

KEY DATA

CCM ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE:
1 NOVEMBER 2028

Not on track to meet deadline
(will require further extension request(s), due to extent of CMR)

CMR CONTAMINATION:
227km²

Heavy
(National authority estimate)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS (OFFICIAL DATA)

Release of cluster munition-contaminated area	Release in 2024 (km ²)	Release in 2023 (km ²)
Clearance	7.58	13.26
Technical Survey	4.5	5.31
Non-Technical Survey	0	0.49

Destruction of submunitions during clearance, survey, and spot tasks	2024	2023
Submunitions destroyed	7,424 (including 1,230 through TS and spot tasks)	8,080 (including 69 in spot tasks)

MAIN CMR SURVEY AND CLEARANCE OPERATORS IN 2024:

- Ministry of Defence
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Ministry of Interior/Civil Defence
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Survey identified 31km² of previously unrecorded cluster munition-contaminated area in 2024, more than double the total area released through survey and clearance. Operator capacity dropped as a result of donor funding cuts that forced Danish Refugee Council (DRC), one of two international non-governmental organisations tackling cluster munition remnants (CMR), to halt operations at the end of July 2024 and close DRC's programme. The Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) acknowledged that Iraq will not meet its 2028 Article 4 clearance deadline and will need to seek another extension.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- The Iraqi government should provide the DMA with the legal authority, funding, human resources, and training to strengthen its effectiveness as the national mine action authority.
- The government should stabilise leadership of the DMA to facilitate continuity of policy and consistency in its implementation, including in the issuance of task orders.
- The government should increase national financial funding for mine action to offset declining international donor support and provide greater transparency in its allocation and use of resources.
- The DMA should accelerate action to upgrade and update its Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database and the resources supporting information management.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2024)	Score (2023)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	6	6	Iraq continued to find significant amounts of previously unrecorded CMR and with little capacity committed to survey, the programme is years away from developing an evidence-based baseline estimate of contamination.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	5	6	RMAC-South continued to lead Iraq's CMR programme but upheavals in leadership of the DMA caused policy disruption at the national level. Donor funding for mine action declined but the government provided no clarity on its plans for funding the sector.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq's 2023–28 mine action strategy acknowledges the importance of diversity to the sector although gender issues became politically sensitive in the last two years. Conservative societal norms keep women's employment low despite legislation to encourage it, but mine action authorities and operators continue actively to encourage recruitment of women.
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION (10% of overall score)	4	4	Iraq does not have a national standard on environmental management in mine action but mine action planning increasingly has to take account of climate extremes and operators continue to develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) to manage the environmental impact of demining.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	5	6	DMA halted and then resumed plans to upgrade its database from IMSMA New Generation to Core. In a further setback, iMMAP lost donor funding for its support to the DMA's information management unit, resulting in the loss of trained human resources.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	7	7	Planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas has benefitted from good coordination between RMAC-South, the operators, and local authorities, but work plans have suffered from shrinking funding.
LAND RELEASE SYSTEM (10% of overall score)	7	7	Federal Iraq adopted the Cluster Munition Remnant Survey (CMRS) methodology for survey and clearance as a national standard in 2019. Eleven national mine action standards were updated in 2024 as part of a review ongoing since 2022.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	5	5	Release of CMR-affected areas dropped significantly for the second successive year in 2024 as donor funding cuts reduced the available operator capacity and the DMA acknowledged it would not meet its Article 4 deadline.
Average Score	5.7	5.9	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Higher Council of Mine Action
- Directorate of Mine Action (DMA)
- Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Ministry of Defence (MoD)
- Ministry of Interior (Civil Defence)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)
- iMMAP

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Iraq calculated total cluster munition-contaminated area at more than 227km² at the end of 2024,¹ making it one of the countries most heavily affected by CMR, and its estimate of contamination is still growing. Federal Iraq accounted for 226km² (99%) of the national total at the end of 2024 (see Table 1), 10% more than a year earlier and nearly 20% more than at the end of 2022. Of the 10 Federal Iraq governorates affected, three in the south—Basrah, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar—alone accounted for 92% of the national total.²

Iraq’s 2023 Article 4 deadline extension request expected that operators would find another 79km² of CMR-contaminated area over the five years to 2028 but that increasingly looks conservative. CMR survey concentrated in southern governorates added 31km² of previously unrecorded contamination in 2024, on top of 24km² the previous year.³ The two-year total of 55km² suggests Iraq is likely to find significantly more than allowed for, and even if survey capacity remained at the same level a reliable baseline of CMR contamination is still some years away.

Federal Iraq’s contamination dates back to the Gulf War of 1991 and the United States (US)-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and follows the path of allied forces’ advance from the south to Baghdad. Coalition aircraft also struck Iraqi army positions in the northern governorate of Kirkuk, but DMA data no longer identify any CMR contamination in the governorate.⁴

For reasons unknown, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) sharply reduced its estimate of CMR contamination in the second half of 2024. In June, it recorded close to 3km² of contamination, including 1.8km² (60%) in Erbil governorate

and the rest split almost evenly between Duhok and Slemani governorates.⁵ Iraq’s 2025 Article 7 report, however, recorded only 1.3km² for the region, without explanation of what accounts for the reduction.⁶

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area (at end 2023 and 2024)⁷

Province	Area at end 2024 (m ²)	Area at end 2023 (m ²)
Anbar	11,216,039	11,216,039
Babylon	559,339	911,758
Basrah	66,953,052	56,053,577
Karbala	141,910	141,910
Kirkuk	79,109	79,109
Missan	450,147	0
Muthanna	101,268,489	90,117,749
Najaf	3,704,571	3,704,571
Ninewa	14,727	215,758
Thi Qar	41,671,599	43,329,654
Federal Iraq sub-total	226,058,982	205,770,125
Kurdistan Region of Iraq	1,305,110	2,914,350
Totals	227,364,092	208,684,475

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The mine action programme in Iraq is managed along regional lines. The DMA has represented Iraq internationally and oversees mine action for humanitarian purposes in Federal Iraq, covering 15 of the nation’s 19 governorates. Mine action in the KRI’s four governorates is overseen by the Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA), which acts as both regulator and operator. The two bodies have functioned largely autonomously, but a memorandum of understanding (MoU) drafted in 2022 to facilitate cooperation between them was signed in May 2024.

The DMA and IKMAA collaborated in drawing up Iraq’s draft National Mine Action Strategy 2023–28, the first produced

jointly by the two authorities.⁸ The strategy sets increasing national ownership as a key objective and says this will be achieved by strengthening both authorities and “ensuring these national entities are empowered, appropriately structured and sufficiently equipped and resourced to allow them to fulfil their responsibilities.”⁹

In 2023, the government earmarked 20 billion Iraqi dinars (US\$17 million) over three years to support implementation of the CCM¹⁰ but the funding was not disbursed on mine action and appears to have been used by the Ministry of Environment for other projects. The DMA provided no information on funding in 2024.

1 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, National Focal Point for CCM, DMA, 7 April 2025.
2 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F.
3 Email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 7 April 2025; Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form F, p. 27.
4 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 21 April 2021. The Article 7 report covering 2021 did not include the amount of previously unrecorded contamination found that year.
5 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 26 June 2024.
6 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F.
7 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 5 and Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 25 April 2024.
8 Interview with Ahmed Aljasem, Director of Information Management, DMA, Baghdad, 11 May 2023.
9 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy for 2023–28, p. 36.
10 Interviews with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Committee of Mine Action,¹¹ which reports to the Prime Minister, oversees and approves mine action strategy, policies, and plans. The committee, which is chaired by the prime minister, includes representatives of the ministries of defence, interior, oil and environment as well as the National Security Council and IKMAA. The DMA “plans, coordinates, supervises, monitors and follows up all the activities of mine action”. It draws up the national strategy and is responsible for setting national standards, accrediting, approving the standard operating procedures (SOPs) of demining organisations, and certifying completion of clearance tasks.¹²

The DMA's authority over mine action is weakened by its status as a directorate of the Ministry of Environment, ranking well below the powerful ministries of defence, interior, and oil that are major actors in the sector. Its policy making and implementation has also suffered from a rapid turnover of directors. The DMA has had at least 20 directors general since 2003. All but one were appointed on an acting basis, which also limited their authority.

Shawkat Tayeh Masoud, a former director of operations who had left the DMA in 2022, returned as acting director in September 2023 but retired in January 2025. His replacement, Eaktiffaa Mezher al-Hasnawi, the Deputy Minister of Environment, was reported as proactive and facilitating task order issuance, but was expected to leave the post in the second half of 2025 in order to run in parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2025.

Director General Masoud carried out sweeping DMA management changes and restructuring in 2024. The DMA previously oversaw three Regional Mine Action Centres (RMACs) for the North, the Middle Euphrates (MEU) region and the South,¹³ but RMAC North and RMAC MEU were closed down in September 2023. RMAC South, located in Basra City, remained the focal point for Federal Iraq's response to CMR, overseeing mine action in four southern governorates: Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar. It collects and uploads results of survey and clearance to Federal Iraq's IMSMA database and is responsible for tasking operators in its area of operations.¹⁴

The government approved a national strategic plan for 2023–28 in June 2023¹⁵ which acknowledges the institutional issues, citing “widespread belief” that the DMA should be strengthened to give it the authority commensurate with its mandate. The plan called for an external assessment of the DMA's legal mandate and institutional position that would provide recommendations to the Higher Council for Mine Action.¹⁶ As at May 2025, the assessment had not been conducted.

The strategic plan calls for strengthened national ownership and more national funding, recognising dependence on external donor support as a key risk to the sustainability of the mine action programme.¹⁷ To boost the mine action capacity, the DMA says Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) “have accepted to be involved” in mine action. The DMA reported the PMF had their own explosive ordnance disposal directorate and a significant workforce in many governorates.¹⁸

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

IKMAA functions as both the regulator and an operator in the KRI. It reports directly to the Kurdistan Regional Government's Council of Ministers and is led by a director general with ministerial rank. It coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garmian, and Sulaymaniyah (Sleman). IKMAA had a total staff of more than 900 personnel in 2023, including 432 in operations, largely unchanged from the previous year, but a budgetary crisis in the KRI in recent years has imposed severe constraints on the mine action sector.¹⁹

IKMAA has received support from Slovenian Aid since 2022 when it provided a grant of €168,000 through ITF Enhancing Human Security. The funds financed the hiring of vehicles enabling IKMAA to deploy 15 demining teams and contributed to a rise in release of mined areas in 2022.²⁰ Additional Slovenian funding approved at the end of 2023 allowed the hiring of 48 vehicles which enabled teams to deploy in 2024.²¹

11 The Council, which is led by the Prime Minister, includes representatives of the ministries of defence, interior, oil, and environment, as well as the National Security Adviser and the head of IKMAA.

12 “Document of roles and responsibilities”, undated but 2019, received by email from the DMA, 13 May 2019.

13 RMAC North covered the governorates of Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Salah ad-Din; RMAC MEU included Babylon, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya, and Wasset; while RMAC South comprised Basrah, Missan, Muthanna, and Thi Qar.

14 Interview with Gus Guthrie, NPA, in Geneva, 12 February 2020.

15 Email from Ahmed Aljasem, DMA, 8 August 2023.

16 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–28, pp. 37–38.

17 Ibid., pp. 17 and 22.

18 Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

19 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, Planning Manager, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

20 Interview with Jabar Mustafa, Director of IKMAA, Erbil, 18 May 2023; and email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

21 Emails from Niyazi Khalid, Deputy Head of IKMAA, 15 April and 13 May 2024.

OTHER ACTORS

UNMAS established a presence in Iraq in 2015 to assess the explosive ordnance threat in areas liberated from Islamic State and set three priorities: explosive hazard management to support stabilisation and recovery; delivery of risk education; and technical support to build capacity of government entities to manage, regulate, and coordinate Iraq's response to explosive ordnance contamination. Since 2021, UNMAS has focused from explosive hazard management to providing technical support to the mine action authorities and their implementing partners. The UNMAS mission in Iraq employed 100 people with 43 international staff in 2019. By the start of 2025, UNMAS had a staff of 23, of which three were internationals.²²

FUNDING FOR CMR SURVEY AND CLEARANCE

Iraq's 2023 CCM Article 4 extension request reported that government funding for mine action averaged close to US\$4 million a year in 2020–22. On the basis of that experience, it projected government funding on \$3.9 million a year for 2024 to 2028 "because the government's budget is not clear and has not been declared until now."²³ The government budget for 2023 earmarked a payment variously reported as US\$20 million and of ID20 billion (US\$17 million) over three years towards implementation of the CCM,²⁴ but the funds were not disbursed on CMR activities and appear to have been diverted to other projects.²⁵ No details were available of CMR funding in 2024 or 2025.

International donors provided most of the funding for mine action in Iraq following the 2015 defeat of Islamic State,

but priorities have changed. The number of donors funding operations in Iraq through UNMAS has dropped from a peak of 21 in 2019 to 8 in 2024,²⁶ and the volume of donor funding channelled through UNMAS dropped from its high point of US\$77 million in 2019 to around \$6 million in 2024.²⁷ Donors also focused aid on clearing areas occupied by Islamic State in western and northern governorates, largely bypassing the south, where most of Iraq's CMR are found.

The US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) supported NPA and DRC in the south, but in July 2024 ended its funding for DRC, which halted operations as a result.²⁸ NPA received donor support in 2024 from PM/WRA, Canada, Norway, and Germany, and, for part of the year, France.²⁹

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Iraq's 2023–28 strategic plan recognises that the impact of contamination varies according to gender, age, and ethnic or religious affiliations, and requires specific activities targeting those needs, for which disaggregated data is a prerequisite.³⁰ Gender issues became politically sensitive in 2023 amid heated public debate over LGBTQ issues, which led the DMA to drop reference to gender mainstreaming and saw the Communications and Media Commission issue a directive in August 2023 banning use of the term "gender" in public communications.³¹

The government supported women's employment through a National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–30 focused on improving workplace conditions for women and a 2023 Social Security Law providing maternity benefits intended to encourage women's workforce participation, but conservative societal norms, particularly in the south, have kept female

employment low.³² UNMAS conducted workshops in Baghdad and Erbil on the role of women in mine action in 2024, which drew participation from the DMA, IKMAA, and the Ministry of Interior as well as from national and international NGOs.³³

NPA has increased outreach and advocacy to local communities and stakeholders, and in 2024 its CMR programme increased the number of women in managerial roles from four in 2023 to six, including a non-technical survey (NTS) team leader and a senior logistics officer, and the number of women in operations rose from nine to ten. NPA has a gender focal point position to promote mainstreaming which is funded until 2025, and out of a total workforce of 493 in Iraq at the end of 2024 it employed 114 women.³⁴ Until it suspended operations in July 2024, DRC employed 10 women among its 56 operations staff, including six deminers split between two teams.³⁵

22 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 4 May 2019, 6 April 2020, 11 May 2023, and 16 May 2025.

23 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, pp. 39–40.

24 Interviews with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, Director, RMAC-S, Basra City, 8 May 2023; and Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

25 Interviews with international mine action stakeholders in Geneva, 28 April to 1 May 2024.

26 Interview with Pehr Lodhammar, Chief Mine Action Programme Iraq, UNMAS, in Geneva, 23 June 2023; and emails from Ban Yaseen, Programme Management Specialist, UNMAS, 23 June 2024; and Shinobu Mashima, Programme Team Lead, UNMAS, 16 May 2025.

27 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 11 May 2023 and 16 May 2025.

28 Email from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, Basrah Manager, DRC, 23 March 2025.

29 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, Programme Manager, and Chris Ramsden, Deputy Programme Manager, South Iraq, NPA, 27 April 2025.

30 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, p. 15.

31 T. Alkuhadry, "As Iraq backslides on gender equality where are its women MPs?", *Al Jazeera*, 9 September 2023.

32 Emails from Safa Jamal, Senior Officer – Programme Management, UNMAS, 27 May 2024; and Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

33 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 16 May 2024.

34 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

35 Email from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, Basrah Manager, DRC, 25 April 2024.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Iraq does not have a policy on environmental management in mine action. The DMA and IKMAA were reportedly in the process of preparing a national standard in 2022 but had not released it by May 2025. The Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and the Ministry of Environment conducted a workshop in 2024 to develop approaches to environmental management in mine action, which also discussed adding environmental factors as criteria in its task prioritisation matrix.³⁶

IKMAA, in line with policies of the KRG cabinet's Environment Board, said it seeks to minimise any environmental harm from demining operations through training of deminers, community engagement, and rigorous monitoring and evaluation.³⁷

Demining organisations mostly apply their own SOPs for managing the environment and minimising harm from operations. NPA appointed an Environmental Advisor for the Iraq programme in August 2024 to help develop the organisation's global environmental policy and in-country

approaches to environmental management, including an IMAS-aligned SOP for land release. NPA's measures include on-site environmental impact assessments, which started in 2025; minimising machinery use; and restricting movement to defined areas to limit soil disturbance while enhancing waste management at operational sites.³⁸

Iraq ranks among the five most vulnerable nations to effects of climate change, including drought, water scarcity, flash floods, frequent sand and dust storms, and extreme heat, all of which pose a growing operational challenge.³⁹ In the KRI, IKMAA reported that mine action planning increasingly had to take account of extreme weather events, including flooding, forest fires, and damage to infrastructure, and said it was developing a range of mitigation strategies including early warning systems.⁴⁰ Operators also report adapting working hours to deal with extreme heat and drawing up sandstorm contingency plans that may pause operations in conditions of reduced visibility.⁴¹

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The DMA and IKMAA have separate databases which operate different information management systems. The DMA database is located at its Baghdad headquarters but RMAC South, headquartered in Basrah, is the focal point for cluster munitions, responsible for uploading CMR-related data.

The DMA operates an IMSMA New Generation system, and in 2022 started preparing to upgrade to IMSMA Core with support from the GICHD and iMMAP, a commercial service provider working under contract to the PM/WRA. It installed an IMSMA Core server in December 2022, started field testing reporting forms in 2023, and was due to launch the system by December 2023.⁴² In March 2024, the DMA informed the GICHD it had decided to halt the upgrade and continue working with IMSMA NG, but reversed that decision later in the year.

The policy change added to concerns about an information management system which implementing partners say suffers from significant data gaps and long delays uploading operating results. This means that the database is not up to date and does not accurately reflect the results of survey or clearance. The DMA attributes delays to the need to correct

reporting errors and the application of quality control (QC).⁴³ Implementing partners point to cumbersome procedures that require them to submit operational data in hard copy and on CD-ROMs to be uploaded manually into the database.⁴⁴ Data verification and correction can add further significant delays.⁴⁵

The limited number and high turnover of the DMA's data processing staff has further contributed to the DMA's information management challenges. In 2023, iMMAP reduced the number of its staff working in the DMA from five to two,⁴⁶ and in August 2024 the PM/WRA stopped funding iMMAP's support.⁴⁷

IKMAA also pursued an upgrade from IMSMA NG but opted to avoid costly IMSMA licenses and installed a system tailor-made from open-source software, including PostgreSQL and PHP, and using the open-source geographic information system, QGIS. IKMAA said the system, developed with support from iMMAP, provided robust functionality and a user-friendly interface.⁴⁸ IKMAA completed migration to the new system in February 2024.⁴⁹

36 Email from Lisa Jean, Country Director, Mines Advisory Group (MAG), 1 May 2025; and Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 4 May 2025.

37 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

38 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

39 Emails from Lisa Jean, MAG, 1 May 2025; and Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 16 May 2025.

40 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

41 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025; Lisa Jean, MAG, 1 May 2025.

42 Statement of Iraq, CCM Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 19 June 2023.

43 Interview with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, RMAC South, DMA, in Basrah, 8 May 2023.

44 Interviews with mine action operators in Iraq, 7–20 May 2023.

45 NPA reported receiving a request in 2022 to verify data relating to a task completed in 2019.

46 Interviews with Clare Pritchard, Country Representative, iMMAP, in Erbil, 15 May 2023, and in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

47 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 27 April 2025. Email from Lisa Jean, MAG, 1 May 2025.

48 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 13 May 2024.

49 Interview with Clare Pritchard, iMMAP, in Geneva, 1 May 2024.

PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq has not had a specific strategic plan for CMR, as the issue has been overshadowed by the priority given to tackling dense, improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State. Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–28, officially approved in July 2023, sets broad goals for both the DMA and IKMAA – the first time the two authorities have cooperated in drawing up a national plan.⁵⁰ These include as a strategic priority the development of “a prioritisation system based on clear and transparent criteria” to inform all planning and tasking decisions.

Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request, submitted in November 2022 and updated in April 2023, included a work plan for the first time based on the capacity available in 2022, but this has already been overtaken by funding shortfalls. The request set the goal of completing clearance of six governorates with total contamination estimated at almost 16.5km² in the first five years. These included completing

clearance of four governorates with small amounts of CMR in 2024: Babylon (0.7km²), Kerbala (1.5km²), Missan (1.1km²), and Ninewa (0.02km²). None of these governorates was freed of contamination in 2024 (see Table 1). The plan also provided for completing clearance of Najaf (4.1km²) in the third year of the extension and Anbar (9.1 km²) in the fifth year.⁵¹

The DMA issues tasks requested by operators after consultation with DMA operations and RMAC staff and taking account of requests from government, local authorities, development plans and prioritisation criteria that include an NTS scoring system.⁵² In much of Federal Iraq, tasking suffers from cumbersome procedures, although in the south, planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas have benefitted from good coordination between RMAC-South, operators, and local authorities.⁵³

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Federal Iraq started working with UNMAS in 2021 on updating national mine action standards for mine and battle area clearance (BAC), NTS, and technical survey (TS). The standards were written in 2004–05, existed in Arabic only, and did not specifically address cluster munitions. The DMA reviewed, updated, and released 23 of 35 national mine action standards between 2020 and 2023.⁵⁴ It reviewed and updated eleven standards in 2024, including for NTS, TS, manual clearance, BAC, marking, clearance of buildings, mechanical clearance, and accreditation for mine action organisations.⁵⁵

The DMA adopted the Cluster Munition Remnants Survey (CMRS) methodology as a national standard in 2019, citing the benefits it has delivered for survey, planning, and clearance.⁵⁶ In 2021, after a review of NMAS 09.11 for battle area clearance, Iraq increased the national standard for depth of CMR clearance from 20cm to 30cm, because in areas with moving sand or soft ground, some CMR, most commonly larger BLU-97 submunitions, had been found to penetrate deeper than 20cm. NPA said the new standard did not affect operations because 30cm was within the range of its existing detectors.⁵⁷ NPA data also showed that the great majority of CMR were found within 5cm of the surface.⁵⁸

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Iraq had two international operators available for cluster munitions survey and clearance at the start of 2024 but shrinking donor funding has reduced the operational capacity. DRC had one manual demining and two EOD/BAC teams with a total of 30 people, including 21 deminers, working in Basrah governorate's Zubair district and Rumaila sub-district at the start of 2024, and it had expected to add an international technical adviser to the programme.⁵⁹ DRC instead halted operations at the end of July 2024 after PM/WRA ended its funding. It closed its Basrah programme in

April 2025 but maintained an office in Erbil, which continues efforts to mobilise donor support.⁶⁰

NPA remained the main CMR survey and clearance operator in Iraq. Its Basrah-based CMR programme employed a total of 99 people, a drop of 24 staff from the previous year due to reduced funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and PM/WRA's reallocation of funding to a mechanical technical survey team working on conventional minefields. NPA's operating capacity included

50 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.
51 2023 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Annex B.
52 Emails from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022; Peter Smethers, FSD, 22 February 2022; Tim Marsella, HALO Trust, 17 March 2022; and Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April 2022.
53 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022.
54 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.
55 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 16 May 2025.
56 Email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC-South, 12 August 2020.
57 Emails from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April and 2 May 2022.
58 Interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, 7 May 2023; and email, 12 May 2023. NPA data showed that 85% of M77 submunitions, which accounted for over half of cleared CMR, were found at a depth of 0–5cm and 70% of BLU-97 submunitions were also found within this range.
59 Email from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 25 April 2024.
60 Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 23 March and 14 May 2025.

four NTS teams with 16 staff and five EOD/BAC teams with 32 staff. NPA, with funding from the US Defence Department's Humanitarian Demining Research and Development, has trialled the Scorpion mine and UXO detection system. This has proved particularly effective at accelerating operations in areas of high metal waste, by reducing metal signals and the need for excavations.⁶¹

Iraq's 2023 Article 4 deadline extension request said the government covered the costs of a total of 11 teams working on cluster munition tasks. These included five teams from

the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior's Civil Defence organisation conducting survey and clearance. Two of these teams focused on TS and the other three on clearance. Another six MoD EOD teams conducted submunition demolitions, a task restricted to the military.⁶² Iraq's CCM Article 7 report indicated two MoD clearance teams and one Civil Defence team were operational in 2024, but gave no details of where or what they did.⁶³ Units of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces were also reportedly working in Muthanna governorate in 2023.⁶⁴

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2024

Iraq released a total of 12.4km² in 2024, according to official data, which recorded 12.1km² released in Federal Iraq and 0.3km² in the KRI.⁶⁵ This represented a 35% drop in the amount of CMR-affected land released from the previous year and 61% less than the area released two years before. The official data is substantially (20%) higher than operators' reported land release of 9.6km².⁶⁶

Mine action authorities also reported destroying a total of 7,424 submunitions, down from 8,080 in 2023.⁶⁷

Table 2: Land release outputs in 2024 (official data)⁶⁸

Release of cluster munition-contaminated area	Release in 2024 (km ²)	Comments
Clearance	7.6	International NGOs reported clearing 7.3km ² .
Technical survey	0	NPA reported cancelling 1.2km ² through NTS.
Non-technical survey	4.5	NPA recorded reduction of 0.6km ² , but the DMA did not show who accounted for the rest.
Destruction of submunitions during clearance, survey, and spot tasks	2024	Comments
Submunitions destroyed	7,424	Including 1,230 items destroyed "not through clearance".

SURVEY IN 2024

Official and operator data relating to land released through survey differ significantly. The DMA did not record any area cancelled through NTS and reported the 4.5km² released through survey in 2024 was all area-reduced through TS (see Table 3). NPA reported cancelling 1,245,600m² through NTS in Thi-Qar and reduced a total of 648,336m², split almost evenly between Basrah and Muthanna governorates.⁶⁹ The KRI did not report any release of cluster munition-contaminated area through survey.

Table 3: Area released through TS in 2024 (official data)⁷⁰

Governorate	Area reduced (m ²)
Basrah	1,418,618
Muthanna	1,431,941
Thi-Qar	1,658,027
Total	4,508,586

61 Online interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, 17 April 2025; and emails from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

62 Revised 2023 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, p. 13.

63 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F.

64 Email from Chris Ramsden, NPA, 13 May 2024.

65 Article 7 report (covering 2024), Form F.

66 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025; and Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 14 May 2025.

67 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F.

68 Ibid.; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 7 April 2025.

69 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

70 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F.

CLEARANCE IN 2024

DMA data shows the amount of CMR-affected land released through clearance in 2024 fell sharply for the second successive year in 2024 but the limited information available prevents a clear determination of the reasons. The DMA reported clearance of a total of 7.6km² in 2024 (see Table 4), a 43% drop on the 13.3km² of clearance it reported for 2023,⁷¹ and a further drop from the 16.6km² it said it cleared in 2022.⁷² The DMA does not detail results by operator, obscuring where the downturn occurred.

Table 4: CMR clearance in 2024 (official data)⁷³

Province	Area cleared (m²)	Items destroyed
South Provinces	7,163,459	5,838
North Provinces	63,134	9
Middle Euphrates	352,420	347
Totals	7,579,013	6,194

NPA remains the biggest operator working to clear CMR in Iraq and despite the loss of staff in 2024, it cleared 7.3km² (see Table 5), marginally (0.5%) less than the previous year (although the 1,610 submunitions it cleared in 2024 were only half its 2023 total).⁷⁴ DRC had focused mainly on tackling other unexploded ordnance but it worked on one CMR task in Basrah governorate before loss of donor funding halted the project at the end of July 2024.⁷⁵

Table 5: CMR clearance by international NGOs in 2024 (INGO data)⁷⁶

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
DRC	Basrah	12,462	2	0
NPA	Basrah	3,917,785	410	369
	Muthanna	3,356,075	1,200	25
Totals		7,286,322	1,612	394

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE AND COMPLIANCE



Under Article 4 of the CCM, Iraq is required to destroy all CMR in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 1 November 2028. In 2025, the DMA has made clear the available operating capacity is insufficient to meet the extended deadline, and it will need to apply for a further extension.⁷⁷

The DMA estimated in 2023 that its five-year strategy for completion needed 34 operational teams.⁷⁸ Its back-up strategy based on the 15 teams available in 2023 projected completion would take up to 16 years.⁷⁹ In 2024, only 10 teams

were operational, half of them provided by NPA, two coming from DRC, two from the MoD, and one from Civil Defence. In reality, even that tally proved to be an over-estimate. One of the two DRC teams active at the start of 2024 was deployed on non-CMR tasks and both teams ceased operating at the end of July when their funding was suspended. The extent to which the MoD and Civil Defence teams were operational in 2024 was also unclear as clearance by NPA alone in 2025 was equivalent to 96% of the official cleared total (see Tables 4 and 5).

71 Ibid.; and Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form F.

72 Iraq's Article 7 report covering 2022 recorded clearance of 33.6km² in that year but included 17.2km² which Mine Action Review assessed to be battle area clearance, not CMR clearance.

73 Article 7 report (covering 2024), Form F. "South provinces" includes Basrah, Missan, Muthanna and Thi-Qar; Middle Euphrates includes Babylon, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, Qadisiya, and Wassit; "North provinces" include Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Nineveh, and Salah ad-Din.

74 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

75 Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 23 March and 14 May 2025.

76 Emails from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025; and Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 14 May 2025.

77 Article 7 Report (covering 2024), Form F; interview with Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, in Geneva, 7 April 2025.

78 2023 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, Annex A.

79 The extension request of 11 April 2023 cites 15.2 years (p. 10) while Annex B of the request puts the figure at 16 years.

The DMA's five-year strategy was based on the expectation that continuing survey would add around 114km² in cluster munition-contaminated areas and bring the total area requiring clearance to around 320km².⁸⁰ That calculation looks conservative after survey in the last two years added 55km² to the database, but a comprehensive baseline estimate is still years away. NPA estimates that with its current resources survey of the key southern governorates of Basrah, Muthanna, and Thi-Qar may be complete by the end of the current extension period.⁸¹ That still does not consider CMR contamination in northern governorates of Federal Iraq or the KRI.

Declining levels of land release combined with rising estimates of contamination underscore Iraq's cluster munitions challenge is getting worse, compounded by unstable national management. The National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028 developed by the DMA and IKMAA with support from the GICHD provides a framework for progress, but implementation depends on uncertain levels of political and financial commitment of federal authorities.

Table 6: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Federal Iraq (km ²)	KRI (km ²)	Totals (km ²)
2024	7.6	0.3	7.9
2023	13.3	0	13.3
2022	16.6	0	*16.6
2021	10.2	0	10.2
2020	5.7	N/R	5.7
Totals	53.4	0.3	53.7

* Based on Mine Action Review calculation. N/R = Not reported

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

Iraq's 2023–28 strategy commits to develop a strategy for managing residual contamination, but no action appears to have been taken yet to follow-up.⁸²

⁸⁰ Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 23.

⁸¹ Email from Chimwemwe Tembo and Chris Ramsden, NPA, 27 April 2025.

⁸² Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, p. 23.