

CYPRUS

MINE
ACTION
REVIEW

CLEARING THE MINES 2021

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 1 JULY 2022
THREE-YEAR EXTENSION REQUESTED TO 1 JULY 2025

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: LIGHT

MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

1 KM²

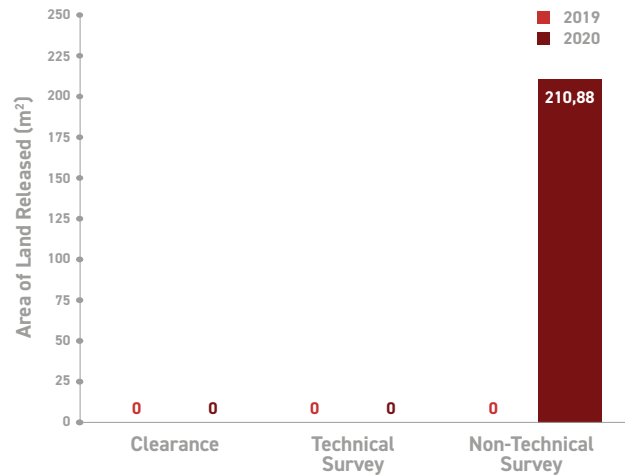
AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2020

0 M²

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2020

0

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



CURRENT LIKELIHOOD OF MEETING 2025 CLEARANCE TARGET (as per the Oslo Action Plan commitment): **LOW**

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Cyprus requested a further three-year extension to its Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline in February 2021. The United Nations upgraded its Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database to IMSMA New Generation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish Cypriot authorities in northern Cyprus should comply with the UN Security Council's call for leaders of the two communities to agree and implement a work plan to complete the demining of Cyprus.¹
- The Republic of Cyprus and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) should update, consolidate and align data on remaining mined areas.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No national mine action authority or mine action centre

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None (Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and DOK-ING were last active in 2017)

OTHER ACTORS

- UN-supported mine action in Cyprus is coordinated by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS) on behalf of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The extent of anti-personnel mine contamination in Cyprus is unclear. The Article 7 Report submitted by Cyprus in June 2021 stated that 21 anti-personnel minefields were laid by Turkish forces, including one in the buffer zone, that “are known not yet to be cleared”. Cyprus said it did not know the size of these mined areas or if they contained mines other than anti-personnel mines.² The report repeated details provided by the Republic of Cyprus in its first request for an Article 5 deadline extension submitted in April 2012.³

Contamination data in UNFICYP’s mine action database, cited by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS), differs significantly from that provided by Cyprus. It shows that Cyprus had 29 mined areas covering a total of 1.5km² at the end of 2020, a level unchanged from the previous year, but that contamination consists mostly of anti-vehicle mines (see Table 1). Mined areas included only one confirmed hazardous area (CHA) and five suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) thought to contain a mixture of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. It also reported 16 CHAs and six SHAs containing only anti-vehicle mines and one other CHA where the mine types were unknown.⁴

Table 1: Mined area (at December 2020)⁵

Location	CHAs	Contamination	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Type of Contamination	Area (m ²)	Total SHA/CHA	Total area (m ²)
South of the buffer zone (territory controlled by Cyprus)	13	AV mines	418,543	6	AV mines	174,014	19	592,557
Buffer Zone	4	AV mines (3 areas) Unknown (1 area)	703,581	0	N/A	N/A	4	703,581
North of the buffer zone (territory controlled by Turkish Cypriot authorities)	1	Mixed (AV mines and AP mines)	170,493	5	Mixed	65,281	6	235,774
Totals	18		1,292,617	11		239,295	29	1,531,912

Cyprus has been divided geographically and politically since 1974 by a 180km-long buffer zone, following Turkish Forces’ operations in the north of the island. Minefields were laid by both the Greek Cypriot National Guard and the Turkish Armed Forces. Permission for UNFICYP to access areas within and outside the buffer zone remains limited.⁶

TERRITORY CONTROLLED BY THE REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

Cyprus’ Article 7 report for 2018 stated that no anti-personnel mines remained in the minefields laid by the National Guard that are in territory under its effective control.⁷ In total, between becoming a State Party on 1 July 2003 and its original APMBC Article 5 deadline of 1 July 2013, Cyprus released all 20 mined areas under its effective control.⁸

BUFFER ZONE

Four mined areas remained in the Buffer Zone at the end of 2020, three of which belong to the National Guard and contain only anti-vehicle mines. The fourth belongs to Turkish Forces and the mine type is unknown.⁹ The Government of Cyprus considers the three minefields with anti-vehicle mines to be under its control and not within the buffer zone.¹⁰

TURKISH CYPRIOT-CONTROLLED TERRITORY IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

The extent of mine contamination in areas controlled by Turkish Forces is not known. Cyprus requested an extension to its Article 5 deadline in 2021 on the grounds that certain parts of its territory that were outside its effective control contained mined areas “in which anti-personnel mines have been or are suspected to be emplaced.”¹¹ Cyprus claimed in its Article 7 report (for 2018) that at least 20 minefields laid and maintained in the occupied areas by Turkish Forces are yet to be cleared of anti-personnel mines, of which one is situated within the buffer zone.¹² Cyprus’ latest Article 7 report (covering 2020) did not estimate the number of mined areas and said their size and the mine types they contained was not known but that they were “overwhelmingly” located adjacent to the buffer zone.¹³

In addition, there is a minefield just north of the buffer zone in Mammari, where heavy rains led to mines being washed into the buffer zone in 2014 and 2015. UNFICYP has raised the issue of clearance of this minefield with the Turkish forces and has offered assistance in this regard.¹⁴ In 2017, a small area of the Mammari minefield was cleared by a Croatian commercial operator contracted by the Turkish Armed Forces.¹⁵

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

UN-supported mine action operations in Cyprus are coordinated by UNMAS on behalf of UNFICYP.¹⁶ In July 2016, UNMAS became an integral component of UNFICYP, providing expertise in mine action planning and coordination, quality assurance (QA) oversight, and management of mine action information.¹⁷ UNMAS also provides assistance to the Committee on Missing Persons (CMP) to ensure safe access to areas where it conducts activities and to UNFICYP for explosive ordnance disposal call-out tasks.¹⁸

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

UNFICYP uses the IMSMA database and in 2020 upgraded it from Version 6 to New Generation.¹⁹

In 2017, a review and reconciliation of all electronic and hardcopy minefield database documentation revealed that a number of SHAs had already been cleared and/or cancelled. However, due to capacity limitations between 2011 and 2016, the information had not been removed from the database. The review resulted in the removal of seven SHAs (totalling more than 950,000m²) from the database.²⁰

Cyprus has submitted annual Article 7 reports since acceding to the APMB in July 2003. Cyprus has submitted four Article 5 deadline extension requests: in 2012, 2015, 2018, and most recently in 2021. Cyprus submitted most of the reports in a timely manner but provided only limited information due to it not having effective control over the remaining anti-personnel mined areas.

PLANNING AND TASKING

Neither Cyprus nor Turkish Cypriot-controlled northern Cyprus has disclosed plans to survey and clear the remaining mine contamination.

Non-technical survey conducted in 2019 was initiated as a confidence-building measure agreed in February 2019 by President of Cyprus, Nicos Anastasiades, and President of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Mustafa Akıncı in the context of long-running discussions on a political settlement and "with a view to working towards a mine-free Cyprus".²¹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

All UN-supported mine action operations in Cyprus are said to be conducted in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).²² In 2016, UNMAS updated the national technical standards and guidelines that are used in UNFICYP to reflect current best practice and to ensure the highest standards are applied for UNFICYP clearance operations.²³

OPERATORS

UNMAS conducts non-technical and technical survey in cooperation with representatives of the National Guard and Turkish Cypriot Security Force.²⁴ No clearance has been conducted since 2017 when the Turkish Armed Forces contracted DOK-ING to conduct clearance, and MAG to conduct QA of demining in the Mammari minefield.²⁵

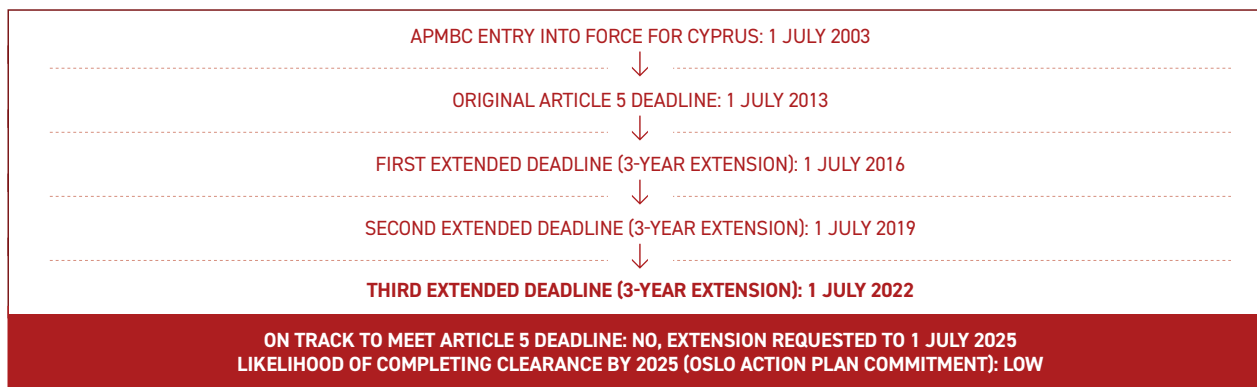
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2020

No mine survey or clearance was reported in Cyprus in 2020.²⁶

The last land release occurred in 2019 when UNFICYP announced release of 18 SHAs covering 210,882m² under confidence-building measures agreed in February 2019.²⁷ The SHAs included nine on each side of the island divide and were selected by UNMAS in cooperation with the National Guard and forces in the Turkish Cypriot-controlled north. The respective militaries conducted non-technical survey and UNMAS and UNFICYP then visited one site in the north and one site in the south to receive documentation certifying completion of the tasks. Some of the sites were located in military areas and respective military forces took the opportunity to conduct training resulting in some area reduction but no items were found.²⁸

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Cyprus is obligated to destroy or ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control, as soon as possible but not later than 1 July 2022.

Cyprus reported clearing all anti-personnel mines in mined areas that it accepted were under its control within ten years of becoming a State Party, namely by 1 July 2013. In 2012, Cyprus submitted the first of four Article 5 deadline extension requests, on the grounds that Cyprus does not have effective control over remaining contaminated areas in the north under the control of Turkish forces.²⁹ Cyprus has provided the same justification for all subsequent extension requests. The fourth request, submitted in February 2021, seeks an extension of three years until 1 July 2025.³⁰

Turkey received an eight-year extension of its Article 5 clearance deadline until 1 March 2022 but did not request additional time for clearance of the areas it controls in northern Cyprus.³¹

The UN Security Council observed with regret in January 2019 "that the sides are withholding access to the remaining minefields in the buffer zone, and that demining in Cyprus must continue." It called on both sides to allow access to deminers and to facilitate the removal of the remaining mines within the buffer zone. Most recently in January 2021, the Council urged both sides in Cyprus to agree upon and implement a plan of work to achieve a mine-free Cyprus.³²

1 UN Security Council Resolution 2561 (2021), unanimously adopted on 29 January 2021, operative para. 13.

2 Article 7 Report (for 2020), Form C.

3 Article 5 Extension Request, Executive Summary, APLC/MSP.12/2012/WP.5, 4 October 2012, para. 16.

4 Email from Mark Connelly, Chief of Operations, UNMAS, 28 May 2021.

5 Ibid.

6 Email from Julie Myers, UNMAS (based on information provided by Stefan De Coninck, UNMAS, and Maj. Rich Pearce, UNFICYP), 26 September 2017.

7 Article 7 Report (for 2018), Form C.

8 APMBC Committee on Article 5 Implementation, "Observations on implementation of Article 5 by Cyprus", 23 June 2015; and Article 7 Report (for 2013), Form G.

9 Emails from Julie Myers, UNMAS (based on information provided by Stefan De Coninck, UNMAS, and Maj. Rich Pearce, UNFICYP), 10 September 2018; and Mark Connelly, UNMAS, 17 July 2019. Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, UN doc. S/2018/676, 6 July 2018, para. 44.

10 Interview with Demitris Samuel, Deputy Permanent Representative, Cyprus Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva, Geneva, 19 May 2016.

11 Cyprus Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 9 February 2021.

12 Article 7 Report (for 2018), Form C.

13 Article 7 Report (for 2020), Form C.

14 Ibid.; and email from Julie Myers, UNMAS (based on information provided by Joseph Huber, UNMAS, and Maj. Rich Pearce, UNFICYP), 24 July 2017.

15 Email from Julie Myers, UNMAS (based on information provided by Stefan De Coninck, UNMAS, and Maj. Rich Pearce, UNFICYP), 10 September 2018.

16 Ibid.

17 UNMAS, "Cyprus" webpage, accessed 27 July 2017, at: <http://bit.ly/2GtXje>.

18 Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, UN doc. S/2018/25, 9 January 2018, para. 12.

19 Email from Mark Connelly, UNMAS, 16 June 2021.

20 Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations operation in Cyprus, UN doc. S/2018/25, 9 January 2018, para. 12.

21 Security Council Press Statement on Cyprus, 27 February 2019, SC/13722, at: <http://bit.ly/2JKyYus>.

22 Email from Julie Myers, UNMAS (based on information provided by Joseph Huber, UNMAS, and Maj. Rich Pearce, UNFICYP), 24 July 2017.

23 Ibid.

24 Email from Mark Connelly, UNMAS, 26 July 2019.

25 Ibid.

26 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Forms C and F; email from Mark Connelly, UNMAS, 28 May 2021.

27 UNFICYP, "18 Suspected Hazardous Areas declared mine free", press release, 9 December 2019.

28 Emails from Mark Connelly, UNMAS, 26 June and 3 July 2020.

29 2012 Article 5 deadline Extension Request.

30 2021 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, submitted 9 February 2021.

31 Turkey's Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 29 March 2013. On the issue of Turkish jurisdiction, see, e.g., European Court of Human Rights, *Güzelyurtlu and others v. Cyprus and Turkey*, Judgment (Grand Chamber), 29 January 2019.

32 UN Security Council Resolution 2453 (2019), operative para. 17; and Resolution 2561 (2021), operative para. 13.