

ARTICLE 4 DEADLINE: 1 NOVEMBER 2028
NOT ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE

KEY DATA

CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION: HEAVY

OFFICIAL BUT PARTIAL ESTIMATE

208km²

SUBMUNITION
CLEARANCE IN 2023

13.26km²

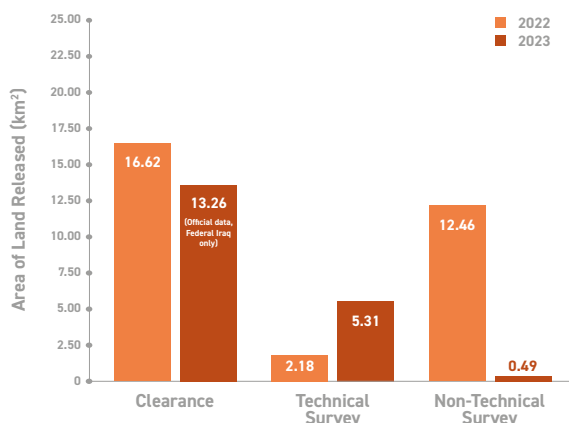
(OFFICIAL DATA,
FEDERAL IRAQ ONLY)

SUBMUNITIONS
DESTROYED IN 2023

8,080

(INCLUDING 69 IN SPOT
TASKS IN THE KRI)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS

In 2023, Iraq received a five-year extension to its Article 4 clearance deadline under the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) until November 2028 but estimated that with the resources available at the time it would require 16 years to achieve completion. The government reportedly allocated \$17 million from the national budget for mine action in the south over three years but additional national funding reportedly was not received. Continued rapid turnover of Directorate of Mine Action (DMA) leadership in 2023 was accompanied by widespread changes of senior staff affecting continuity of policy. The DMA moved ahead in 2023 with preparations for upgrading its database from Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation to IMSMA Core but in 2024 reportedly decided not to proceed.

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 as a matter of priority should take action to upgrade and update its IMSMA database and the resources supporting information management.

ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

Criterion	Score (2023)	Score (2022)	Performance Commentary
UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION (20% of overall score)	6	6	Large, previously unrecorded cluster munition-contaminated areas continued to be identified in 2023, underscoring the limitations of previous survey and Iraq's understanding of how much it has to clear. The DMA's Regional Mine Action Centre-South (RMAC-S) agreed with Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in 2023 that it should focus on survey to develop an evidence-based baseline estimate of contamination.
NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT (10% of overall score)	6	7	Iraq officially approved a new mine action strategy for 2023–28, the first produced in consultation between the mine action authorities for the Kurdish Region and Federal Iraq. It recognised the need to increase national ownership and increase national funding for the sector but stakeholders report that funding earmarked for operations in the south in the national budget was spent on other programmes. Management of the sector meanwhile suffered from high turnover of leadership in the DMA.
GENDER AND DIVERSITY (10% of overall score)	7	7	Iraq's 2023–28 mine action strategy acknowledged the importance of gender and diversity to the sector. The DMA and the Iraq Kurdistan Mine Action Agency (IKMAA) have conducted workshops and training promoting inclusion in what has been a male-dominated sector. Political sensitivities on gender led to the term being banned in official announcements in 2023 but did not appear to affect employment of women despite conservative social attitudes.
ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION* (10% of overall score)	4	Not Scored	Iraq does not have a national standard on environmental management in mine action. Some international demining organisations are exploring how their capacity can help address severe pressure on water supply and irrigation systems to facilitate productive use of cleared land. The HALO Trust is looking into possibilities of partnerships with local organisations to follow up clearance with assistance to rehabilitate soil and irrigation systems to address acute problems of water quality and supply.
INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING (10% of overall score)	6	6	DMA information management still struggled with obsolete reporting procedures causing chronic delays uploading operating results to the database and big discrepancies between official and operator data. IKMAA is upgrading its database from IMSMA NG to a new system based on open-source software. The DMA was preparing in 2023 to upgrade from IMSMA NG to Core but in 2024 appeared to have halted the process. Iraq submits annual updates on progress in Article 7 reports.
PLANNING AND TASKING (10% of overall score)	7	7	Planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas have benefitted from good coordination between RMAC-S, operators, and local authorities. Operators say RMAC-S's task-order system works, efficiently prioritising tasks according to local recommendations, DMA priorities, and operator requests.
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 and has reported benefits for accurate mapping, planning, and land release. The DMA has worked since 2022 to update national mine action standards.
LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE (20% of overall score)	5	6	Official figures show release of CMR-affected areas in 2023 dropped to around one third of the level in the previous year. This mainly reflected the significant drop in cancellation through non-technical survey (NTS) recorded by the DMA in 2023, but clearance was also down by nearly one quarter. Iraq received a five-year extension of its Article 4 deadline until 2028 but indicated with the resources currently available it would take close to 16 years to achieve completion.
Average Score	5.9	6.5	Overall Programme Performance: AVERAGE

* New criterion introduced in 2024 to assess performance.

** The weighting of this criterion was previously 20% of overall performance score, but is now given a 10% weighting.

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

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

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Ministry of Defence

- Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)
- Ministry of Interior (Civil Defence)
- Al Khebra Company for Demining
- Ta'az Demining Company

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- Danish Refugee Council

- Mines Advisory Group (MAG)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

Iraq ranks as one of the countries most heavily affected by cluster munition remnants (CMR) and its estimate of contamination is still growing. At the end of 2023, Iraq reported total CMR contamination of close to 206km² (see Table 1), 8.5% more than a year earlier.¹ This is despite reported clearance of more than 13km² in 2023.

Contamination at the end of 2023 affected nine of Federal Iraq's 15 governorates, but 92% of it was concentrated in just three southern governorates of Basrah, Muthanna, and Thi Qar. Missan was reported cleared of CMR in 2023 but the northern governorate of Kirkuk joined the list of affected governorates in 2023, which saw estimates of contamination increase in six governorates.

Table 1: Federal Iraq cluster munition-contamination²

Province	Area (at end 2023) (m ²)	Area (at end 2022) (m ²)
Anbar	11,216,039	10,974,800
Babylon	911,758	633,031
Basrah	56,053,577	46,497,041
Karbala	141,910	141,910
Kirkuk	79,109	0
Missan	0	955,962
Muthanna	90,117,749	81,790,909
Najaf	3,704,571	3,700,442
Ninewa	215,758	21,224
Thi Qar	43,329,654	44,887,183
Qadisiya	0	0
Totals	205,770,125	189,602,502

CMR survey concentrated in southern governorates continues to add substantial areas of previously unrecorded contamination to the database. Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request estimated that operators would find another 79km² of CMR-contaminated area over the five years to 2028, an estimate that looks extremely conservative. Iraq reported that survey added a total of 24km² in 2023,³ including 9.6km² in Basrah governorate and 8.3km² in Muthanna. This was substantially less than the nearly 48km² added in the previous year⁴ and the 30km² of previously unrecorded hazardous area identified by Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) in 2023.⁵ At this rate, Iraq looked more likely to identify more than 150km² of additional hazardous areas in this extension period.

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 identifies any CMR contamination in the governorate.⁶ The most commonly found items are M77, BLU-63 and BLU-97 submunitions. Other CMR found include BLU-61, M42, and M118 submunitions.⁷

Although not reflected in Iraq's CCM Article 7 report, the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) has identified close to 3km² of CMR contamination, 60% of it in Erbil (see Table 2). IKMAA did not identify the origin or device types.

Table 2: KRI cluster munition-contaminated area⁸

Province	Hazardous areas	Area (m ²)
Duhok	8	572,949
Erbil	2	1,753,000
Slemani	8	588,401
Totals	18	2,914,350

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 country'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 and a memorandum of understanding

1 CCM Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 5 and Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 25 April 2024.

2 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), p. 5 and Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA, 25 April 2024.

3 Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form F, p. 27.

4 Ibid., p. 5 and Form F; and Article 7 Report (covering 2022), Form F.

5 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, Programme Manager, NPA, 2 May 2024.

6 Article 7 Report (covering 2020), Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, DMA/RMAC South, 21 April 2021. Iraq's Article 7 Report for 2021 does not appear to have included the amount of previously unrecorded contamination found in 2021.

7 Interviews with Nibras Fakhir Matrood, Director, DMA RMAC-S; Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC-S, Basrah, 29 April 2019; and Mats Hektor, Project Manager, NPA South Iraq, Basrah, 28 April 2019; and Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F; email from Chris Ramsden, Deputy Programme Manager, South Iraq, NPA, 7 June 2024.

8 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 26 June 2024.

(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 2022–28, the first produced jointly by the two authorities.⁹ 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.”¹⁰

In 2023, the government earmarked 20 billion Iraqi dinars (US\$17 million) over three years to support implementation of the CCM¹¹ but the funding was not disbursed on mine action and appears to have been used by the Ministry of Environment for other projects.

FEDERAL IRAQ

The inter-ministerial Higher Committee of Mine Action,¹² 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, and approving the standing operating procedures (SOPs) of demining organisations, and certifying completion of clearance tasks.¹³

DMA coordination of mine action remains a challenge in a sector in which its formal status as a department of the relatively low-ranking Ministry of Environment gives it less authority than the powerful ministries of defence, interior, and oil, which are also major actors in the sector. Long-running discussions on a proposed demining law have raised the possibility of placing the DMA directly under the Office of the Prime Minister but there was no indication in 2023 the government planned to take up the idea.

DMA policy making and implementation has also suffered from a rapid turnover of directors. The DMA has had at least 19 directors general since 2003, including three in the last year. All but one were appointed on an acting basis, which also limited their authority. Dr Sabah Hasan al-Hussaini, who assumed the position in February 2023, was already the head of another directorate and returned full time to that position after some months. Shawkat Tayeh Masoud, a former director of operations who had left the DMA in 2022, returned as acting director in September 2023.

Under Director General Masoud, the DMA experienced sweeping changes of senior managers and a restructuring. The DMA previously oversaw three Regional Mine Action Centres (RMACs) for the North, the Middle Euphrates (MEU) region and the South¹⁴ but RMACs North and MEU were closed down in September 2023. RMAC South, located

in Basra City, remains the focal point for Federal Iraq's response to CMR contamination. 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.¹⁵

The government approved a national strategic plan for 2023–28 in June 2023¹⁶ 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 calls for an external assessment of the DMA's mandate and position that would provide recommendations to the Higher Council for Mine Action but it does not indicate any timeline for this review and as at June 2024 there was no sign of any move to conduct it.¹⁷

The strategic plan calls for strengthened national ownership and more national funding, recognising the dependence on external donor support as a key risk to sustainability of Iraq's mine action programme.¹⁸ To boost the capacity available for mine action 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 EOD [explosive ordnance disposal] Directorate and a significant workforce in many governorates.¹⁹

Donor funding for demining operations channelled through UNMAS has declined significantly from its high point of US\$77 million in 2019 (some of it for activities in 2019–20) and faced the possibility of a further significant drop in 2024.²⁰ International donors have prioritised funding for clearance of improvised mines in areas occupied by Islamic State in western and northern governorates, largely bypassing the financial requirements for clearance of the south which account for almost all Iraq's CMR contamination and are dependent on Iraqi government funding.

Iraq reported that government funding for mine action totalled about \$81 million in the decade to 2022 and averaged close to \$4 million a year in 2020–22.²¹ The government

9 Interview with Ahmed Aljasem, Director of Information Management, DMA, in Baghdad 11 May 2023.

10 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2002–2028, p. 36.

11 Interviews with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

12 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.

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

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

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

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

17 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 37–38.

18 Ibid., pp. 17 and 22.

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

20 Email from Shinobu Mashima, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 11 May 2023; and interview with Shinobu Mashima and Johannes Smith, UNMAS, in Baghdad, 14 May 2023.

21 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 40.

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 CCM²² but the funds

were not disbursed on CMR activities and appear to have been diverted to other projects.²³

KURDISTAN REGION OF IRAQ

IKMAA functions as both the regulator and an operator in the KRI. It reports directly to the Kurdish Regional Government's Council of Ministers and is led by a director general who has ministerial rank. It coordinates four directorates in Dohuk, Erbil, Garman, 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.²⁴

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 contributing to a rise in release of mined areas in 2022.²⁵ Additional Slovenian funding approved at the end of 2023 allowed the hiring of 48 vehicles which enabled teams to deploy in 2024.²⁶

OTHER ACTORS

UNMAS established a presence in Iraq in 2015 to assess the explosive ordnance hazard threat in liberated areas and set three priorities: explosive hazard management to support stabilisation and recovery, including the return of people displaced by conflict; 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, as donor funding slowed

and in line with a greater focus on localisation, UNMAS shifted its focus 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 but by 2023 numbered only 51 of whom 7 were internationals.²⁷ The number of donors funding operations in Iraq through UNMAS has dropped from a peak of 21 to 10 in 2023.²⁸

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The Iraq National Strategic Mine Action Plan for 2017–2021 referred to gender equality and gender mainstreaming within mine action activities as objectives of an effective programmatic response.²⁹ Iraq's 2023–2028 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 The DMA dropped reference to gender mainstreaming in 2023 amid heated political debate on LGBTQ issues which saw the Communications and Media Commission issue a directive in August 2023 banning use of the term 'gender' in public communications.³¹ The Council of Ministers instructed in November 2023 that the term "gender" should be replaced by "justice between men and women". The government also launched a National Strategy for Iraqi Women 2023–30 which emphasised women's political participation and economic empowerment.³²

It was not immediately clear what further action, if any, was planned by the DMA, which created a gender unit in 2017, adopted its first Gender Unit Action Plan in early 2021 and in 2022 cooperated with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and NPA conducting training courses on gender balance and diversity.³³ Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request submitted in 2023 reported that the DMA, in partnership with NPA, had established and trained two mixed-gender teams (for technical survey and clearance).³⁴

IKMAA said it aims to improve its gender and diversity balance in line with Iraq's six-year national strategy but in 2023 employed only 123 women in its total staff of 991 (12%), and only 9 women among the 623 operations staff. IKMAA has plans to deploy all-female demining and EOD teams in all provinces but implementation is dependent on finding donor support.³⁵

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

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

24 Email from Khatab Omer Ahmad, IKMAA, 3 May 2023.

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

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

27 Emails from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS, 4 May 2019, 6 April 2020, and 11 May 2023; and Hayder Ghanimi, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 28 April and 31 August 2022.

28 Interview with Pehr Lodhammar, UNMAS, in Geneva, 23 June 2023; and email from Ban Yaseen, Programme Management Specialist, UNMAS, 23 June 2024.

29 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, pp. 12, 18, 20, and 30.

30 Ibid., p. 15.

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

32 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

33 Article 7 Report (covering 2022), pp. 30–36.

34 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, p. 26.

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

Heightened political sensitivities surrounding gender issues prompted several operators to postpone a number of activities but does not appear to have interfered with recruitment and deployment of female staff. Operators have identified declining donor support as an obstacle to employing more women. UNMAS developed a Gender and Diversity toolkit to assist gender mainstreaming by implementing partners. In June 2023, it organised a workshop for female staff of the DMA and ministries of

defence and interior and in November it held another workshop for IPs' female field staff.³⁶

Among organisations tackling CMR, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) employed 10 women among its 56 operations staff, including six deminers split between two teams.³⁷ NPA has a gender focal point position to promote mainstreaming which is funded until 2025 and recruited additional female staff in 2023 bringing the number to 105 out of 526 total staff, including 76 women in field roles out of 405 operations personnel.³⁸

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Iraq does not have a policy on environmental management in mine action. In 2022, the DMA and IKMAA were in the process of preparing a national standard but as of May 2024 this has not been released. Demining organisations mostly apply their own SOPs for managing the environment and minimising harm from operations.

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. IKMAA reported mine action planning increasingly had to take account of climate change and the impact of extreme weather events, which include flooding, forest fires and damage to infrastructure. IKMAA said it was developing a range of mitigation strategies including early warning systems.³⁹

Some international demining organisations are exploring how their capacity can help address severe pressure on water supply and irrigation systems to facilitate productive use of cleared land. The HALO Trust is looking into possibilities of partnerships with local organisations to follow up clearance with assistance to rehabilitate soil and irrigation systems to address acute problems of water quality and supply.⁴⁰ NPA has an environmental SOP followed during the planning and implementation of tasks. Teams avoid disturbing soil unless specifically required for technical survey or clearance operations, and seek to ensure that the soil is in a state suitable for its intended use after completion of a task.⁴¹ In 2022, NPA appointed a global environmental adviser and piloted collection of environmental data in the course of NTS. NPA is also developing support for local communities in rehabilitating irrigation canals and use of irrigation pipelines that help conserve water.⁴²

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028 underscores the importance of comprehensive information management processes to effective planning, tasking, implementation, and reporting. It also says Iraq will seek to increase understanding of its remaining mine and CMR contamination through continuous updating of its baseline data by means of a database clean-up, desktop analysis, and contact with communities.⁴³

The DMA and IKMAA have both operated an IMSMA NG database with technical support from iMMAP, a commercial service provider based in Erbil and working under contract to the US Department of State's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA). The DMA database is located at its Baghdad headquarters but RMAC South, headquartered in Basrah, is the focal point for cluster munitions and responsible for uploading CMR-related data.

The DMA was preparing from 2022 to upgrade to IMSMA Core with support from the GICHD and iMMAP but in 2024 DMA Director General Masoud decided not to proceed. The DMA had installed an IMSMA Core server in December 2022, started field testing reporting forms in 2023, and was due to launch the system by December 2023.⁴⁴ It expected to start data migration by uploading risk education and victim assistance data before extending to include survey and clearance results.⁴⁵ In March 2024, however, the DMA informed the GICHD it had decided to halt the upgrade and continue working with IMSMA NG.

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 and an online dashboard are not up to date and do not accurately reflect

36 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

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

38 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

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

40 Email from Hein Bekker, Programme Manager, HALO, 4 May 2023; and interview in Baghdad, 10 May 2023.

41 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, then Deputy Programme Manager, NPA, 12 April 2023.

42 Ibid; and interview with Chris Tierney, Programme Manager, NPA, in Baghdad, 13 May 2023.

43 Iraq National Mine Action Strategy 2022–2028, pp. 20–21.

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

45 Interview with Ahmad Aljasim, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.

the results of survey or clearance. The DMA attributes delays to the need to correct reporting errors and apply quality control.⁴⁶ Implementing partners point to cumbersome procedures which require them to submit operational data in hard copy and on CD-ROMs to be uploaded manually into the database.⁴⁷ Data verification and correction can add further significant delays.⁴⁸ The DMA introduced an Online Task Management System in 2019 to facilitate tasking but took it offline in October 2021, reportedly over sensitivities about the data available.

The limited number and high turnover of the DMA's data processing staff has further contributed to the DMA's information management challenges. iMMAP has

progressively reduced the scope of its engagement with the DMA and reduced the number of its staff working in the DMA from five at the start of 2023 to two by the end of the year.⁴⁹

IKMAA has also pursued an upgrade from IMSMA NG but opted to avoid costly IMSMA licenses and install 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.⁵⁰ IKMAA completed migration to the new system in February 2024 and was due to close IMSMA NG at the end of July.⁵¹

PLANNING AND TASKING

Iraq's National Mine Action Strategy 2023–2028, 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.⁵² 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 has not had a specific strategic plan for CMR which has been overshadowed by the priority given to tackling dense improvised mine contamination in areas liberated from Islamic State.

Iraq's Article 4 deadline extension request, submitted in November 2022, was updated in April 2023 to include for the first time a work plan based on the capacity available in 2022. The work plan did not provide any details of Iraq's targets for survey but set the goal of completing clearance of six governorates with total contamination estimated at almost 16.5km² in the first five years. These included clearing in 2024, the first year of the extension, all contamination in

four governorates with small quantities of CMR: Babylon (0.7km²), Kerbala (1.5km²), Missan (1.1km²) and Ninewa (0.02km²). The plan provided for completing clearance of Najaf (4.1km²) in the third year of the extension and Anbar (9.1 km²) in the fifth year.⁵³

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.⁵⁴ In much of Federal Iraq, tasking suffers from cumbersome procedures. In the south, planning and tasking for survey and clearance of cluster munition-contaminated areas have benefitted from good coordination between the RMAC-S, operators, and local authorities. RMAC-S's task order system prioritises tasks according to local recommendations, DMA priorities, and operator requests, and is said to be working well.⁵⁵

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. Since 2020, the DMA has reviewed, updated, and released 23 of 35 national mine action standards.⁵⁶ They included standards for

NTS and TS and mine clearance, BAC, EOD, marking, personal protective equipment, mechanical demining, post-clearance documentation, accreditation, EOD, IED disposal, land release, safety in the workplace, house clearance, monitoring, sampling procedures, quality management, and marking. In November 2022 they were still only available in Arabic.⁵⁷ The DMA released seven national standards that were translated

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

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

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

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

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

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

52 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.

53 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, Annex B.

54 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.

55 Email from Marie-Josée Hamel, DRC, 30 March 2022.

56 Email from Safa Jamal, Senior Officer – Programme Management, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

57 Email from Ahmed Aljasim, DMA, 15 April 2022.

into English with support from NPA in November 2022, and 10 standards were translated by UNMAS in 2023.⁵⁸ It also reviewed six standards and four technical notes in 2023 which were still awaiting official endorsement in 2024. The DMA was reportedly preparing a technical note on the use of thermite for demolitions.⁵⁹

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.⁶⁰

In August 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.⁶¹ NPA data also showed that the great majority of CMR were found within 5cm of the surface.⁶²

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Iraq's 2023 Article 4 extension request said the government covered the costs of a total of 11 teams working on cluster munitions tasks but other capacity may also be active. The extension request identified 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 technical survey and three on clearance). Another six MoD teams (EOD) conducted submunition demolitions, a task restricted to the military.⁶³ Iraq's Article 7 report does not identify which organisations were operational but Units of Iraq's Popular Mobilisation Forces were also reportedly working in Muthanna governorate in 2023.⁶⁴

Two international demining organisations also conducted survey and clearance of CMR-contaminated areas. 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 in 2023. It expected to add an international technical adviser to the programme in 2024.⁶⁵

NPA operated in south Iraq with a total staff of 124 based in Basra City, including nine multi-task teams (MTTs) doing TS and clearance, 2 NTS teams, and a mechanical unit.⁶⁶ NPA's mechanical unit deployed in Basrah governorate's Shatt al-Arab district working on AP mine tasks but the rest of the teams worked on CMR tasks in Muthanna governorate. One NTS team and four MTTs worked in Zubair district, where heavy contamination is blocking agricultural production, while the other NTS team and three MTT teams worked in the central area. The two remaining MTTs worked close to the Saudi border. NPA had to reduce capacity in the south in 2024 as a result of cuts in donor support for Iraq.⁶⁷

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND ARTICLE 4 COMPLIANCE

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

Iraq reported releasing 19km² of CMR-affected land in 2023: 0.49km² cancelled through non-technical survey, 5.31km² reduced through technical survey, and 13.26km² released through clearance.⁶⁸ The 2023 output was a reduction on the area officially reported as released in 2022 when Iraq said it released nearly 15km² through survey as well as 16.6km² through clearance.⁶⁹

Despite the drop in land released, Federal Iraq said it destroyed a total of 8,011 submunitions in 2023,⁷⁰ 71% more than it recorded in 2022. Most were cleared in the southern governorates of Basrah, Missan, and Muthanna, but Iraq's Article 7 report also included 336 items cleared in central and northern areas and 802 destroyed during TS.⁷¹ The KRI did not conduct any clearance of CMR tasks but reported destroying 69 submunitions in the course of its operations in 2023.⁷²

58 Email from Shinobu Mashima, UNMAS Iraq, 11 May 2023.

59 Email from Safa Jamal, UNMAS, 27 May 2024.

60 Email from Haitham Fattah Lafta, RMAC-S, 12 August 2020.

61 Emails from Chris Tierney, NPA, 17 April and 2 May 2022.

62 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 CMR were also found within this range.

63 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, updated 11 April 2023, p. 13.

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

65 Email from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 25 April 2024.

66 Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

67 Virtual interview with Chris Ramsden, NPA, 2 May 2024 and email, 19 May 2024.

68 Article 7 report (covering 2023), Form F.

69 Article 7 Report (covering 2021), Form F; and email from Haitham Fattah, RMAC-South, DMA, 25 May 2023.

70 Article 7 report (covering 2023), Form F.

71 Ibid.

72 Email from Niyazi Khalid, IKMAA, 26 June 2024.

SURVEY IN 2023

Although official data did not record any area cancelled through non-technical survey in 2023, NPA reported cancelling 494,970m² through NTS in Basrah governorate in 2023.⁷³ RMAC South acknowledged the discrepancy was due to delays in quality management checks and uploading the data into the database.⁷⁴

Iraq's Article 7 report showed additionally that it reduced 5.3km² through technical survey in 2023, all of it located in the southern governorates of Basrah (3.29km²), Missan (0.73km²), Muthanna (0.2km²), and Thi Qar (1.08km²).⁷⁵

CLEARANCE IN 2023

The DMA does not identify which organisations conduct clearance and delays and inconsistencies between official and operator data prevent a clear determination of actual progress in any year. The 13km² Iraq reported as cleared in 2023 represented a 20% drop from the 16.6km² which the Mine Action Review determined was the CMR-contaminated area cleared in 2022.⁷⁶

Table 3: CMR clearance in Federal Iraq in 2023 (official data)⁷⁷

Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	Items cleared
Basrah	2,360,833	N/R
Missan	222,915	N/R
Muthanna	10,674,540	N/R
Subtotal		6,873
TS	N/R	802
Central and North	N/R	336
Totals	13,258,288	8,011

N/R = not reported

Results reported by the two international operators conducting systematic CMR survey and/or clearance also registered an almost 10% drop in area cleared – from 8.4km² the previous year to 7.7km² (see Table 4) while the number of items cleared dropped by 40%. However, NPA, released 33% more area than in 2022 despite working with largely the same capacity. It attributed that result to the fact its teams had more working days than in 2022, when delays issuing access letters forced teams to stand down.⁷⁸

Table 4: CMR clearance in Federal Iraq in 2023 (NGO operator data)⁷⁹

Operator	Governorate	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions cleared	Other UXO cleared
DRC	Basrah	28,542	7	0
NPA	Basrah NPA	2,681,591	510	462
	Muthanna	4,976,363	2,854	8
Totals		7,686,496	3,371	470

⁷³ Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

⁷⁴ Email from Chris Ramsden, NPA, 13 May 2024.

⁷⁵ Article 7 Report (covering 2023), Form F. The Article 7 report recorded reduction of 7,692,449m² through TS but its detailed breakdown of the areas reduced totalled 5,310,129m².

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ Article 7 report (covering 2023), Form F.

⁷⁸ Email from Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

⁷⁹ Emails from Mohammed Qassim Abdulridha, DRC, 25 April 2024; and Chimwemwe Tembo, NPA, 2 May 2024.

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. However, Iraq’s extension request makes clear that with the operating capacity available at the time it submitted the report it would not achieve completion by the new deadline. The DMA estimated its five-year strategy for completion needed 34 teams.⁸⁰ A second strategy based on the 15 teams available in 2023 projected completion would take up to 16 years.⁸¹

Moreover, the amount of CMR contamination to be cleared is still rising with the discovery of previously unrecorded hazardous areas. Small amounts of CMR were added to the database for Babylon, Kirkuk, and Ninewa governorates, and a substantial amount for Muthanna, which was sparsely populated by nomadic communities at the time of initial survey. NPA is identifying an average of about 30km² a year of CMR contamination to add to the database, which could add around 150km² in the five years of this extension, close to double the amount of additional CMR-affected areas allowed for in the extension request.

The downward trajectory of donor support for mine action in oil-rich Iraq looks set to slow the pace of land release unless the government sharply increases the funding provided from the national budget. Iraq has ambitious plans for road, rail, port, and energy infrastructure in the south that weigh in favour of increased government spending on mine action but there is little clarity about the government’s intentions.

Mine action in recent years has prioritised survey and clearance of improvised mine contamination in western and northern areas saturated with improvised mines by Islamic State eclipsing the extensive mine as well as CMR contamination in southern governorates. In 2023, the government reportedly earmarked \$17 million over three years to support implementation of the CCM⁸² but the funding did not materialise in mine action and was reportedly spent on other programmes.

Table 5: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Federal Iraq (km ²)	KRI (km ²)	Totals (km ²)
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
2019	4.3	0.4	*4.7
Totals	50.1	0.4	50.5

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

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

It is too soon for Iraq to be planning for the management of residual cluster munition contamination.

80 Article 4 deadline Extension Request, 11 April 2023, Annex A.
81 The 2023 extension request of 11 April 2023 cites 15.2 years (p. 10) while Annex B of the request puts the figure at 16 years.
82 Interview with Bakr Sahib Ahmed, DMA, in Baghdad, 11 May 2023.