

KEY DATA

NO APMBC ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE:

State not party to the APMBC

AP MINE CONTAMINATION:

Unknown

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS

Release of AP mined area	Release in 2024 (m²)	Release in 2023 (m²)
Clearance	Not reported	Not reported
Technical Survey	Not reported	Not reported
Non-Technical Survey	Not reported	Not reported
Destruction of AP mines during clearance, survey, and spot tasks	2024	2023
AP Mines destroyed	Not reported	Not reported

MAIN AP MINE SURVEY AND CLEARANCE OPERATORS IN 2024:

- None

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Cuba should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Cuba should clear anti-personnel (AP) mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.

AP MINE SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

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

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- None

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The extent of mine contamination in Cuba is unknown but is believed to have remained unchanged for many years. Cuban authorities maintain minefields around the United States (US) naval base at Guantanamo in the south-east of Cuba. The base, which covers an area of 117km², is encircled by several electrified fences, tens of thousands of AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines, and motion sensors, forming a heavily fortified perimeter.¹ The border is described as one of the most heavily monitored and sealed in the world.²

American minefields were first laid at Guantánamo in 1961 to protect the base from a possible advance by Cuba's Frontier Brigade, the infantry and armoured forces of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, who had taken power two years earlier. The United States has occupied the base under a lease signed in 1903, which successive Cuban governments regard as a violation of national sovereignty.³

Cuba, in turn, laid its own minefields on the other side of Guantanamo's barbed-wire fences 22 years later, in 1983, following the US invasion of Grenada. According to official accounts, the mines were intended to deter a possible US incursion through that area.⁴ In a 1997 document submitted to the United Nations General Assembly, Cuba stated that its "military policy is to use mines solely as a defence against the external threat or use of aggression, particularly on the part of one country which is well-known for having maintained a hostile policy towards Cuba for more than three decades and which has vast arsenals of all types of weapons, including nuclear weapons."⁵

On 16 May 1996, US President Bill Clinton announced a new AP mine policy requiring the removal of all non-self-destructing AP mines by the end of 1999, except those used for training or along the Korean Demilitarized Zone.⁶ The US Department of Defense reported that mines

on the US side of Guantanamo base were removed in accordance with this Presidential Order. By 1999, US Marines had removed some 50,000 AP and AV mines, replacing them with motion and sound sensors.⁷ Quality assurance was reportedly completed in 2000.⁸ Clearance was facilitated by the fact that the mines had been emplaced in 1961 according to maps and a strict cluster design, and had been regularly maintained. Between 1962 and 1990, 13 Marines were reportedly killed while maintaining them.⁹

In 2007, Cuba stated it carries out "a strict policy with regard to guaranteeing a responsible use of AP mines with an exclusively defensive character and for national security".¹⁰ An earlier Foreign Ministry statement affirmed that existing minefields are "marked, fenced and guarded" in accordance with Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II.¹¹ By contrast, the US Navy reported in 1999 that Cuba's minefields were laid haphazardly in 1983 without precise mapping, making future clearance particularly challenging.¹²

Media sources report that Cuba's minefields also serve to restrict the movement of Cubans seeking to reach the foreign military installation and subsequently depart for the United States. Rare accounts exist of victims injured while trying to cross. Among the areas facing the greatest risks are those bordering the towns of Boquerón and Caimanera, where animals or people can accidentally trigger mines.¹³ According to a book published in 2008, mines laid around the naval base detonate "at least once a month",¹⁴ 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 mines and burned 1,700 acres over the course of three days before being extinguished.¹⁵

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- 1 "People of Guantanamo live under the danger of anti-personnel mines", *Martí Noticias*, 4 December 2014, at: <https://bit.ly/3x4vCZD>; "Barbed wire and anti-personnel mines", *Martí Noticias*, 26 January 2012, at: <http://bit.ly/464JExj>.
 - 2 "Cuba/United States – Guantánamo: a U.S. base of geostrategic importance in the heart of the 'American Mediterranean'", French National Centre for Space Studies (CNES), images taken on 12 October 2019 by the Sentinel-2B satellite, at: <http://bit.ly/4mGY25F>.
 - 3 "Guantánamo 'minesweepers' perform a delicate task: Deadly devices disabled one by one", *Miami Herald*, 6 March 2018 (original published on 18 March 1999), at: <http://bit.ly/46gAAGH>; and "Guantanamo base now free of land mines but US official fear waves of defectors", *Miami Herald*, 6 March 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/45JPlll>.
 - 4 Ibid.
 - 5 "Cuba's observations on the question of anti-personnel landmines" issued as an official document of the General Assembly under agenda item 71", 14 November 1997, at: <http://bit.ly/4g3plof>.
 - 6 Presidential Decision Directive/NSC-48, White House, 26 June 1996, at: <http://bit.ly/45JYPwT>; and "US Announces AP Mine Policy", US Department of State archives, 16 May 1996, at: <http://bit.ly/3UV1w8E>.
 - 7 "Marines unload deactivated land mines for destruction at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba", US Department of Defence archives, at: <https://bit.ly/3x3BB0f>; and "Anti-tank mines are stacked for destruction at Guantanamo Bay", US Department of Defense archives, at: <http://bit.ly/3VfqA5>; and <http://bit.ly/4n30rFW>.
 - 8 "Detritus of Conflict: The U.S. Approach to the Humanitarian Problem Posed by Landmines and other Hazardous Remnants of War", US Department of State archives, 18 April 2003, at: <http://bit.ly/4mLdRbl>.
 - 9 "Guantánamo 'minesweepers' perform a delicate task: Deadly devices disabled one by one", *Miami Herald*.
 - 10 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.
 - 11 Statement of the Directorate of Multilateral Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 19 June 2000.
 - 12 "Guantánamo 'minesweepers' perform a delicate task: Deadly devices disabled one by one", *Miami Herald*.
 - 13 "Informe situa a Cuba como productor de mines AP", *Martí Noticias*, 4 December 2014, at: <http://bit.ly/47W1e93>; and "People of Guantanamo live under the danger of AP mines", *Martí Noticias*, 4 December 2014, at: <https://bit.ly/3x4vCZD>.
 - 14 "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.
 - 15 "U.S. and Cuban forces unite to fight a common foe: wildfire at Guantanamo", *USA Today*, 1 March 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/2KytDH9>.

Cuba is the only Latin American State that has not adhered to the APMBC and which has never committed to clearing its minefields. It has not acceded to Amended Protocol II, which regulates the use of AP mines, though it is party to the 1980 CCW Protocol II. Consistent with its previous voting, Cuba abstained from voting on UN General Assembly Resolution 79/34 on 2 December 2024, which called for

universal adherence to and effective implementation of the APMBC. The resolution was adopted by the positive votes of 173 States, with only Russia voting against and 15 other States abstaining. The Landmine Monitor lists Cuba among 12 potential producers of AP mines in the world,¹⁶ noting that while it is not known to be actively producing them, it has yet to commit to never doing so in the future.¹⁷

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no mine action programme in Cuba.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARD COMPLETION

Cuba has not conducted clearance in its minefields around the US naval base at Guantánamo since it emplaced them in 1983.

¹⁶ A total of 12 States—all not party to the APMBC—are listed as possible producers: Armenia, China, Cuba, India, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam. Of these, only India, Iran, Myanmar, Pakistan, Russia, and South Korea appear to be actively producing AP mines.

¹⁷ Landmine Monitor, "Cuba", accessed 29 August 2025, at: <http://bit.ly/46fLWL3>.