

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Cuba should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Cuba should clear anti-personnel mines in 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 extent of mine contamination in Cuba is unknown and is believed to have remained unchanged in the recent years. Cuban authorities maintain minefields around the United States (US) naval base at Guantanamo in the south-east of Cuba. According to online media, the Cuban government placed anti-personnel mines around the base as a means to defend against a possible US invasion.¹ In 2007, Cuba said it carries out “a strict policy with regard to guaranteeing a responsible use of anti-personnel mines with an exclusively defensive character and for [Cuba’s] national security.”² According to an earlier statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, existing minefields are duly “marked, fenced and guarded” in accordance with Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II Meeting of Experts.³ The Landmine Monitor lists Cuba as one of only a handful of States that still producing anti-personnel mines.⁴

In 1996, the then US President, Bill Clinton, issued an order to clear the US Guantanamo base of all “hair-triggered” explosives. By 1999, the US marines had cleared approximately 50,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines on the US side of the fence separating Cuba from the US naval base in Guantanamo and replaced them with motion and sound sensors.⁵

According to a book published in 2008, mines laid around the naval base detonate “at least once a month”,⁶ but it has not been possible to independently confirm this claim. In February 2018, a fire broke out in the 17-mile strip of land separating the Guantánamo base from Cuban territory which reportedly detonated 1,000 landmines and burned 1,700 acres over three days before being extinguished.⁷

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no mine action programme in Cuba.

LAND RELEASE

Cuba has not conducted clearance in its minefields around the US naval base at Guantánamo over the last ten years.

1 “People of Guantanamo live under the danger of anti-personnel mines”, *Radiotelevisionmartí*, 4 December 2014, (Spanish), at: <https://bit.ly/3x4vCZD>.

2 Statement by Rebeca Hernández Toledano, First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Cuba to the UN, “Item 29: Assistance in mine action”, UN General Assembly, Fourth Committee, New York, 6 November 2007.

3 Statement of the Directorate of Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 June 2000.

4 *Landmine Monitor Report 2020*, at: <https://bit.ly/2Qw7lLy>, p. 5.

5 “Marines unload deactivated land mines for destruction at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba”, US Department of Defence archives, at: <https://bit.ly/3x3BB0f>; and “Guantánamo ‘minesweepers’ perform a delicate task: Deadly devices disabled one by one”, *Miami Herald*, 6 March 2018 (original published on 18 March 1999).

6 “The Cuban mines detonate at least once a month, sometimes starting fires that sweep across the fence line. [Staff Sergeant Kaveh Wooley of the US Marines]... described a fire that started the previous summer and turned into a giant cook-off, with about 30 mines exploding....” D. P. Erikson, *Cuba Wars: Fidel Castro, the United States, and the Next Revolution*, Bloomsbury, United States, October 2008, pp. 196–97.

7 “U.S. and Cuban forces unite to fight a common foe: wildfire at Guantanamo”, *USA Today*, 1 March 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/2KytDH9>.