

IRAQ

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 NOVEMBER 2023
(NOT ON TARGET TO MEET DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE	2016	2015
Problem understood	5	6
Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance	3	3
Targeted clearance	4	4
Efficient clearance	6	6
National funding of programme	5	6
Timely clearance	3	3
Land release system in place	6	6
National mine action standards	5	5
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	4	5
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.6	4.9

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Iraq's mine action programme made significant progress in the south, but in central and northern Iraq the conflict with Islamic State diverted attention and resources to priorities other than clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Iraq should formulate a strategic plan and detailed national standards for survey and clearance of cluster munitions.
- Iraq should work with operators to resolve major discrepancies in data, particularly concerning operations in central and southern Iraq.
- When circumstances permit, technical survey of areas confirmed or suspected to contain CMR should be conducted to establish a robust figure for nationwide contamination.
- Iraq should devise procedures to end long and hazardous delays in carrying out demolitions of cleared items.

CONTAMINATION

CMR contaminate significant areas of central and southern Iraq, a legacy of the 1991 Gulf War and the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Iraq has claimed that CMR in confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) cover a total of 200km² across nine central and southern governorates of which 95% was said to be in just the three governorates of Basra, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar.¹ A small amount of CMR contamination also remains in northern Iraq's Kurdish region.

The highway between Kuwait and Basrah was heavily targeted by cluster bomb strikes in the 1991 Gulf War,² and cluster munitions were also used extensively during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, particularly around Basra,

Nasiriyah, and the approaches to Baghdad. CMR are a feature of many of the clearance tasks being undertaken to open up access to oilfields and develop infrastructure as well as for humanitarian clearance.³

The Department of Mine Action (DMA) estimated that CMR contamination whose presence had been confirmed at the end of 2016 was 207km², nearly 7km² more than a year earlier, reflecting identification of additional hazards in the course of survey in 2016. One district of Muthanna governorate, Al-Salman, accounted for 128.5km², more than half the total.⁴

Table 1: CMR contamination in Iraq 2016⁵

Governorate	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Babylon	1	89,500	0	0
Basra	154	25,524,912	0	0
Karbala	4	1,595,474	1	218,708
Missan	10	671,938	1	5,932
Muthanna	31	128,643,822	0	0
Najaf	4	4,012,033	1	1,309,596
Al-Qadisiyah	4	3,740,034	1	226,303
Thi-Qar	12	43,092,816	0	0
Wassit	2	299,143	0	0
Totals	222	207,669,672	4	1,760,539

Kurdish regional authorities estimated CMR-affected areas at 1.18km² in two governorates (Dohuk and Garmiyah) at the end of 2015 together with 0.6km² of SHAs. A year later they said northern governorates had residual, scattered CMR contamination but no CHAs or SHAs.⁶ A number of areas where there is evidence of CMR still need to be surveyed to establish the extent of contamination.⁷

Other Explosive Remnants of War and Landmines

Iraq also has very heavy ERW contamination across the north, centre, and south, and more than 200km² of confirmed anti-personnel mine contamination, as well as dense contamination by improvised mines in areas controlled by, or liberated from, Islamic State.⁸

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The mine action programme in Iraq is managed along regional lines. The DMA represents Iraq internationally and manages mine action for humanitarian purposes in the centre and the south, implementing policies set by an inter-ministerial Higher Council of Mine Action which reports to the Prime Minister. Commercial companies undertaking oilfield clearance operations report to the Ministry of Oil.⁹

The DMA oversees four Regional Mine Action Centres (RMACs): for the north (covering the governorates of Anbar, Kirkuk, Mosul, and Saladin), the centre (Baghdad, Diyala, and Wassit), a region identified as "ME" (Babylon, Karbala, Najaf, and al-Qadisiyah), and the south (Basra, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar).¹⁰ RMAC South, based in

Basra, is active coordinating the activities of non-commercial operators and collecting survey and clearance data, but the extent to which other RMACs are functioning is unclear.

Mine action in Iraq's northern governorates under the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) is managed by the Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA). It coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmiyah, and Sulimaniya (Sleman).

Strategic Planning

Iraq does not have a national strategic plan for clearance of CMR. Its vision for mine action is "Iraq free from the impact of mines and explosive remnants of war, including cluster munitions."¹¹

Operators

The DMA said five organisations conducted survey and/or clearance of areas affected by cluster munitions in 2016, including Civil Defence, Danish Demining Group (DDG), Iraq Mine Clearance Organization (IMCO), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and RMAC South. IMCO had ceased operation in 2015 but the DMA said it reaccredited IMCO after it re-registered as a national organisation.¹²

Despite Iraq's high level of CMR contamination, only two organisations, Civil Defence and NPA, were involved in systematic CMR clearance in 2016. Civil Defence provided the main CMR clearance capacity, deploying teams with a total of 202 deminers/explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technicians in 15 governorates.¹³ NPA's capacity included three three-strong survey teams and five EOD/battle area clearance (BAC) teams with 48 deminers/EOD technicians, for a total of 57 personnel.¹⁴

IKMAA has reported that only Mines Advisory Group (MAG) conducts CMR clearance in the KRG.¹⁵

LAND RELEASE

Iraq's war against Islamic State and associated security and humanitarian challenges raised attention to the mine action sector in 2016, but lowered the priority of cluster munitions clearance. Dense contamination by improvised devices inflicting casualties and delaying the return of civilian populations to urban centres controlled by Islamic State was the top imperative, resulting in slower progress on CMR survey and clearance.¹⁶

Major discrepancies between the data available from mine action authorities and operators made it difficult to assess progress. Moreover, long delays between completing clearance of tasks and final QC checks by mine action authorities can also result in long delays before it is formally released.¹⁷

Survey in 2016

Survey of CMR-affected areas in central and southern Iraq in 2016 (see Table 2) covered less than a quarter of the 42.17km² surveyed the previous year, according to DMA data.¹⁸

Table 2: Survey of CMR-contaminated areas in 2016

Operator	CHAs confirmed	Area confirmed (m ²)
Civil Defence	7	987,397
DDG	2	2,516,211
IMCO	6	5,222,379
NPA	18	747,347
RMAC South	1	49,821
Totals	34	9,523,155

DMA's record of activities undertaken by international operators, as in the past, differed significantly from the operators' own records. DDG had prepared to set up survey teams but reported that it was instructed that survey was not a requirement and as a result it undertook no CMR survey in 2016.¹⁹ NPA said it confirmed 76 CMR hazards covering 6.73km², mostly in Missan governorate, in addition to cancelling 14 SHAs covering 5.74km², nearly 10 times more than recorded by DMA data (see Table 3).²⁰ Even including NPA's survey results, the CMR-affected area surveyed in 2016 was almost two-thirds less than the previous year.

Table 3: Non-technical survey and CMR survey in 2016²¹

Operator	SHAs cancelled	Area cancelled (m ²)	SHAs confirmed	Area confirmed (m ²)
NPA South Iraq	14	5,740,052	76	6,731,293

IKMAA has concluded that the KRG has only scattered, residual CMR contamination, and did not record any CMR-related survey in 2016.²²

Clearance in 2016

The DMA reported a sharp decline in the amount of CMR-affected land cleared in central and southern Iraq in 2016 to 2.9km², compared with 8.2km² the previous year, but official numbers appear to be distorted by delays in the government's certification of clearance, among other factors, and the pace of clearance may in fact have accelerated.

DMA records showed that NPA, working in Basra and Missan governorates, cleared 1.18km² of CMR-affected areas in 2016 but cleared another 2.21km² of land that had some submunitions, clearing 129 items.²³ Data from NPA, which worked with three survey teams and 48 EOD/BAC technicians, showed that it cleared 7.9km² in 2016, more than three times the 2.3km² it said it cleared in 2015, although by its own count the number of submunitions it cleared dropped from 1,157 in 2015 to 525. The acceleration in clearance accompanied stronger coordination with RMAC South which saw NPA for the first time operating with a workplan for non-technical survey and clearance in Basrah, Missan, and Muthanna governorates in 2017–18.²⁴

Demolitions of cleared items, however, remained a major concern for all operators across the mine action sector. Only the army was authorised to conduct demolitions and the diversion of military personnel and resources to conflict areas reduced the attention to demolitions, leaving cleared items stored in insecure settings for long periods.²⁵

In the KRG, MAG remained the only organisation working on cluster munition strikes in 2016 but this made up only a small part of its activities in 2016 and it cleared less than half the 0.55km² tackled the previous year.²⁶

Table 4: Clearance of CMR contamination in 2016

Operator	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	UXO destroyed
Centre & South²⁷				
Civil Defence	12	1,730,893	1,462	62
NPA ²⁸	11	1,158,692	123	11
Subtotals	23	2,889,585	1,585	73
KRG				
MAG ²⁹	5	209,920	97	7
Totals	28	3,099,505	1,682	80

ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 4 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, Iraq is required to destroy all cluster munition remnants in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 November 2023.

On current estimates of contamination Iraq would need to release around 30km² of CMR-affected areas a year to meet its treaty deadline. That would pose a

significant challenge even without the pressures it faces from conflict with Islamic State and the many resulting security and humanitarian imperatives. Against that background, however, cluster munitions does not rank as a priority and progress in survey and clearance lags well behind the level that would be needed to meet its deadline.

1 Email from Ahmed Al-Jasim, Head of Information Management Department, DMA, 30 May 2016.

2 United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)/UN Development Programme (UNDP), "Overview of Landmines and Explosive Remnants of War in Iraq", June 2009, p. 10.

3 Telephone interview with Kent Paulusson, Senior Mine Action Advisor for Iraq, UNDP, 28 July 2011.

4 Email from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 6 April 2017.

5 Ibid.

6 Emails from Khatab Omer Ahmad, Planning Manager, Directorate General of Technical Affairs, Iraqi Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), 8 April 2017 and 20 May 2016.

7 Information from Kathy Keary, Liaison Manager, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), 26 June 2017.

8 Emails from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 6 April 2017; and Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 8 April 2017.

9 DMA presentation to 2015 Mine Action Country Planning Workshop for Iraq, Istanbul, 13 May 2015; Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, "Capacity Development Support to National Mine Action Authorities in Iraq, Phase 1: Initial Assessment Mission", February 2012.

10 DMA presentation to 2015 Mine Action Country Planning Workshop for Iraq, Istanbul, 13 May 2015.

11 Ibid.

12 Email from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 4 May 2017.

13 Emails from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 6 April and 4 May 2017.

14 Email from Mats Hektor, Project Manager South Iraq, NPA, 1 April 2017.

15 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 8 April 2017.

16 Email from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 23 May 2017.

17 NPA reported in April 2017 that it was waiting for QC of tasks completed in 2015. Email from Mats Hektor, NPA, 27 April 2017.

18 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 8 April 2017.

19 Email from Southern Craib, Country Director, DDG, 27 March 2017.

20 Email from Mats Hektor, NPA, 1 April 2017.

21 Interviews and correspondence with operators, February–May 2017.

22 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmed, IKMAA, 20 May 2016.

23 Email from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 6 April 2017.

24 Emails from Mats Hektor, NPA, 1 April 2017; and Bjørn Skodvin Hannisdal, Country Programme Director, NPA, 3 June 2016.

25 Email from Mats Hektor, NPA, 1 April 2017.

26 Email from Steven Warner, Desk Officer for Iraq, MAG, 28 April 2017.

27 Emails from Ahmed Al-Jasim, DMA, 6 April and 4 May 2017.

28 NPA reported to Mine Action Review that it had cleared 14 areas containing CMR totalling 7.95km², clearing 525 submunitions, 1,549 other items of UXO, 43 anti-personnel mines, and 5 anti-vehicle mines. Email from Mats Hektor, NPA, 1 April 2017.

29 Email from Steven Warner, MAG, 28 April 2017.