

KEY DATA

CLUSTER MUNITION CONTAMINATION: MEDIUM

NATIONAL ESTIMATE

8.78km²

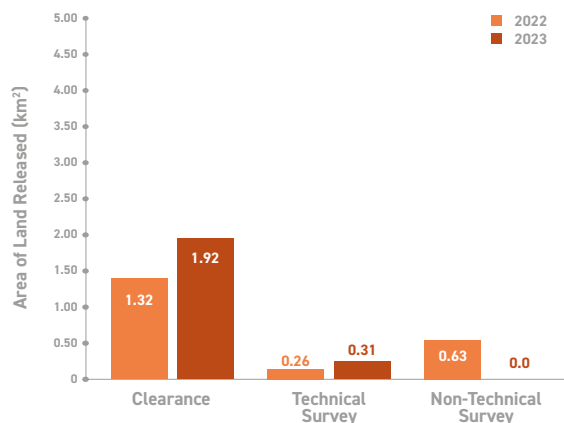
SUBMUNITION
CLEARANCE IN 2023

1.92km²

SUBMUNITIONS
DESTROYED IN 2023

196

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- While formal accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) is not currently possible for Kosovo, as it is not recognised as a State by the depositary, Kosovo should submit a letter to the UN Secretary-General pledging to comply fully, on a voluntary basis, with the CCM and, as is planned for this year, submit voluntary Article 7 reports on an annual basis.
- The Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC) should seek to complete clearance of cluster munition remnants (CMR) as soon as possible. With the newly developed mine action strategy, and provided that funding is sustained, KMAC should ensure the implementation of realistic annual targets and adhere to the established timeline for completion.
- In addition to survey of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), Kosovo should also review the basis on which confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) are established. In particular, it should conduct survey to confirm CMR contamination before embarking on full clearance.

CLUSTER MUNITION SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

- Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Kosovo Security Force (KSF)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO)
- Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
- The Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO-led international peacekeeping force

OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

UNDERSTANDING OF CMR CONTAMINATION

At the end of 2023, Kosovo reported 8.78km² of CMR contamination across 38 hazardous areas, comprised of 22 CHAs covering a total of 3.88km² and 16 SHAs covering 4.9km² (see Table 1).¹ The overall estimate has decreased by 1.24km² from the 10.02km² at the end of 2022.²

Table 1: Cluster munition-contaminated area (KMAC data) (at end 2023)³

District	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total areas	Total area (m ²)
South	3	375,000	3	610,000	6	985,000
North	5	1,529,850	3	3,395,089	8	4,924,939
Centre	4	710,000	1	100,000	5	810,000
East	1	520,000	1	50,000	2	570,000
West	9	742,614	8	745,375	17	1,487,989
Totals	22	3,877,464	16	4,900,464	38	8,777,928

Kosovo has a reasonable if imperfect understanding of CMR contamination remaining on its territory because of two decades of mine action, including surveys in 2013 and 2015. In September 2022, The HALO Trust (HALO) completed a non-technical survey (NTS) project that was designed to create CHAs and SHAs, as this was not done during the 2013 survey; prior to the NTS project there was no classification of CHAs and SHAs in Kosovo.⁴ In 2024, Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) was planning to conduct NTS of seven tasks in the municipalities of Leposavic, Mitrovica, and Zubin Potok, where no activities have been done since the initial NTS in 2015.⁵ KMAC believes that once these surveys are completed the baseline of contamination in the northern municipalities will be finalised.⁶ Kosovo's newly launched national mine action strategy for 2025–30 plans for nine hazardous areas to be resurveyed in the northern regions by the beginning of 2025.⁷

In 2013, HALO and KMAC conducted joint NTS of cluster munition strikes and mined areas across Kosovo, with the exception of four municipalities in the north. The survey identified 130 CHAs: 51 cluster munition strikes, covering

7.63km², and 79 mined areas over 2.76km².⁸ In 2015, NPA, in coordination with KMAC and local municipality authorities, conducted NTS of the four northern municipalities.⁹ The NPA survey confirmed 8.9km² of CMR contamination in three of the four municipalities surveyed (Leposavic, Zubin Potok, and Zvecan). No CMR were found in the fourth (Mitrovica North). NPA believes that 83 cluster bombs were dropped in this region, dispersing a total of 17,041 submunitions.¹⁰

Contamination is primarily a result of conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s; and between the FRY and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1999. During Operation Allied Force, NATO aircraft bombed 333 locations between 24 March and 10 June 1999, dropping 1,392 bombs that released more than 295,700 submunitions.¹¹ FRY forces also used cluster munitions during the 1998–99 conflict in Kosovo. A large clearance programme followed in 1999 under a UN mandate, but this ended prematurely in 2001, leaving many CMR-contaminated areas still needing to be cleared.¹²

OTHER EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR AND LANDMINES

Kosovo is also contaminated with anti-personnel mines (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines* report on Kosovo for further information). It remains affected by explosive remnants of war (ERW) other than CMR. Most ERW consists of unexploded aircraft bombs and items of abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO) from the conflicts in the 1990s.

However, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams continue to encounter items of unexploded ordnance (UXO) dating back to the Second World War.¹³ The Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Kosovo Security Force (KSF) EOD teams regularly dispose of ERW in response to information provided by the public and demining organisations.¹⁴

1 Email from Ahmet Sallova, Head, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

2 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.

3 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

4 Email from Michael Montafi, Programme Manager, HALO, 18 April 2023.

5 Email from Claus Nielsen, Country Director, NPA, 25 April 2024.

6 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 May 2022.

7 Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 11.

8 A. Moore, HALO, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First CCM Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.

9 NPA, "Cluster Munition Remnants in Northern Kosovo: non-technical survey of contamination and impact", September 2015; and email from Goran Peršić, NPA Bosnia and Herzegovina, 13 May 2016.

10 NPA, "Cluster Munition Remnants in Northern Kosovo: non-technical survey of contamination and impact."

11 ICRC, "Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo", rev. June 2001, pp. 4 and 6; and HALO, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", 10 September 2015, at: <https://bit.ly/30P1X70>.

12 A. Moore, HALO, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First CCM Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.

13 UNMIK, "OKPCC EOD Management Section Annual Report 2008", Pristina, 12 January 2009, p. 4.

14 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 1 August 2012.

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

KMAC is responsible for managing survey and clearance of mines and ERW throughout Kosovo. The Centre prepares an annual work plan in cooperation with the international demining non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and coordinates their operations along with the national demining teams of the KSF. It also coordinates survey, quality assurance (QA), risk education, public information, and victim assistance.¹⁵ KMAC's role and responsibilities as head of the national mine action programme under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence were established and institutionalised by Kosovo's 2012 Law on Humanitarian Demining which was amended in 2022.¹⁶

NGO operators in Kosovo report a constructive working relationship with KMAC and say there is an enabling environment for mine action in Kosovo with clear administrative processes in place for obtaining visas and annual accreditation.¹⁷

In 2023, the Kosovo Government provided €1.1 million in financial support to KMAC and to the KSF for mine and CMR clearance.¹⁸ In 2023, NPA's CMR survey and clearance activities were funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA), the United States (US) Department of State's Office of Weapon Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA), and the European Union (EU).¹⁹ HALO received funding for battle area clearance (BAC) from US PM/WRA and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA).²⁰ It has been estimated that €3.5 million will be required on an annual basis to meet Kosovo's mine action strategy's objectives, totalling €21 million between 2025 and 2030. The programme currently has limited confirmed international funding beyond the middle of 2025. To address this gap, the mine action programme will actively seek to mobilise funds and other resources which will allow for the strategy to be implemented.²¹

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Kosovo's mine action strategy for 2025–30 prioritises gender and diversity mainstreaming as a guiding principle. The strategy directs that mine action activities be sensitive to gender and inclusive of ethnic and disability considerations. It emphasises that gender and diversity considerations should be integrated into all phases of planning, implementation and follow-up.²² Both KMAC and KSF have gender policies in place. KMAC reported that the KSF's gender policy aims to facilitate the consultation of all groups affected by mines and ERW, expressly women and children.

Table 2: Gender composition of operators in 2023²³

Operator	Total staff	Women staff	Total managerial or supervisory staff	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total operational staff	Women in operational positions
KMAC	5	1 (20%)	0	0	3	0 (0%)
KSF	112	27 (24%)	14	2 (14%)	60	9 (15%)
NPA	110	35 (32%)	4	2 (50%)	101	32 (32%)
HALO*	145	34 (23%)	13	2 (15%)	124	29 (23%)
Totals	372	97 (26%)	31	6 (19%)	288	70 (24%)

* The numbers change monthly.

Kosovo's mine action strategy recognises the lack of economic opportunities in Kosovo, with women and youth particularly impacted by limited employment prospects. This leads many to seek better prospects abroad, posing both a challenge and an opportunity for the mine action sector. It poses a threat of losing valuable talent and human capital, yet it also provides an opportunity to recruit new talent

within Kosovo. By hiring both women and men from diverse ethnic groups and offering competitive salary packages and benefits, NPA and HALO actively promote gender equality and economic empowerment within local communities. This approach aligns with the principles outlined in their respective Gender and Diversity Policies.²⁴

15 Ibid.
16 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 June and 3 July 2017; Ministry of Defence, "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 3; and Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 4.
17 Emails from Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.
18 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.
19 Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.
20 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.
21 Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 16.
22 Ibid., p. 18.
23 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.
24 Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 5.

KMAC recognises that explosive ordnance contamination affects women, girls, men and boys differently and that gender specific mobility patterns, roles and responsibilities mean that females and males of various ages and ethnic backgrounds will have different information on areas that are contaminated in their communities, and also different priorities for clearance and post-release land use.²⁵

HALO has a gender policy in place which was developed in consultation with the Kosovo Women's Network. The policy aims at both increasing the recruitment of women and at retaining existing female employees and includes provision for increased family leave and child-care allowances for those taking care of children, to remove barriers to women's employment.²⁶ In 2023, HALO received funding to provide monthly childcare stipends for mothers with children under 6, baby boxes for newborns, and school supplies for children up to 15. This initiative supports the recruitment and retention of women, particularly mothers, by removing employment barriers. In 2023, four women received childcare stipends, one baby box was issued, and 85 school supply packages were given to 41 parents in the programme. Additionally, HALO filmed a recruitment video featuring three female staff members—a team leader, a medic, and our HR manager—discussing their experiences, the work environment, benefits, and the importance of recruiting women. As a result, HALO saw a significant increase in female applicants for operator positions in the following recruitment round.²⁷

HALO continues to ensure that as many household members as possible are consulted during pre- and post-clearance surveys. It stated that it continues to ensure inclusion of women, children, and ethnic minorities in community liaison (CL) activities; there is always a CL Officer woman supporting the NTS teams, and senior management staff who are fluent in relevant languages are deployed for CL activities.²⁸

In 2023, NPA increased the proportion of female employees from 27% of the workforce in 2022 to 32%. Additionally, half of the senior management team is now female. A Gender and Safeguarding focal point was identified in 2023 and was due to begin work in 2024 after receiving training from the global advisor at NPA's Head Office.²⁹

NPA confirmed its survey and CL teams were gender balanced and ensured that the participation of all relevant social groups is always taken into account when conducting activities in local communities.³⁰ NPA's efforts to recruit and train multi-ethnic survey and clearance teams have also been a critical factor in allowing the deployment of teams in areas of particular ethnic and political sensitivities, extending the reach of mine action operations in northern Kosovo, while also building bridges and friendships between the individual staff members and through their community liaison activities.³¹ NPA has reported that in its areas of operations both Albanian and Serbian communities have been previously surveyed and NPA teams conducted clearance in all communities based on the approved annual operational plan.³² At the end of 2023, 54% of NPA staff were Albanian and 46% were Serbian.³³

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

Kosovo has a national mine action standard on the environment which was updated in line with International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) 07.13 on environmental management in mine action during 2022.³⁴ KMAC reported that environmental assessments are part of the planning and delivery of survey and clearance operations.³⁵ In Kosovo, demining operations are conducted from April to November, but climate change is impacting these efforts with more frequent and unpredictable weather events. The first Law on Climate Change, enacted in December 2023, aims to improve environmental protection by controlling greenhouse gas emissions under the Ministry of Environment, Spatial Planning, and Infrastructure.³⁶ KMAC sets priorities for clearance using a system based on three criteria: risk reduction, development and environmental

protection, and poverty reduction. Within the development and environmental protection criterion, hazardous areas contributing to climate change impacts are assigned the highest priority (Priority 1) for clearance.³⁷

NPA Kosovo conducted an initial desk assessment of the environmental impact of its operations with the highest impact coming from the use of very old diesel vehicles. NPA plans to partly mitigate this impact through the procurement of nine new vehicles and by minimising the number of vehicles used to transport equipment and staff during operations. NPA also has a single-use plastic policy in place, has integrated environmental criteria into the procurement process and increased vehicle maintenance.³⁸ Environmental considerations are embedded in Module 3 of NPA's standing

25 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.

26 Email from Olivia Meader, HALO, 22 May 2020.

27 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

28 Email from Megan Dwyer, HALO, 11 May 2022.

29 Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

30 Email from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019.

31 Emails from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019 and 1 September 2020.

32 Email from Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 1 June 2022.

33 Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

34 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.

35 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

36 Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 5.

37 Mine Action and the Resilience of Communities to Climate Change, GICHD, December 2023, p. 40.

38 Email from Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023.

operating procedures (SOP) for Kosovo, which covers Health, Safety, and Environment and environmental assessments are integrated into survey and task planning. In 2023, an environmental focal point was identified who will begin duties after training by NPA's global advisor. NPA and KMAC report that they consider climate-related and extreme weather risks in their task planning.³⁹

In March 2024, HALO's Kosovo programme introduced an SOP on Environmental Management for Operations, aligned with HALO's global environmental management SOP. This SOP aims to ensure minimal environmental impact and mitigates potential negative effects of survey and clearance

operations. While HALO does not currently conduct environmental assessments for planning and delivery of survey and clearance tasks, it follows its SOP and takes measures such as minimising vegetation cutting during clearance, avoids cutting down trees whose trunks are larger than 5cm in diameter, and works around smaller trees when possible, rather than cutting them down. HALO also plans for weather-related impacts by, for example, scheduling high-altitude tasks during the dry season to ensure better access and safety. HALO notes that increasingly unpredictable weather patterns have made planning more challenging in recent years.⁴⁰

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

KMAC uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) New Generation version for its national mine action database. Data are disaggregated between mines, CMR, and other ERW.⁴¹ Operators were positive in their assessments of the quality and accessibility of data contained in the database and of KMAC's information management systems in general. At the time of writing, KMAC was collaborating with the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) to install IMSMA Core, which was expected to be operational by late 2024. During this process, data quality has been improved and data updated, incorporating reports from operators. HALO Kosovo's Information Manager and KMAC's Quality Assurance Officer participated in an IMSMA Core training in Switzerland and are assisting KMAC with the transition to the new system.⁴²

Operators report to KMAC on a weekly basis; NPA reported all data collection forms are consistent and enable collection of the necessary data.⁴³ HALO was similarly positive, adding that the database is checked against HALO's quarterly reports. Once a task is completed or when KMAC agrees and signs off on a re-survey or survey conducted by an NTS team, the data is fed into IMSMA.⁴⁴

The land release data reported to Mine Action Review by clearance operators and the KMAC were more or less aligned. This is an improvement compared to previous years' reports, which typically contained greater discrepancies.

KMAC reported to Mine Action Review that Kosovo was planning to submit a voluntary Article 7 report for the CCM.⁴⁵

PLANNING AND TASKING

Kosovo's newly launched Mine Action Strategy for 2025–30, developed by KMAC in consultation with operators and with the support of the GICHD, declares that the risk of explosive ordnance contamination will be considered tolerable once all high and medium-priority tasks have been completed by 2030, and provided that there are no incidents for five years thereafter. The general expectation is that any remaining contamination after 2030 would be considered as residual.⁴⁶ Strategic objective 1 on land release is supported by four strategic outcomes:

- Greater clarity on the remaining contamination in Northern municipalities will be established;
- Mine action organisations will continue clearance operations to fulfil task completion, prioritising high and medium-priority tasks and concluding with low-priority tasks;

- In light of current efficiency challenges and anticipated obstacles posed by difficult terrain such as dense vegetation and steep slopes, KMAC will reassess clearance requirements to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; and
- Recognising that 2030 marks the conclusion of the international mine action organisations' presence in Kosovo, the mine action programme will implement staff transition plans.⁴⁷

The target of 1.8km² of annual BAC has been set, along with zero high and medium priority tasks remaining by 2030 and as few low priority tasks remaining as possible. It is planned that of the 38 municipalities that are currently contaminated with landmines and CMR 35 will be declared free from risks of landmines or CMR by 2030.⁴⁸

39 Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

40 Email from Michael Montaf, HALO, 7 May 2024.

41 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 30 April 2019.

42 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; and Erkin Huseinov, Advisor Information Management, GICHD, 21 June 2024.

43 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO, 1 May 2019; Terje Eldøen, NPA, 25 April 2019; and Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 1 June 2022.

44 Email from Megan Dwyer, HALO, 11 May 2022.

45 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

46 Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, p. 8.

47 Ibid., p. 10.

48 Ibid., p. 11.

KMAC elaborates an annual work plan for survey and clearance of CMR. In 2024, it planned for the release of 14 of the 38 hazardous areas.⁴⁹

In 2019, HALO developed a new prioritisation system that considers the “community profile” for a task. This system draws on several factors, such as socio-economic status,

planned land use, government development plans, and demographics. All information is collected from government and public data as well as from extensive community survey. New prioritisation information was added during 2021 and early 2022 through the NTS project by providing an individual rank for prioritisation based on set parameters.⁵⁰

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2022, the national mine action standard (NMAS) for land release in Kosovo was updated in accordance with IMAS and made available to operators in March 2023.⁵¹ The terms “mine/ERW” were replaced by “explosive ordnance” throughout. The definition of “clearance” was updated, along with the addition of a section on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and booby-traps.⁵²

At the beginning of 2023, HALO Kosovo updated its SOPs for manual mine clearance, BAC, and task management to reflect the organisation’s global best practices. Due to the dense vegetation and steep slopes in the remaining BAC tasks, HALO, and with agreement from KMAC, chose the Schonstedt GA-72Cd detector as the primary search method for BAC. This decision was based on extensive testing in consultation with clearance operators. The Vallon VMX-10 Large Loop Detector, previously the primary search detector, exhibited limitations in specific operational scenarios. It struggled to manoeuvre effectively in young forests with closely grouped trees, where diameters range from three to ten centimetres, requiring multiple areas to be marked for subsequent searches with the Schonstedt. Additionally, when operating in steep terrain, BAC operators faced challenges maintaining balance and ensuring consistent mapping at the required height with the Vallon VMX-10. Navigating such terrain proved time-consuming, as it required extra effort from operators to maintain balance and remap areas for accurate coverage. The Vallon VMX-10 will continue to be used in specific areas where its deployment is practical.⁵³

Since 2018, NPA has been implementing the Cluster Munition Remnants Survey (CMRS) methodology to carry out technical

survey (TS) on CMR-contaminated areas in Kosovo. According to this methodology, which NPA has modified to reflect the specific conditions in Kosovo (and in line with the IMAS), operators are permitted to enter a cluster munition strike area and to walk on ground with subsurface contamination, increasing the efficiency of the survey process and offering the ability to accurately define confirmed hazardous areas.⁵⁴ HALO also works in the same way after conducting a field risk assessment to evaluate the safety implications of walking in uncleared ground.⁵⁵

The HALO Kosovo Programme continues to conduct its research and development activities to increase safety and operational efficiency and share innovative technological means. The Scorpion detection system from US Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program (HDRD) was successfully trialled in 2019 and is now deployed to support BAC tasks. The Scorpion detector integrates a large-loop electromagnetic induction (EMI) sensor and caesium vapour total-field magnetometer and applies differential global positioning system (DGPS) for centimetre accuracy in targeting. It is essentially two integrated detectors mounted on a trolley, which can be deployed over an open task to identify desired magnetic anomalies in the ground.

The Scorpion system has been found to significantly improve BAC productivity in suitable areas, that is outside of densely vegetated areas or steep terrains. In 2023, the Scorpion system was more than twice as productive as the Large Loop Detector, with average clearance rates of 168m² per day compared to 82m² a day for the Large Loop Detector.⁵⁶

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2023, Kosovo’s national mine action programme’s capacity consisted of two international operators, HALO and NPA, and a national operator, the KSF. The KSF, also provided a round-the-clock EOD emergency response. KFOR also supports the KSF and Kosovo Police with EOD response tasks and organising mine and ERW demolitions in Mitrovica and the north of Kosovo, including in NPA’s areas of operations.⁵⁷

49 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

50 Emails from Olivia Meader, HALO, 22 May 2020; and Megan Dwyer, HALO, 11 May 2022.

51 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 May 2022.

52 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.

53 Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024; and Laura Moreno-González, Operations Manager, HALO, 25 June 2024.

54 Interview with Terje Eldøen, NPA, Pristina, 5 April 2019; and email, 25 April 2019.

55 Email from Laura Moreno-González, HALO, 25 June 2024.

56 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

57 “Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo”, 4 April 2019, p. 4; and interview with Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, Pristina, 5 April 2019.

Table 3: Operational clearance capacities deployed in 2023⁵⁸

Operator	Manual CMR clearance teams	Total CMR clearance personnel
KSF	3	45
HALO	9	73
NPA	8	80
Totals	20	198

HALO's operational personnel are cross-trained for mine clearance and BAC and can move readily between the two.⁵⁹ There was no substantial change to the number of

clearance personnel deployed by HALO in 2023 compared to 2022. However, no survey personnel were deployed in 2023 following the completion of the survey project in 2022. Training continues for new staff to replace those who have retired or left, but HALO did not expect any significant changes to their overall capacity in 2024.⁶⁰

NPA's area of operations in Kosovo cover the five northern municipalities of Leposavic, Mitrovica, Podujevo, Zubin Potok, and Zvecan.⁶¹ In 2023, there was a significant increase in the number of CMRS and clearance personnel deployed by NPA compared to 2022, with three additional teams deployed from March 2023, funded by the EU. This capacity will be maintained throughout 2024.⁶²

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2023

A total of 2.23km² of cluster munition-contaminated area was released in 2023, of which 1.92km² was cleared and 0.31km² was reduced through TS. Half of all area clearance in 2023, however, found no CMR.

SURVEY IN 2023

In 2023, no land was cancelled through NTS and 0.31km² was reduced through TS (see Table 4).⁶³ This is a decrease from the 0.63km² cancelled through NTS in 2022 and an increase from the 0.26km² reduced through TS in 2022.⁶⁴

Table 4: Reduction through TS in 2023

District	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
Mitrovica	NPA	145,851
Zvecan	NPA	159,720
Total		305,571

CLEARANCE IN 2023

In 2023, over 1.93km² of CMR-contaminated area was cleared with the destruction of 196 submunitions (see Table 5).⁶⁵ This is an increase from the 1.32km² of CMR-contaminated area cleared in 2022.⁶⁶ That said, since half of all clearance in 2023 found no CMR, this indicates an ongoing problem with survey.

Table 5: CMR clearance in 2023⁶⁷

District	Operator	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
Mitrovica	NPA	1	453,202	26	36
Zvecan	NPA	1	336,095	152	4
Pristina	NPA	1	25,550	0	0
Gracanica	NPA	1	72,258	3	139
Ferizaj	HALO	1	120,621	0	0
Peje	HALO	2	81,931	5	0

58 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

59 Email from Megan Dwyer, HALO, 11 May 2022.

60 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

61 Email from Terje Eldøen, NPA, 26 August 2020.

62 Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

63 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

64 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023; Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

65 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

66 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023; Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

67 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May and 4 July 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

68 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024.

Table 5 Continued

District	Operator	Areas cleared	Area cleared (m ²)	Submunitions destroyed	Other UXO destroyed
Prishtine	HALO	2	32,645	10	0
Prizren	HALO	1	32,963	0	0
Ferizaj	KSF	1	41,000	0	1
Ferizaj	KSF	1	71,000	0	115
Babaj i Bokes	KSF	1	656,000	(Surface clearance only) 0	5
Totals		13	1,923,265	196	300

KSF was reported to have cleared a total 146,071m² across two tasks with no submunitions found.⁶⁸ NPA started clearance of the task in Pristina in late 2023 and cleared 25,550m² with no submunitions found but this task was ongoing in 2024 and it was expected that submunitions would be found during clearance.⁶⁹ HALO released one task in Devetak, Ferizaj totalling 247,367m² with no submunitions found although their teams found considerable evidence of the presence of cluster munitions.⁷⁰ The original polygon was 185,258m², though total area cleared was 201,693m² due to additional fade-outs outside the original surveyed area, with 45,674m² from the original survey polygon reduced.⁷¹

There was a significant decrease in the amount of CMR contaminated area cleared by HALO from 2022 to 2023. This decrease was primarily due to the remaining tasks being in steep, densely vegetated areas unsuitable for the large-loop detector it has been using. However, the area reduced through TS increased due to fewer evidence points requiring fade-out. With the survey project completed in 2022, no area was cancelled in 2023.⁷² There was no significant change in NPA's clearance output from 2022 to 2023.⁷³

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Kosovo cannot formally adhere to the CCM and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 4. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear CMR as soon as possible.

Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24 aimed to complete mine and cluster munition clearance by the end of 2024.⁷⁴ It is now understood by KMAC and operators that meeting this clearance deadline will not be possible, and a new mine action strategy for 2025–30 has been developed with a new completion deadline set for 2030.⁷⁵

NPA reported that the delayed EU funding, which was initially supposed to start in 2019 but did not feed through until the end of 2022, had been a significant impediment to meeting clearance targets as operators were not able to increase clearance capacity as planned. In addition, the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to a significant reduction in clearance output for that year. Furthermore, previously unrecorded CMR contamination has been found and added to the database every year. For NPA working in northern Kosovo, the remaining contaminated areas are located at high altitudes where due to local weather conditions it is only possible to conduct clearance from May to September, thereby restricting annual clearance output.⁷⁶

Operators agree that the new deadline can be met, given sustained donor commitment to clearing the remaining mine and cluster munition contamination in Kosovo. This effort is seen as a crucial contributor to enhancing human security, economic development, and stability in Kosovo and the broader Western Balkans region.⁷⁷

Table 6: Five-year summary of CMR clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2023	1.92
2022	1.32
2021	1.30
2020	0.34
2019	1.26
Total	6.14

⁶⁹ Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

⁷⁰ Emails from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May and 25 June 2024.

⁷¹ Email from Laura Moreno-González, HALO, 25 June 2024.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Email from Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024.

⁷⁴ "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 14 May 2024; Claus Nielsen, NPA, 25 April 2024; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

⁷⁶ Email from Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023.

⁷⁷ Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 7 May 2024.

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

The second strategic objective of Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2025–30 focuses on enhancing national capacities and includes a strategic outcome on the management of residual contamination. As clearance operations conclude in 2030, Kosovo will shift from proactive clearance efforts to the reactive management of residual threats by KMAC with support from KSF units. Recognising the unique requirements of risk management, KMAC will seek to ensure that both KMAC and KSF are equipped, staffed, and resourced to address residual contamination effectively.⁷⁸ A comprehensive residual contamination strategy is planned for development and submission to the Government of Kosovo by 2029.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Kosovo Mine Action Strategy 2025–2030, 18 June 2024, pp. 8 and 12.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.