

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

1 KM²

(NATIONAL ESTIMATE)

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2022

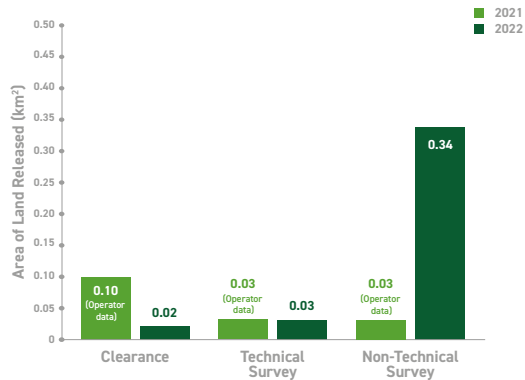
0.02 KM²

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2022

12

(ALL DESTROYED IN
SPOT TASKS)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- While formal accession to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) is not currently possible for Kosovo, as it is not yet recognised as a State by the depository, Kosovo should submit a letter to the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General stating that it intends to fully comply, on a voluntary basis, with the APMBC and submit voluntary Article 7 reports annually.
- The Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC) should seek to complete clearance of anti-personnel (AP) mines as soon as possible and should elaborate a new mine action strategy with realistic annual targets and a timeline for completion.
- The Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) should be updated to the latest version, to have accurate and up-to-date information for the new mine action strategy.
- 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 evidence of CMR contamination before embarking on full clearance.
- A specific resource mobilisation strategy should be developed as a matter of urgency.

DEMINEING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT

- Kosovo Mine Action Centre (KMAC)

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Kosovo Security Force (KSF)

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- The HALO Trust (HALO)

- Kosovo Force (KFOR), a NATO-led International Peace Keeping Force

OTHER ACTORS

- Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Kosovo is contaminated by mines, cluster munition remnants (CMR), and other explosive remnants of war (ERW), primarily as a result of the conflict between the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in the late 1990s, and between Yugoslavia and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) member States in 1999.¹

As at the end of 2022, KMAC reported that 25 AP mined areas remained, covering almost 0.59km² (see Table 1).

In addition, there are four areas that are contaminated with both AP mines and CMR totalling 425,000m², bringing the total to 1.01km².² This is a decrease from the 30 mined areas covering almost 1.19km² reported as at the end of 2021.³ The baseline of mine contamination at the end of 2022 cannot be reconciled with the baseline reported by KMAC at the end of 2021.

Table 1: AP mined area by district (at end 2022) (KMAC data)⁴

District	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)	Total areas	Total area (m ²)
South	1	20,000	5	72,021	6	92,021
East	2	14,645	4	68,832	6	83,477
West	6	177,274	7	236,054	13	413,328
Total	9	211,919	16	376,907	25	588,826

The last detailed survey of contamination in Kosovo was in 2013, during which The HALO Trust (HALO) and KMAC systematically conducted community surveys across most of the districts in Kosovo, with the exception of four municipalities in the north, and confirmed 130 hazardous areas: 79 mined areas covering an estimated 2.76km² and 51 cluster munition strikes covering an estimated 7.63km².⁵ The northern municipalities have since been surveyed and KMAC has confirmed that no mined areas remain.⁶

KMAC believes the current baseline of contamination to be reasonably accurate, evidence-based, and complete, but said there may still be reports by locals in the future of previously unknown areas suspected to be contaminated by mines.⁷

HALO conducted a non-technical survey (NTS) project from 2021 to 2022 that was designed to create CHAs and SHAs, as this was not done during the 2013 survey; prior to the

recent survey there was no classification of CHAs and SHAs in Kosovo. HALO reports that the project has significantly contributed to ensuring Kosovo's current baseline is as accurate as possible given available resources. In 2022, 77,506m² of previously unrecorded AP mined area was discovered by HALO through NTS and added to the database. The areas consist of eight mined areas in the villages of Batushë, Belincë, Kabash, Kuklibeg, Morinë, Neçavc, and Rapqë.⁸

Both AP and anti-vehicle (AV) mines were used during the conflict, in fixed-pattern minefields as well as more randomly in "nuisance" minefields.⁹ The UN claimed in 2002 that "the problems associated with landmines, cluster munitions and other items of unexploded ordnance [UXO] in Kosovo have been virtually eliminated",¹⁰ but further investigation revealed considerably more contamination than indicated.¹¹

OTHER EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE CONTAMINATION

In addition to contamination from mines, Kosovo is contaminated with CMR (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2023* report on Kosovo for further information) as well as other ERW. Kosovo Force (KFOR) and Kosovo Security Force (KSF) explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) teams regularly dispose of ERW in response to information from the public or demining organisations.¹²

1 See UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), "UNMIK OKPCC EOD Management Section Annual Report 2005", Pristina, 18 January 2006, p. 2; and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo*, Rev'd Edn, Geneva, June 2001, at: <https://bit.ly/331PWfQ>, pp. 6 and 15.

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

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

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

5 HALO, "Action on cluster munitions in Kosovo", Side event, First Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM) Review Conference, Dubrovnik, 10 September 2015.

6 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 23 August 2022.

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

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

9 ICRC, *Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo*, June 2001, p. 15.

10 "UNMIK Mine Action Programme Annual Report - 2001", Mine Action Coordination Cell, Pristina, undated but 2002, p. 1.

11 HALO, "Failing the Kosovars: The Hidden Impact and Threat from ERW", Report, 15 December 2006, p. 1.

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

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Kosovo's mine action programme is fully nationally owned, with a strong, longstanding commitment from the government, and benefits from a dedicated team of permanent national staff.¹³ KMAC is responsible for managing survey and clearance of mines and ERW throughout Kosovo. KMAC prepares an annual work plan in cooperation with 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, risk education, public information, and victim assistance activities.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

In 2022, the Kosovo Government provided €1.1 million in financial support to KMAC and to the KSF for mine and CMR clearance.¹⁷ Kosovo's current Mine Action Strategy, for 2019–24 sets an objective of ensuring greater financial stability through intensified fundraising efforts.¹⁸ HALO was able to secure three years' funding in 2021 from the US Government, with support from KMAC.¹⁹ In December 2022, the European Union (EU) committed to funding a joint project from Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) and HALO, which will run for 34 months, with €2 million assigned to NPA for CMR clearance and €1.9 million assigned to HALO for mine clearance.²⁰

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 2022.²¹

HALO's Kosovo programme has no specific environmental standing operating procedure (SOP) but an organisational environmental policy and global SOP were under review at the time of writing.²²

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

Kosovo's mine action strategy 2019–24 stipulates that all mine action activities and assistance must reflect the needs of different ages and gender in a targeted and non-discriminatory manner, and that mine action and community liaison data are to be collected and systematically disaggregated according to sex and age.²³ 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 mine action operators in 2022²⁴

Operator	Total staff	Women employed	Total staff in managerial or supervisory positions	Women in managerial or supervisory positions	Total staff in operational positions	Women in operational positions
KMAC	4	1	3	0	1	1
KSF	115	6	8	1	95	4
HALO	102	28	15	5	71	20

13 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, pp. 5–6.

14 ICRC, *Explosive Remnants of War, Cluster Bombs and Landmines in Kosovo*, June 2001, p. 15.

15 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 3; and email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 May 2022.

16 Emails from Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

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

18 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 14.

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

20 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

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

22 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

23 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 8; and email from Megan Dwyer, HALO, 11 May 2022.

24 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

Kosovo's mine action strategy recognises the local barriers to equal employment society, with significant differences in employment levels between men and women. The Strategy notes that, as at 2019, more than four-fifths of women of working age were not employed in Kosovo's labour market, and less than one in eight had been employed annually over the past five years. The primary reasons given for female unemployment are child- and family-care obligations, which traditionally in Kosovo society fall on women.

The Strategy notes the efforts of mine action operators to overcome these challenges and barriers to employment, such as through childcare and parental leave, and gender-sensitive recruitment practices that encourage women to apply for positions traditionally seen as jobs for men. It further recalls the importance of employment of not only multi-gender, but also multi-ethnic survey and clearance teams, and the particular benefits of recruitment in areas affected by high unemployment and poverty.²⁵

KMAC recognises that explosive ordnance affects women, girls, men and boys differently and that gender-specific mobility patterns, roles, and responsibilities mean that women and men of different ages and ethnic backgrounds will have distinct information on contaminated areas in their

communities as well as different priorities for clearance and post-release land use.²⁶

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, in order to remove barriers to women's employment.²⁷ HALO continues to explore options for attracting more female applicants to clearance operator vacancies, such as creating a video showcasing female HALO employees and liaising with women's networks in Kosovo.²⁸

HALO continues to ensure that as many household members as possible are consulted during pre- and post-clearance surveys. It continues to ensure inclusion of women, children, and ethnic minorities in community liaison (CL) activities; there is always a female CL Officer supporting the NTS teams, and senior management staff who are fluent in relevant languages are deployed for CL activities.²⁹

According to KMAC, Kosovo's baseline of AP mined area has been established through inclusive consultation.³⁰

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.³¹ 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.

HALO reported that all data collection forms are consistent and enable collection of the necessary data and added that the database is checked in comparison to HALO's quarterly reports; once every 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.³²

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 voluntary submission of Article 7 reports was again under consideration.³³

PLANNING AND TASKING

Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy for 2019–24 predicted that all known mined and CMR-contaminated areas would be addressed by the end of 2024, leaving only residual contamination to be managed thereafter. It contains annual projections for AP mine clearance, including:

- all high-priority AP mine tasks (8 as at October 2018) to be cleared by the end of 2020
- all medium-priority AP mine tasks (25 as at October 2018) to be cleared by 2022
- all low-priority AP mine tasks (15 as at October 2018) to be completed by 2024.³⁴

25 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, pp. 8–9.

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

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

28 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

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

30 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 16 April 2020.

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

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

33 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 8 June 2023.

34 "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 12.

In 2022, KMAC, with support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), conducted a mid-term review of the strategy through a stakeholder workshop with active participation from KMAC, the KSF, HALO, and NPA. The greatest impediments to implementation of the strategy identified during the mid-term review included:

- COVID-19 related lockdowns and restrictions.
- The discovery of previously unrecorded contaminated areas, which significantly increased the contamination baseline.
- Substantial delays in the multi-year EU grant that fund HALO and NPA activities until 2025.
- Operational assets, including survey and clearance equipment and vehicles, are old and need to be repaired or replaced.
- Seasonal factors mean that some areas can be accessed for only up to six months a year. Also, the geographic locations of some hazardous areas make them difficult to access at times.³⁵

In light of these challenges and the fact that Kosovo is not on track to meet the objectives in its current strategy, KMAC,

in consultation with operators, will elaborate a new strategy in partnership with the GICHD that will include an updated contamination baseline, clearance objectives, and completion timeline.³⁶

In 2022, the work plan prioritised the clearance of high-priority AP mined areas, but this was a challenge for KMAC as they only had two KSF teams dedicated to the task.³⁷ As at July 2023, four high-priority AP mine tasks identified in 2018 had been cleared and four were suspended. Nine of the medium-priority tasks have been cleared and four are currently suspended. None of the low-priority tasks has yet been cleared but all remaining tasks will be addressed in the new strategy.³⁸

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.³⁹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2022, the national mine action standard for land release in Kosovo was updated in accordance with IMAS and made available to operators in March 2023.⁴⁰ 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.⁴¹

At the beginning of 2023, HALO Kosovo reviewed and updated its SOPs on manual mine clearance, battle area clearance (BAC), and task management to reflect HALO’s best practice globally.⁴²

A 2014 evaluation of Kosovo’s mine action programme, conducted on behalf of the International Trust Fund (ITF) Enhancing Human Security, concluded that increased capacity and improvements to land release methodology and equipment would be necessary for Kosovo to complete clearance by 2024. Since the 2014 evaluation, significant improvements have been made to the mine action programme, including the introduction by HALO of Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System (HSTAMID) detectors, which have enhanced operational productivity.⁴³

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2022, Kosovo’s national mine action programme’s capacity consisted of two international operators—HALO and NPA—and a national operator: the KSF. NPA, however, did not conduct survey or clearance of AP mined area in 2022, focusing solely on tackling CMR.⁴⁴ The KSF also provided a round-the-clock EOD emergency response. KFOR, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force, also supports the KSF and Kosovo Police with EOD response and organises mine and ERW demolitions in Mitrovica and the north of Kosovo.⁴⁵ The demining season is from the end of March to the end of November due to weather conditions.⁴⁶

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

36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 July 2023.

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

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

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

42 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

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

44 Email from Vanja Sikirica, NPA Kosovo, 20 May 2022; and telephone interview, 1 July 2022.

45 Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 28 April 2021.

46 “Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo”, 4 April 2019, p. 3.

Table 3: Operational NTS, TS, and clearance capacities deployed in 2022⁴⁷

Operator	NTS teams	Total NTS personnel	Manual TS/clearance teams	Total TS/clearance personnel
KSF	0	0	2	10
HALO	2	8	0	0
Totals	2	8	2	10

HALO's operational personnel are cross-trained for both mine clearance and BAC and can move readily between the two. In 2022, HALO deployed two teams with eight personnel in total for the NTS project, which concluded in September 2022. HALO did not deploy any personnel for mine clearance in 2022 due to the programme's mine clearance funding ceasing in November 2021. The mine clearance team that had been deployed in November 2021 switched to CMR clearance

for the remainder of 2021 and the entirety of 2022. In 2023, HALO expected to have fewer NTS personnel following the conclusion of the NTS project. These personnel will be retrained and deployed for mine clearance in 2023 due to the commencement of the EU IPA III mine clearance grant. HALO was planning to train and deploy four mine clearance teams in 2023.⁴⁸ KSF deployed half the number of deminers in 2022 compared to 2021 due to a drop in funding.⁴⁹

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2022

KMAC reported a total of nearly 0.40km² of AP mined area released in 2022, of which 0.34km² was cancelled, 0.03km² was reduced and 0.02km² was cleared.

SURVEY IN 2022

In 2022, a total of 343,093m² was cancelled through non-technical survey by HALO in the districts of Gjakove and Gjilan and 34,729m² was reduced through technical survey (TS) by KSF in the west of the country. This is an increase from the 30,086m² cancelled and the 33,100m² reduced in 2021 due to an increased number of areas assessed by HALO NTS teams and the number of NTS reports approved by KMAC.⁵⁰

Table 4: Release of mined area through NTS in 2022⁵¹

District	Operator	Area cancelled (m ²)
Gjakove	HALO	322,763
Gjilan	HALO	20,330
Total		343,093

Table 5: Release of mined area through TS in 2022⁵²

District	Operator	Area reduced (m ²)
West	KSF	34,729
Total		34,729

CLEARANCE IN 2022

In 2022, a total of 20,650m² was released through clearance without any AP mines being found, only fragments of AP mines and one item of UXO (see Table 6).⁵³ This is a decrease from the 166,869m² reported as cleared in 2021 with seven AP mines destroyed.⁵⁴ The drop in output is largely due to HALO not being funded for mine clearance in 2022.⁵⁵

47 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 8 June 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

48 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

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

50 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

51 Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

52 Ibid.

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

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

55 Email from Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

Table 6: Mine clearance in 2022 (KMAC data)⁵⁶

District	Operator	Area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
West	KSF	16,770	0	1
East	KSF	3,880	0	0
Total		20,650	0	1

In addition, 12 AP mines were found and destroyed by KSF during EOD spot tasks.⁵⁷

PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

Kosovo cannot formally adhere to the APMB as it is not recognised as a State by the depository of the Convention and therefore does not have a specific clearance deadline under Article 5. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear AP mines as soon as possible.

Kosovo's Mine Action Strategy 2019–24 aims to complete mine and cluster munition clearance by the end of 2024.⁵⁸ It is now understood by KMAC and operators that meeting this clearance deadline will not be possible, and a new mine action strategy is in development which will include an updated deadline for completion.⁵⁹ The completion of the NTS project means that Kosovo has its most accurate estimate ever of remaining AP mined area. Recently secured EU funding has enabled HALO to resume mine clearance. A new mine action strategy was due to be elaborated in 2023 with an updated completion timeline.

Nearly 25 years have passed since the conflict between the FRY forces and NATO ended, and it is high time that Kosovo sets a clearance deadline that is realistic and met. While some of the challenges identified in the mid-term strategic review remain, Kosovo should ensure that efficient land release methodologies are applied so that resources are not wasted on untargeted clearance.

Table 7: Five-year summary of AP mine clearance

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2022	0.02
2021	0.10
2020	0.14
2019	0.27
2018	0.22
Total	0.75

PLANNING FOR MANAGEMENT OF RESIDUAL CONTAMINATION

KMAC has reported that a strategy for the management of residual contamination will be developed in conjunction with the new mine action strategy.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ "Mine Action Strategy 2019–2024 in Republic of Kosovo", 4 April 2019, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Emails from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023; Vanja Sikirica, NPA, 30 March 2023; and Michael Montafi, HALO, 18 April 2023.

⁶⁰ Email from Ahmet Sallova, KMAC, 24 April 2023.