⁴⁸ China had not reported any AP mine clearance the previous year in 2020.⁴⁹ In September 2021, it was reported by an online media source that Chinese authorities had begun clearance operations along the Chinese side of the border between Yunnan province and Myanmar, near Yunnan’s Nansan township and near the Menadue township.⁵⁰ No further details were available.

37 Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, “China”, notes 1 and 2, at: <https://bit.ly/3Y02ExS>.

38 Statement of China, Security Council Open Debate on Mine Action, 8 April 2021.

39 Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor, “China”, note 3.

40 Ibid, note 12.

41 Ibid, notes 13 and 14.

42 “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>.

43 “China’s Guangxi completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnam border”, *China Daily*, 26 November 2018.

44 “Yunnan completes de-mining mission along Sino-Vietnamese border”, *Xinhua*, 16 November 2018.

45 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2023), Form B; and Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2022), Form B. Unofficial translations.

46 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A.

47 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2022), Form A.

48 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2021), Form A. Unofficial translation.

49 Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (covering 2020), Form E.

50 “China Begins Landmine Removal Operation Along Border With Myanmar”, *Radio Free Asia*, 13 September 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3D3IhQB>.