

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

MINE ACTION REVIEW ESTIMATE

2.8km²

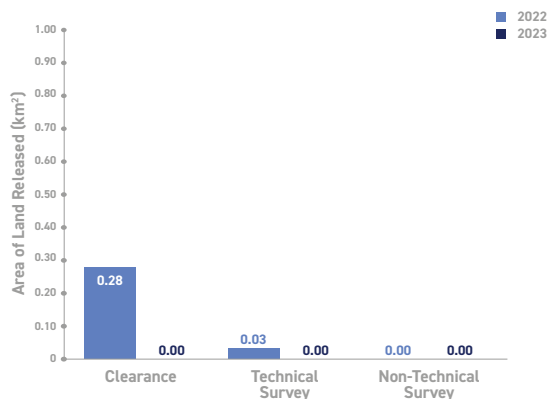
AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

0km²

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

0

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

The HALO Trust, the only international operator undertaking survey and clearance in Georgia in recent years, has now withdrawn from the country. HALO's explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) operations in Abkhazia, an autonomous republic outside the effective control of the Georgian government, were suspended on 31 March 2023, due to lack of donor funding. No land release was undertaken in Abkhazia or in Tbilisi Administered Territory (TAT) by HALO or by Georgia's national operators during the year. In February 2023, it was reported that a naval mine of unspecified type and origin exploded in the Black Sea, approximately 25 metres from land in Batumi, south west Georgia.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Georgia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Georgia 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.
- Georgia should continue to engage in bilateral political dialogue with Azerbaijan as well as multilateral dialogue with all stakeholders via the Landmine Free South Caucasus (LMFSC) Campaign, to enable full clearance of the Red Bridge border minefield.
- Georgia should develop a resource mobilisation strategy and engage with donors to secure the resources needed to complete clearance.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- State Military Scientific Technical Centre (DELTA)
- Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCCD)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Engineering Battalion of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Georgian State Security Service (SSS)
Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO) (Ceased operations in 2023)

OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The full extent of mine contamination in Georgia is not known due to access restrictions and lack of survey. According to official estimates provided in 2022, Georgia has at least 2.8km² of contamination across five mined areas in the TAT (see Table 1).¹ In its most recent Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Georgia again confirmed that mined areas remained near the village Barisakho, close to the border with Dagestan in Russia; near the village of Kadoeti, which is close to South Ossetia; near the village of Khojali, close to Abkhazia; as well as along Georgia's borders of Azerbaijan and Armenia.²

Table 1: Mined area in TAT (at end 2022)³

Region	District/ Municipality	Village	Type of mine contamination	Mined areas	Area (m ²)
Kvemo Kartli	Marneuli	Kirach-Muganlo	Mixed AP/AV	1	2,738,730
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Kadoeti	Mixed AP/AV	1	*29,828
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Dusheti	Barisakho	AP only	2	28,058
Shida Kartli	Khashuri	Osiauri	AP only	1	N/K
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	Mestia	Khojali	AP only	2	**26,000
Totals				7	2,822,616

N/K = not known * This includes 16,825m² of confirmed hazardous area (CHA), and 13,003m² of suspected hazardous area (SHA) identified by HALO during NTS in 2022.

** Identified as SHA by HALO in 2022.

The only mined location in Table 1 not mentioned in this most recent CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report is an area of an unknown size near the village of Osiauri, a military base in the interior of the country.⁴ Contamination in Georgia comprises AP mines in all seven mined areas, as well as anti-vehicle (AV) mines in one area and both AV and AP mines in another area.⁵ There may be other contamination. Since 2011, the Georgian government has reportedly been conducting a General Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) which may amend the baseline.⁶ However, in its latest Protocol V Article 10 Report, Georgia says additional technical and financial support is needed to complete the GMAA.⁷

On 13 February 2023, it was reported that a naval mine exploded in the Black Sea approximately 25 metres from land in Batumi, south west Georgia, after it was brought to the shore by the current. The mine type and origin was not specified. However, the article highlights that, since the beginning of the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, sea mines have been repeatedly brought to the coasts of Romania and Bulgaria.⁸

In the mined areas at Barisakho and Osiauri, the precise extent of contamination is unknown. HALO was unable to secure the necessary permission and funding to be able

to complete non-technical survey (NTS) at these areas. It says both technical survey (TS) and NTS are required to accurately determine the size of the mined areas.⁹ Having ceased operations in Georgia at the end of the first quarter of 2023, HALO is no longer pursuing efforts to secure access.¹⁰

The Red Bridge minefield is an unfenced 7km-long and 2.2km² minefield consisting of densely packed lines of AP and AV mines at the "Red Bridge" border crossings between Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia. Laid in 1991 by Azerbaijan during the 1988 Nagorno-Karabakh war, it is the largest minefield in the Caucasus and the last major minefield not in the vicinity of a functioning military establishment. The Red Bridge minefield affects more than 4,000 people. As at May 2022, there had been 88 incidents: 22 involving people and the other 66 involving livestock.¹¹ It is not known if any incidents have occurred since then. In Barisakho, there are two mined areas close to a police station on the Russian border, which were laid to prevent entry from Ingushetia during the Second Chechen War. In Osiauri, a military base in the interior of the country, next to the main east-west road through Georgia, mines were laid around the perimeter of an ammunition storage area to defend the position in an event of an invasion.¹²

1 Tbilisi Administered Territory (TAT) does not include the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are outside Georgia's effective control.

2 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A; and email from Gocha Shavgulidze, Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD), State Military Scientific Technical Centre (DELTA), 1 July 2024.

3 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, Head of Division, DELTA, 31 May 2022; Michael Montafi, Partnerships Manager, HALO, 26 July 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023. Data on mined areas at the villages of Kadoeti and Khojali were provided by HALO in April 2023. All other information in this Table was provided by Georgia's national authority in May 2022 and stated to be accurate as at the end of 2021.

4 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

5 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

6 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

7 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form E.

8 "Naval mine explodes near shore in Batumi", *Ukrainska Pravda*, 13 February 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/4dLmcaF>.

9 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

10 Email from Tom Griffiths, Head of Region, HALO, 25 April 2024.

11 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

12 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021 and 17 May 2022.

HALO was able to conduct NTS at Kadoeti and Khojali as planned in 2022. Evidence of AV mines was found at Kadoeti, where 16,825m² of confirmed hazardous area (CHA) and 13,003m² of suspected hazardous area (SHA) was identified. At Khojali, two sections of SHA covering an area of 26,000m² of were identified.¹³ There may also be mined areas in South Ossetia as a result of the 1990–92 Georgian–Ossetian war and the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia. HALO was not

granted access for clearance in South Ossetia, which is under Russian control. HALO is not aware of any remaining areas of contamination in Abkhazia.¹⁴

HALO believes that, besides the areas already identified, any additional AP mine contamination in Georgia is so sparse and spread over such large areas that further survey of areas where access is permitted would not be productive.¹⁵

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

Georgia remains contaminated by other unexploded ordnance (UXO), likely in South Ossetia and also within Georgia in former firing ranges. Georgia also suggests that explosive remnants of war (ERW) contaminate the Shida Kartli region, bordering Russia, and “other populated places of Georgia, which were bombed”.¹⁶

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Georgia’s national mine action authority is the Humanitarian Demining Control Division (HDCD). Renamed after a reorganisation in January 2019, the HDCD sits under the State Military Scientific Technical Centre, known as DELTA, within the Ministry of Defence (MoD).¹⁷ The primary task of the HDCD is to coordinate mine action in Georgia, including overseeing the national mine action strategy and quality assurance (QA)/quality control (QC), and facilitating the development and implementation of Georgian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS), in accordance with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS). They are also responsible for collecting and processing data for the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database and for identifying and marking hazardous areas.¹⁸ The HDCD directly undertakes some NTS and TS.¹⁹

Capacity-building efforts of the HDCD have continued. In June 2023, DELTA HDCD staff attended a regional Operational Data Analyst training course organised by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), and, in April 2024, DELTA staff participated in a mine action management course organised by the GICHD in Serbia.²⁰ In previous years, HALO provided training on IMAS, geographic information systems (GIS), and survey and clearance techniques.²¹ Nevertheless, the HDCD faces challenges in its

work owing to a lack of equipment and says it still requires expert assistance in almost all areas of mine action.²²

The Georgian government funds the running costs of the HDCD. Georgia has funded the Engineering Battalion, which carries out some survey and battle area clearance (BAC).²³ HALO reports that, during the time of its operations in Georgia, the authorities were enabling of mine action wherever access is granted. HALO had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the HDCD, which allowed HALO to work in Georgia.²⁴

While permission to start clearance two of the six minefields (at Khojali and Kadoeti) was granted to HALO in 2019, permissions for the other four was not granted and HALO did not expect permissions for clearance at Barisakho or Osiauri to be forthcoming due to the perceived tactical value of these minefields to the Georgian military.²⁵ Permission to access the Red Bridge area had also been denied since July 2015 when, following initial granting of access to HALO and their initiation of NTS, the Azerbaijani military demanded a month later that TS be halted.²⁶ In 2019, Georgia reported further discussions with Azerbaijan regarding the clearance of Red Bridge minefield.²⁷ However, as at March 2023, when HALO was winding down operations in Georgia, it had still not been

13 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

14 Email from Fiona Kilpatrick, Head of Region, Europe (South Caucasus), HALO, 12 June 2023.

15 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

16 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A.

17 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 20 June 2016, and 28 March and 10 June 2019; and Matthew Walker, Programme Officer, HALO, 8 April 2019; Decree 897 issued by the Minister of Defence, 30 December 2010; CCW Protocol V Article 10 Reports covering 21 March 2017 to 31 March 2018), Form A; and covering 2023, Form A.

18 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 6 July 2015; Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022; and Gocha Shavgulidze, HDCD, DELTA, 1 July 2024; and CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A.

19 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 2 September 2022.

20 Emails from Tinatin Maurer-Shengelia, Programme Officer, Co-operation Programmes, GICHD, 11 June 2024; and Gocha Shavgulidze, DELTA, 1 July 2024; and CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A.

21 Emails from Matthew Walker, HALO, 8 April 2019; Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 10 June 2019.

22 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form E.

23 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 12 May 2020.

24 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

25 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 26 July 2022.

26 Emails from Andrew Moore, HALO, 18 October 2016; Irakli Chitanava, HALO, 2 May 2017; and Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

27 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.

granted permission to restart clearance.²⁸ HALO closed its programme in Georgia that year.²⁹ While there has been no humanitarian demining in Georgia since HALO's departure

from the country, the HDCCD hopes that this can resume in the near future.³⁰

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Georgia is reported to have a gender and diversity policy in place for its mine action programme³¹ and to facilitate equal access to employment for qualified women and men in survey and clearance teams. Proportionately, however, the number of women in national mine action organisations has remained very low, with only one of the HDCCD's seven positions—the GIS/IMSMA specialist—filled by a woman in 2022. DELTA reported that 1% of military personnel within the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion were women in 2021.³² No information has since been provided on the gender balance of the HDCCD's staff or of personnel within the EOD Company of Combat Engineer Battalion.

Women made up 31% of HALO staff in 2022, including those based in Abkhazia and TAT.³³ HALO emphasises that deployment of women in EOD teams was operationally vital as, in accordance with local gender norms in villages, female EOD team members would take the lead when interacting with female-led households. Furthermore, in the Gali-based EOD team, the presence of an acting female team leader at various times had a significant impact in positively shifting perceptions among community members about the kinds of roles that women in Abkhazia are capable of undertaking.³⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

In 2022, DELTA reported that Georgia's draft NMAS contained a standard on environmental management and policy.³⁵ DELTA has also stated that all national and international demining operators are expected to abide by State laws relating to environmental protection when planning and conducting demining operations.³⁶ Information was last requested from the national authorities in June 2024, regarding what measures are taken by national operators to protect the environment during survey and clearance, but none was provided. Prior to ceasing operations in Georgia in 2023, HALO operated according to an institutional environmental policy as well as environmental SOPs, which aim to leave the environment in a state at least as good as it was before demining operations and one which permits intended land use after release.³⁷

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The HDCCD uses the IMSMA database³⁸ and, according to HALO, the data are accurate. Data archives go back to 2009 and are regularly updated, based on HALO's reports when it was operational in-country, and on work by the Engineering Battalion.³⁹ It is not known if data are disaggregated by type of contamination and method of land release.

In 2023, Georgia restated that various government agencies, in particular the Defence Forces and the EOD team of the Georgian State Security Service, report contamination discovered through their established networks and in response to information from local residents. Exchange of data between relevant ministries, national agencies, and external organisations is reported to be ongoing.⁴⁰ That said, Georgia reports that further support is needed to train staff in IMSMA.⁴¹

28 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

29 Email from Tom Griffiths, HALO, 25 April 2024.

30 Email from Gocha Shavgulidze, HDCCD, DELTA, 9 August 2024.

31 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021.

32 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.

33 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

34 Ibid.

35 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

36 Ibid.

37 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 17 May 2022.

38 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form B.

39 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 8 May 2020 and 17 May 2022.

40 Protocol V Article 10 Reports covering 2023, Form B; and covering 2021, Form B.

41 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form E.

PLANNING AND TASKING

Georgia has reported having a national mine action strategy in place with the main aims and targets focused on clearing mined areas (unless they are deemed to have military utility) and areas contaminated with ERW.⁴² Georgia had a mine action plan in place for 2022.⁴³ No update was provided as to whether a plan was in place for 2023 or 2024.

Since 2009, Georgia has had no national level prioritisation system for clearance. In 2022, Georgia said that clearance is sometimes conducted at the request of ministries, organisations, or commercial companies to facilitate safe infrastructure development.⁴⁴

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Georgia states that development of National Technical Standards and Guidelines (NTSGs) and NMAS continued in 2023, in line with IMAS.⁴⁵ A draft set of NMAS is in need of expert review.⁴⁶ The GICHD received a request for support with the NMAS from Georgia in June 2022, but was not able to respond due to lack of resources.⁴⁷ HALO stated that it had not been given access to the draft NMAS or asked to provide input.⁴⁸ The International Ammunition Technical Guidelines (IATGs) have been translated into Georgian but the translation of the IMAS remained ongoing as at May 2022.⁴⁹

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2023, HALO the only international operator present in Georgia in recent years but has now withdrawn from Georgia completely.⁵⁰ HALO undertook no survey or clearance in 2023.⁵¹ HALO responded to call-outs in conflict-affected areas across Abkhazia until funding expired at the end of March 2023.⁵²

At the time of writing, no up-to-date information was available from the national authority on national operational capacity deployed in 2023 or 2024.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

No area contaminated with AP mines was reported to be released through survey or clearance in Georgia in 2023. AV mines were, though, identified during demining conducted by an EOD Company of its Defence Forces.⁵³ Georgia did not report adding any AP mined area to the national database in 2023.

SURVEY IN 2023

No land contaminated with AP mines was released through survey in Georgia in 2023. In 2022, a total of 32,456m² was reported to have been reduced through TS by the HDCC at the Dedoplistskaro base in Kakheti region.⁵⁴

Georgia did not report adding any hazardous areas to the national database in 2023. By contrast, in 2022, HALO identified 26,000m² of SHA at Khojali as well as 13,003m² of SHA and 16,825m² of CHA at Kadoeti (see Table 1).⁵⁵ These areas were not added to the national database as HALO did not have access to the database in 2022.⁵⁶

42 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 March 2019.
43 Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.
44 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May and 26 July 2022.
45 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form A; and email from Gocha Shavgulidze, HDCC, DELTA, 1 July 2024.
46 Emails from Gocha Shavgulidze, HDCC, DELTA, 1 and 10 July 2024.
47 Email from Tinatin Maurer-Shengelia, GICHD, 11 June 2024.
48 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.
49 Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021 and 31 May 2022.
50 Emails from Fiona Kilpatrick-Cooper, HALO, 12 April 2024.
51 Emails from Michael Montaf, HALO, 17 May 2022; Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.
52 Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.
53 Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form B.
54 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.
55 Emails from Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May 2023; and Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.
56 Emails from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 and 19 April 2023.

CLEARANCE IN 2023

No land contaminated with AP mines was reported to be released through clearance in Georgia in 2023. Georgia reported that three TM-62P AV mines were identified during demining by an EOD Company in its Defence Forces at the "Akhalqalaqi military base".⁵⁷ This is likely the former Russian military base that closed in 2007.⁵⁸ Georgia also states in its most recent CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report that the EOD Company of the Engineering Battalion cleared an 2,500m² at a military firing range near Gonio in Adjara region in 2023.⁵⁹ The HDCC confirmed in July 2024 that no AP mines

or other mines have been found at the site – only items such as small arms, hand grenades, and grenade launcher shells and their fragments.⁶⁰

While no clearance took place in Georgia in 2023, a total of 0.28km² of mined area was released through clearance in Georgia in 2022.⁶¹ Most of this (0.24km²) took place at Primorsky, the site of an explosion at an ammunition storage area in 2017. As such, the mines had not been emplaced but rather scattered around the area by the explosion.⁶²

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

No target date has been set for completion of AP mine clearance in Georgia. DELTA reiterated in 2021 that, "given all the impediments, it is difficult to name specific timelines".⁶³ The Red Bridge minefield is Georgia's largest mined area, clearance of which has previously been identified as one of its key strategic mine action priorities.⁶⁴ Georgia previously reported plans to start clearing the Red Bridge minefield in 2015, but after discussions between Georgian and Azerbaijani

representatives only survey was permitted.⁶⁵ In 2022, HALO reported that, while there had been indications from the Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs that progress had been made on general demarcation disputes between Georgia and Azerbaijan, there was still no clear evidence of progress towards Red Bridge clearance. In June 2024, Mine Action Review requested an update on the matter from the national authorities, but none was provided.

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

DELTA stated in 2022 that Georgia's national strategy provides for action to address previously unknown mined areas that are found after completion.⁶⁶ The MoD Engineering Battalion has been trained to carry out EOD, demining, and BAC by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace programme.⁶⁷ Georgia has expressed concern—echoed by HALO—that this capacity to tackle residual contamination is limited.⁶⁸

⁵⁷ Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form B.

⁵⁸ "Russia closes last military base in Georgia", *Reuters*, 13 November 2007, at: <https://bit.ly/3S30Ye1>.

⁵⁹ Protocol V Article 10 Report (covering 2023), Form B.

⁶⁰ Email from Gocha Shavgulidze, HDCC, DELTA, 10 July 2024.

⁶¹ Emails from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023; and Jemal Kopaleishvili, DELTA, 18 May and 16 June 2023.

⁶² Email from Rachael Rosenberg, HALO, 12 April 2023.

⁶³ Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

⁶⁴ Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 April 2017.

⁶⁵ Interview with George Dolidze, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 28 May 2009; and email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 3 June 2015.

⁶⁶ Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.

⁶⁷ Emails from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 28 April 2021; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 30 April 2021.

⁶⁸ Email from Oleg Gochashvili, DELTA, 31 May 2022.