



RECOMMENDATION FOR ACTION

- China should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) and clear all mined areas as a matter of priority.

CONTAMINATION

The extent of mine contamination remaining in China is not known.

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 conducted clearance operations along its border with Vietnam between 1992 and 1999,³ and between 2005 and 2009.⁴

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."⁵ However, casualties from landmines continued to be reported in parts of Yunnan bordering Vietnam where some areas were still marked as mine-affected and press reports said one or two people were injured in this region every year.⁶

1 US Department of State, "Hidden Killers 1994", Washington, DC, September 1998, p. 18, and Table A-1.

2 L. Huizi and L. Yun, "Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border", *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.

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 Statement of China, Second APMBC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

6 "Landmines continue to kill in Yunnan province", *Global Times*, 16 May 2011; Z. Jiawei, "Landmines haunt Chinese village", *China Daily*, 13 January 2011.

Moreover, in September 2011, a Foreign Ministry official reported to Landmine Monitor 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 Maputo Review Conference in 2014, China said it had “basically eradicated landmines on its own territory”.⁹ China has not reported on mine contamination along its borders with Russia and India or on operations to clear them.

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no formal mine action programme in China. Any mine clearance is conducted by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) as a military activity.

LAND RELEASE

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. Press reports cited claims by the Chinese military that this second clearance operation was the largest in world military history.¹⁰

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 5.15km².¹¹

In early November 2015, however, China embarked on a further demining operation along the border with Vietnam.¹² According to media accounts, this phase of clearance on the border was set to be completed by the end of 2017, with the clearance of more than 50 minefields covering an area of more than 50km² in six counties along the border, in areas home to over 50,000 people. It was claimed that more than 470,000 mines remained to be cleared, despite the two other clearance operations in 1992–94 and 1997–99.¹³

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

China is not a state party or signatory to the APMBC but nonetheless has obligations under customary international human rights law to protect life, which requires clearance of mines as soon as possible.

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 Huizi and Yun, “Chinese soldiers nearly done with landmine sweeping on the Sino-Vietnam border”, *Xinhua*, 31 December 2008.

11 Statement of China, Second APMBC Review Conference, Cartagena, 4 December 2009.

12 P. Scally, “Huge land mine clearance underway in Wenshan, Honghe”, Blog post on *Gokunming*, 5 November 2015, at: http://www.gokunming.com/en/blog/item/3620/huge_land_mine_clearance_underway_in_wenshan_honghe.

13 X. Wei, “Mine clearance mission on China-Vietnam border”, *China Daily*, 3 November 2015, at: http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/2015-11/03/content_22359369.htm; and Z. Tao, “China launches 3rd mine clearance mission along China-Vietnam border”, *China Military Online*, 2 December 2015, at: http://eng.mod.gov.cn/TopNews/2015-12/02/content_4631304.htm.