

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Vietnam should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a state party to the APMBC, Vietnam has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Vietnam should prepare and publish a detailed assessment of remaining mined areas.
- The Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) should draw up a strategic plan for completing mine clearance.
- VNMAC should provide regular detailed reporting on the progress of demining.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Vietnam's mine problem is certainly small compared with its explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination, though its full extent is unknown. A survey conducted between 2010 and 2014 reported anti-personnel mines in 26 of 63 cities and provinces but gave no further details.¹ Between 2014 and 2019, Danish Demining Group (DDG) identified 13 previously unrecorded minefields in four districts in Quang Nam province and one district in Thua Thien Hue province. In 2018, DDG identified three anti-personnel mined areas of 12,652m² in A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province. Local residents were aware of the presence of mines and reported to DDG that they tended to avoid these areas.²

Most mines were left by conflicts in the 1970s with neighbouring Cambodia and China, and affect areas close to its borders with those countries.³ Clearance had been

reported by Vietnam along its northern border with China in the 1990s and from 2004 onwards, but mined areas further inland are believed to persist.⁴ It was reported in 2013 by the Engineering Command that clearance had been completed in the Cambodia border areas.⁵ Many ports and river deltas were mined extensively during the armed conflict with the United States and were not completely cleared when it ended. A number of sea mines have been found on the coast.⁶ Some mines have also been found around former United States (US) military installations.⁷

Vietnam also has extensive contamination from cluster munition remnants (CMR) and other explosive remnants of war (ERW) ("See Mine Action Review's *Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants 2019* report on Vietnam for further information").

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Vietnam's mine action programme is restructuring, but management and operations continue to depend largely on the armed forces. According to the Decree on the Management and Implementation of Mine Action Activities, issued in February 2019 (hereafter, the 2019 Decree), the Ministry of National Defence (MoD) will continue to elaborate and preside over the national mine action programme, as the lead authority, in coordination with other relevant ministries and sectors.⁸ It also designates the MoD as the focal point for international cooperation in mine action.⁹

The Vietnam National Mine Action Centre (VNMAC) was established in 2014 by Prime Ministerial decision (No. 738 of 2013) to strengthen the direction of mine action and provide

a focal point for mine action operations. The 2019 Decree instructed VNMAC, "under the direction of the Prime Minister and managed by Ministry of Defense, to monitor, coordinate and implement mine action tasks."¹⁰ Although the VMAC is not yet fully functional, 2019 is a crucial year as the national programme develops its legal framework, structure, policies, and standards.¹¹

Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and Golden West all provide capacity development support in Vietnam.¹²

GENDER

As at August 2019, Vietnam has not provided information on whether it has a gender policy and implementation plan for mine action.

International operators DDG, MAG, and NPA all report having organisational gender and diversity policies and state that they consult both women and children during community liaison activities with male and female members of community liaison/survey teams. They say they provide equal opportunities during the recruitment process and are working towards gender-balanced employment.¹³

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Data quality and accessibility continues to be a major challenge in Vietnam. VNMAC is responsible for national information management and uses the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA). However, with the exception of the UNDP Korea-Vietnam Mine Action Project (KV-MAP) project data, information is not shared with mine action operators.¹⁴ The ERW impact survey report released in 2018 noted that "regulations on reporting demining activities have not been strictly followed" and authorities had received clearance data for only two provinces, Ha Tinh and Quang Tri, where international donors have supported operations.¹⁵

The VNMAC information management unit intends to consolidate mine action data from the Technology Centre for Bomb and Mine Disposal (BOMICEN), the UNDP KV-MAP project, and Quang Tri province into the national information management system. With support from NPA, VNMAC is equipped with the necessary technical capabilities and knowledge, but legislation governing the collection and sharing of mine action data was lacking.¹⁶ However, the forthcoming guiding Circular, which as at June 2019 was being elaborated, is expected to provide clarity on the collection and sharing of mine action data, including data the military allow to be made public.¹⁷

Vietnam has a National Mine Action Standard, a Technical Mine Action Regulation, and various mine action-related procedures, each of which have their own data collection forms. These data collection forms are not consistent, nor

are they used in a standard manner. However, this issue is expected to be addressed by the legal framework being developed.¹⁸

Mine action data collected by the provincial information management system in Quang Tri, also using IMSMA, is accessible to all mine action stakeholders. The database holds survey and clearance results, providing a basis for planning and tasking, as well as victim data. It has also received some data on clearance activity undertaken by the Provincial Military Command for 2000 to 2013.¹⁹ The data, which are believed to be accurate, up to date, and reliable, have been the catalyst for greater coordination across all stakeholders within the province.²⁰ Live operations data can be accessed via QTMAC's website, while the other Vietnamese provinces with active mine action programmes do not have databases, and operators maintain their own.²¹

Development of information management is an aim of the KV-MAP project, the goal of which is to improve available information for the UXO/mine action sector to support informed policy making and task prioritisation.²² In 2018, Coordination Offices and Database Centres for Mine Action were established in Quang Binh and Binh Dinh provinces with training provided to provincial staff. As at June 2019, these centres manage the data from the KV-MAP project which is then fed into the VNMAC database but the aim is for the centres to be sustainable and in the future manage the mine action data for the province.²³

PLANNING AND TASKING

Decision 504, approved by the Prime Minister in April 2010, set out a National Mine Action Plan for 2010–25. The plan aimed to "mobilize domestic and international resources in making efforts to minimize and finally create impact-free environment for social economic development." It called for ERW contamination clearance of 8,000km² between 2016 and 2025.²⁴

A VNMAC action plan for 2018 included three main targets²⁵:

- Finalise legislation, decrees, and guidelines for the mine action sector in order to provide a unified framework for the sector country-wide
- Clarify contamination estimates through the release of the landmine impact survey and develop risk education
- Clearance of some 300km² of ERW-affected land.

It is evident that at least partially these targets have been achieved: legislation has been introduced; clarifying guidelines are being developed; and the results of the ERW impact survey were released. As at May 2019, however, no

information had been formally provided by VNMAC on the realisation of its 2018 goals or on its goals for 2019.

As at May 2019, there was no national prioritisation system for mine clearance. The prioritisation processes implemented in Quang Tri and Quang Binh are predominantly for CMR contamination. In Quang Tri province, there is a prioritisation plan in place and an effective system for task allocation.²⁶ The prioritisation processes and accompanying forms were piloted in 2018 and were rolled out in May 2019, with QTMAC now managing the province-wide clearance task prioritization process.²⁷ The criteria are established based on consultation and agreement between QTMAC and operators. In Quang Binh province, MAG has been applying its own procedures and process to prioritise clearance tasks based on scores of consent, hazard assessment, and community benefits.²⁸ While DDG uses a consultative approach at the province, district and village level to prioritise its clearance tasks.²⁹

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

Vietnam has both National Technical Regulations (QCVNs), which are legally binding and similar in content to standing operating procedures (SoPs), and National Mine Action Standards (TCVN), closely aligned with the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS), but considered optional by VNNMAC and the MoD.³⁰

OPERATORS

Most clearance in Vietnam is conducted by the Army Engineering Corps and military-owned commercial companies. Outside the central provinces its current strength and deployment are unknown. Officials have previously reported that it had 250 mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) teams nationally. The three Provincial Military Command (PMC) teams in the aforementioned provinces all conducted BAC throughout 2018. Vietnam reportedly has more than 70 military-owned companies undertaking clearance related to infrastructure and commercial and development projects.³¹

International operators active in 2018 included DDG, working in Quang Nam and Thua Thien Hue provinces; MAG, working in Quang Binh and Quang Tri provinces; NPA, working in Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue provinces; and PeaceTrees Vietnam, which has been working in Quang Tri province since 1995.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

VNNMAC has not shared any data on mine clearance activities in Vietnam in 2018 and operators did not report any anti-personnel mined area reduced or cancelled through survey or cleared in 2018.

In 2018, DDG identified 12,652m² of anti-personnel mined area in A Luoi district, Thua Thien Hue province.³² During explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) spot tasks, five anti-personnel mines were destroyed: one by DDG, one by MAG, and three by NPA.³³

Vietnam has not set a deadline for completion of anti-personnel mine clearance. In 2013–17, the Legacy of War Coordination Centre (renamed the Quang Tri Mine Action Centre in 2018), recorded clearance of 497 mines, 4% of the total number of items cleared, but the number of mines cleared annually has fallen steadily.³⁴ In Quang Tri province, from 2000 to 2018, 7.5% of the 635 incidents from explosive ordnance were due to landmines and of the 295,671 items of ordnance found through clearance during this time 6,866 (2.3%) were landmines.³⁵

- 1 VNNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam, Based on the Explosive Remnants of War Contamination Survey and Mapping – Phase 1", provided by VNNMAC 19 April 2018, p. 38.
- 2 Questionnaire from DDG.
- 3 Interview with Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, Deputy Commander, Military Engineering Command, People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN), in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
- 4 Information provided by Sr. Col. Phan Duc Tuan, PAVN, in email from Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA), Hanoi, 24 September 2012; and in interview in Geneva, 30 June 2011.
- 5 Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Head of Bomb and Mine Department, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013.
- 6 Landmine Action, *Explosive Remnants of War and Mines Other than Anti-personnel Mines*, London, March 2005, p. 181.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Decree on Implementation and Management of Mine Action, No.18/2019, 1 February 2019.
- 9 Email from Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019.
- 10 Draft Decree on the management and implementation of mine action activities, Hanoi, April 2018.
- 11 Emails from Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019; and Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 12 For more information see Mine Action Review "Clearing Cluster Munition Remnants" 2019 report for Vietnam.
- 13 Emails from Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019; Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019; and Clinton Smith, DDG, 29 May 2019.
- 14 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 15 VNNMAC, "Report on Explosive Remnants of War Contamination in Vietnam", Hanoi, 2018, pp. 36–37.
- 16 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 17 Skype interview with Nils Christensen, UNDP, 13 June 2019.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Meeting with Christopher Ramsden, Senior Technical Adviser, LWCC, Nguyen Duc Thien, Manager, LWCC; Nguyen Van Duc, Data Processing Officer, LWCC; and Snr Lt. Tran Van Hai, Operations Officer, Provincial Military Command, in Dong Ha, Quang Tri, 19 April 2018.
- 20 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 21 Emails from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 7 April 2017; Simon Rea, MAG, 11 April 2017 and 28 June 2019; and Clinton Smith, DDG, 23 March 2017.
- 22 UNDP, "Vietnam mine action project: Project brief", January 2019.
- 23 Skype interview with Nils Christensen, UNDP, 13 June 2019.
- 24 Prime Minister, "Decision on Approval of the National Mine Action Plan Period 2010–2025", Hanoi, 21 April 2010.
- 25 Interview with Nguyen Hang Phuc, VNNMAC, Hanoi, 18 April 2018.
- 26 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 27 Email from Simon Rea, MAG, 16 June 2019.
- 28 Email from Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019.
- 29 Email from Clinton Smith, DDG, 29 May 2019.
- 30 Email from Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019.
- 31 Interview with Sr. Col. Nguyen Thanh Ban, Engineering Command, Hanoi, 18 June 2013; email from Executive Office of the National Steering Committee, 6 August 2012; interviews with mine action stakeholders, Hanoi, 16–20 April 2018; and email from Lee Moroney, Golden West Humanitarian Foundation, 22 June 2019.
- 32 Questionnaire from DDG.
- 33 Emails from Simon Rea, MAG, 24 April 2019; Resad Junuzagic, NPA, 6 May 2019; and Clinton Smith, DDG, 29 May 2019.
- 34 LWCC database, accessed at: bit.ly/2KzobUH. Operators cleared 210 landmines in 2013, 108 in 2014, 94 in 2015, and 54 in 2016, mostly US-made M-14 and M-16 anti-personnel mines.
- 35 QTMAC, "Facts and Figures: By Mine Action Component: Clearance", at: bit.ly/2Mh673l; and QTMAC, "Facts and Figures: By Mine Action Component: Accidents and Victims", at: bit.ly/2ZZdi5L.