

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

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PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

	2017	2016
Problem understood	6	6
Target date for completion of cluster munition clearance	3	3
Targeted clearance	6	6
Efficient clearance	6	6
National funding of programme	2	2
Timely clearance	5	5
Land-release system in place	7	7
National mine action standards	7	7
Reporting on progress	5	5
Improving performance	2	3
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.9	5.0

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Clearance output decreased in 2017 as emergency clearance of new cluster munition remnants (CMR) resulting from the April 2016 conflict came to an end. Overall CMR contamination has risen by 0.18km² since 2016 following the discovery by survey of new contamination in the Askeran district. In addition, donors have prioritised released of mined areas over CMR clearance, so it is likely that CMR clearance output will continue to fall.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities should make a formal commitment to respect and implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) and to clear all CMR.
- The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities should provide funding for CMR survey and clearance.

CONTAMINATION

The exact extent of contamination from CMR in Nagorno-Karabakh is not known, but it is significant and widespread.¹ At the end of 2017, CMR contamination (both surface and subsurface) was estimated to be 71.62km² across 212 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), in seven of a total of eight districts (see Table 1).² This represents a small increase in CMR contamination of 0.18km² from 2016³ to 2017, despite clearance in 2017, following confirmation of three suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) totalling 1.5km² in the Askeran district.⁴

Table 1: CMR contamination by district (at end 2017)⁵

District	CHAs	Area (km ²)
Askeran	56	21.29
Hadrut	28	10.54
Lachin	17	8.50
Martakert	45	11.70
Martuni	57	15.09
Shushi	8	4.00
Stepanakert	1	0.50
Totals	212	71.62

In 1988, a decision by the parliament of the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Province to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia resulted in armed conflict from 1988 to 1994 between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Large numbers of cluster munitions were dropped from the air during the conflict. Nagorno-Karabakh declared independence in 1991 but this has not been internationally recognised.

On 1 April 2016, intense fighting broke out in Nagorno-Karabakh along the front line between Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh forces and the armed forces of Azerbaijan. While ground fighting was confined to areas close to the Line of Contact (LOC), artillery fire penetrated more than 10km into Nagorno-Karabakh, and included use of cluster munitions. A ceasefire was agreed on 5 April 2016.⁶ The HALO Trust has estimated the four days of hostilities added 2.4km² of CMR contamination.⁷

More than two-thirds of remaining contamination is in Askeran, Martakert, and Martuni. Most of the remaining CMR are located in woods and hillsides, where the threat endangers the lives of woodcutters, foragers, and domestic livestock grazing in common areas around rural settlements.⁸ Between 1996 and 2017, The HALO Trust recorded 18 incidents from submunitions, including seven fatalities.⁹ The last recorded incident involving CMR was in November 2017, when a 23 year old man picked up a ShOAB cluster bomb (thinking it was a rock) and threw it, causing it to detonate. He received multiple shrapnel wounds to his left hip, right shoulder and right eye.¹⁰

Other Explosive Remnants of War and Landmines

Nagorno-Karabakh is also contaminated by other explosive remnants of war (ERW) and landmines.¹¹ Mine contamination reportedly covered 3.6km² in April 2018 (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Nagorno-Karabakh for further information).¹²

Programme Management

A mine action coordination committee is responsible for liaising between the local authorities and The HALO Trust.¹³ Regular coordination committee meetings are said to be held between the local authorities, The HALO Trust, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).¹⁴

In 2000, The HALO Trust established the Nagorno-Karabakh Mine Action Centre (NKMACE), which consolidates all mine action-related information and responds to requests from the government ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local communities.¹⁵ The NKMACE maintains maps and a database of all SHAs surveyed, all areas cleared of mines or ERW, locations of all mine- and ERW-related incidents, and a record of all risk education given.¹⁶

Legislation and Standards

No national standards exist in Nagorno-Karabakh, and The HALO Trust follows its own standing operating procedures (SOPs).¹⁷

Quality Management

Similarly, The HALO Trust uses its own quality management systems, with quality assurance (QA) and quality control (QC) applied by four levels of management.¹⁸

Operators

Since 2000, The HALO Trust has been the sole organisation conducting land release in Nagorno-Karabakh. HALO's Nagorno-Karabakh operations cover both CMR clearance and mine clearance, and The HALO Trust does not field separate teams dedicated solely to either. Operational staff are trained and experienced in working in both capacities.¹⁹ Since the April 2016 conflict, The HALO Trust has collaborated with the Nagorno-Karabakh Rescue Services when gathering information about CMR and mines, and as part of the QA process through its participation in the official handover ceremony with community representatives.²⁰

In 2017, The HALO Trust employed an average of 180 personnel, an increase compared to over the 142 staff average for 2016.²¹ In 2017, HALO employed one manual team to complete clearance of the cluster munition strikes from the April 2016 fighting.²² HALO then employed two teams for occasional CMR clearance between April and October 2017.²³

Over the course of 2017, HALO Trust battle area clearance (BAC) teams were employed for 80 days, compared to 209 the previous year.²⁴ This reflects the shift in donor priorities away from BAC and onto landmine clearance.

The average per square metre cost of CMR clearance has been gradually increasing year on year, which may partly be accounted for by the increase in sub-surface BAC in recent years.²⁵ In 2017, one manual team cleared 13,654m² per day, with 15% of the total being sub-surface clearance. This compares to 28,182m² per day in 2012, with 5% of the total being sub-surface clearance.²⁶

LAND RELEASE

A total of some 1.1km² of area contaminated with CMR was released by clearance in 2017,²⁷ compared with 3.3km² in 2016.²⁸ A total of 0.26km² was released by survey in 2017.

Survey in 2017

In 2017, The HALO Trust reduced 2,659m² of land by technical survey in the Martakert region and 260,000m² of land by technical survey in the Martuni region. The HALO Trust also confirmed three areas totalling 1.5km² in the Askeran region as CMR-contaminated.²⁹

In order to determine whether a strike requires further clearance, The HALO Trust initially surveys a 500,000m² area around evidence of submunitions. Clearance starts from the centre of the area of known evidence and extends outwards, employing a buffer. If no further evidence of CMR is found, the remaining area is released.³⁰

Clearance in 2017

The HALO Trust cleared 1.06km² of area containing CMR and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) in 2017, during which seven submunitions and one other item of UXO were destroyed. Three areas were released by clearance and one other, in the Askeran district, was suspended at the end of the demining season.³¹

Table 2: Clearance of CMR-contaminated areas in 2017

District	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
Askeran	1	814,700	5	1
Martakert	1	171,300	0	0
Martuni	1	70,000	2	0
Totals	3	1,056,000	7	1

In 2017, The HALO Trust completed clearance of CMR in the villages of Nerkin Horatagh and Mokhratagh in the north-east Martakert region, which resulted from the April 2016 fighting.³² Between 10 August 2016 and 28 February 2017, The HALO Trust cleared 723,130m² of land through sub-surface clearance and a further 50,000m² through surface clearance, of which 171,300m² of sub-surface clearance was completed in 2017.³³ Overall, HALO found and destroyed 17 submunitions through this clearance, though none was found in 2017.³⁴

In addition to planned clearance, The HALO Trust destroyed 45 submunitions during explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) spot tasks in 2017.³⁵

The clearance output in 2017 has decreased from the previous year. In 2016, clearance output was high due to the emergency clearance of the April 2016 contamination.³⁶ The HALO Trust's CMR clearance operations continue to remain a "secondary" activity, as per the donors' request to prioritise mine clearance.³⁷ Submunition clearance is conducted on days when minefields cannot be accessed safely due to adverse conditions.³⁸

Progress in 2018

As at May 2018, The HALO Trust was planning to continue to prioritise clearance of mines over CMR, and as such has not included CMR survey or clearance in its workplan for 2018.³⁹ Survey and clearance of CMR will continue on an ad hoc basis whenever adverse weather or other conditions do not permit safe mine clearance.⁴⁰

ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

Nagorno-Karabakh is not a state party to the CCM and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 4. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear CMR as soon as possible. No target date has been set to complete clearance of CMR.

The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities do not provide The HALO Trust with any funding for clearance of CMR-contaminated or mined areas.⁴¹

Progress in clearance of CMR has fluctuated over the last five years, as shown in Table 2. The HALO Trust is currently prioritising clearance of mines, as part of its efforts to complete clearance of all accessible mined areas by 2020, and The HALO Trust deploys teams to conduct BAC only in a reserve capacity.⁴²

Table 3: Clearance of CMR-contaminated area in 2013–17

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2017	1.06
2016	3.28
2015	2.91
2014	13.01
2013	4.65
Total	24.91

The HALO Trust saw its expected USAID funding reduced for the 2016/17 financial year, but its operational capacity has not been impacted.⁴³ The HALO Trust was expecting to receive \$3.5 million from USAID to complete landmine clearance of Nagorno-Karabakh over 2018 and 2019.⁴⁴ USAID has requested that funds be used for clearance operations within the former Soviet-era Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO), and that The HALO Trust focus on mine clearance.⁴⁵ CMR surface clearance is funded by USAID as a secondary activity, to be conducted when weather or other conditions do not permit safe mine clearance.⁴⁶

Since 2015, the HALO Trust has received support from an anonymous donor for mine clearance outside the Soviet oblast boundary, along with matching funds, with a view to completing all clearance. This has attracted a number of private individuals and foundations.⁴⁷ The HALO Trust secured a partnership with ONEArmenia, which successfully crowdfunded in 2017 to help raise funds for HALO Trust's demining operations.⁴⁸ The HALO Trust reports that funding from a number of private donors would decrease or end in 2018.⁴⁹ Funding to The HALO Trust from the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), through its conflict, stability and security fund (CSSF), ended on 31 March 2017.⁵⁰

While surface clearance of legacy CMR contamination within the NKAO boundaries of Nagorno-Karabakh could potentially be completed within a few years, this would still leave subsurface contamination within the NKAO boundaries of Nagorno-Karabakh, in addition to CMR contamination in areas outside the NKAO which are under the control of the Nagorno-Karabakh forces. The HALO Trust hopes to clear Nagorno-Karabakh of all mines by 2020, but no equivalent target date exists for CMR.⁵¹

The international isolation of Nagorno-Karabakh also makes it difficult for The HALO Trust to raise funds to work in the region, and funds raised are often subject to territorial restrictions.⁵² Almost no CMR is conducted outside the NKAO.⁵³ Funding is needed to prevent Nagorno-Karabakh's communities being blighted by mines and CMR for decades to come.⁵⁴

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- 1 Email from Andrew Moore, Caucasus and Balkans Desk Officer, HALO Trust, 29 May 2015.
- 2 Email from Amasia Zargarian, Programme Support Officer, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 3 The figures in the 2016 CMR report for Nagorno-Karabakh have been amended from those previously reported in Mine Action Review as the earlier figures provided by HALO Trust did not include clearance of suspended areas.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 6 The HALO Trust, "HALO Trust begins emergency clearance in Karabakh", 19 April 2016, at: <https://www.halotrust.org/media-centre/news/halo-begins-emergency-clearance-in-karabakh/>.
- 7 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Emails from Ash Boddy, Regional Director, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017; and Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 1 June 2018.
- 10 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 1 June 2018.
- 11 The HALO Trust, "Nagorno-Karabakh", accessed 13 April 2017, at: <https://www.halotrust.org/minefreenk/>.
- 12 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 13 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 28 June 2013.
- 14 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 26 May 2016.
- 15 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 28 June 2013.
- 16 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "De-mining Needs Assessment in Nagorno-Karabakh", September 2013, p. vii.
- 17 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 26 May 2016.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 22 May 2015.
- 20 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 21 Emails from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017; and Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 1 June 2018.
- 22 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Emails from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017; and Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 1 June 2018.
- 25 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 26 Emails from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018 and 19 June 2018.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017.
- 29 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 30 Ibid., and email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017.
- 31 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 1 June 2018.
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 7 June 2016.
- 37 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 13 April 2017.
- 44 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 45 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 26 May 2016 and 11 June 2015.
- 46 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 47 Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 28 September 2017.
- 48 Emails from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 3 April and 28 September 2017.
- 49 Email from Amasia Zargarian, HALO Trust, 4 May 2018.
- 50 Email from Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 27 April 2017.
- 51 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 26 May 2016, and Ash Boddy, HALO Trust, 14 April 2017.
- 52 The HALO Trust website, accessed 27 May 2015, at: <http://www.halotrust.org/where-we-work/nagorno-karabakh>.
- 53 Email from Andrew Moore, HALO Trust, 11 June 2015.
- 54 The HALO Trust website, accessed 27 May 2015.