

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION: UNKNOWN BUT VERY HEAVY

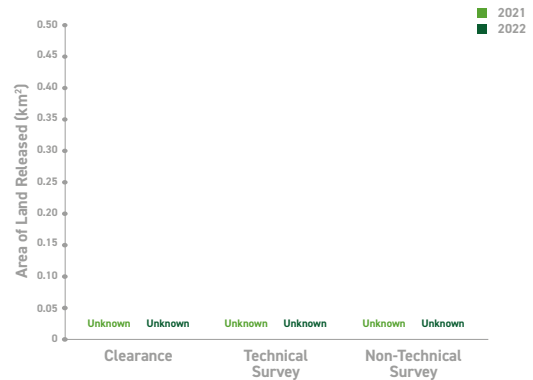
AP MINE CLEARANCE IN 2022

UNKNOWN

AP MINES DESTROYED IN 2022

UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- North Korea should cease all use of anti-personnel (AP) mines.
- North Korea should resume mine clearance in the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) as soon as possible and permit independent verification of clearance.
- North Korea should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- North Korea should clear AP mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- No functioning mine action programme

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Korean People's Army engineers

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- None

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The extent of North Korea's mine problem is not known. In 1998 North Korea admitted laying mines in the DMZ, a 1,000km² strip of land between the north and south of the peninsula believed to be one of the most densely contaminated areas in the world. Mined areas are reported to be marked and fenced but mines are also believed to have shifted as a result of flooding and landslides.¹

¹ Statement of North Korea, United Nations (UN) General Assembly, New York, 4 December 1998, UN doc. A/53/pv79, pp. 8-9; Choe Sang-Hun, "Koreas start clearing landmines at DMZ in effort to ease tensions", *The New York Times*, 1 October 2018.

North Korean soldiers are also reported to have laid BBM-82 fragmentation mines along parts of its 880km-long border with China in 2020 in order to deter and prevent people from illegally leaving the country or entry by people who might bring in COVID-19. Troops reportedly sustained injuries from mine detonations as they emplaced mines on the two provinces' border with China.²

North and South Korea completed clearance of the Joint Security Area (of the DMZ) in Panmunjom in October 2018 under an agreement on measures to ease tensions. Additional clearance was conducted in late 2018 around Arrowhead Hill (also known as Hill 281) in Cheolwon, Gangwon province, under a pilot, joint operations project to recover human

remains.³ South Korea reported clearing 158 mines (not disaggregated by type) and 2,410 items of unexploded ordnance around Arrowhead Hill in 2020.⁴

In April 2022, South Korea resumed demining operations in the Baekmagoji area of the DMZ. Operations had been suspended following threat of hostile action from North Korea in the border area.⁵ In November 2022, during a statement to the Twentieth Meeting of States Parties, South Korea reported it was "continuing with its mine clearing efforts, where possible, in a systemic and phased manner" and in line with International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) but did not provide information on where these activities were taking place.⁶

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

North Korea has no functioning mine action programme.

In September 2018, the North Korean and South Korean Ministers of Defence signed a military agreement, the Panmunjom declaration, which mandated North Korea, South Korea, and the United Nations Command (UNC) to "remove all mines in the Joint Security Area (of the DMZ) in Panmunjom within 20 days, beginning on October 1, 2018".⁷ Diplomacy intended to improve relations between North and South Korea in 2019 did not lead to any additional action.

Following a request from North Korea to the UNC, the Korean People's Army engineers received training on use of US detectors using ground-penetrating radar for tackling box mines.⁸ US army engineers trained South Korean army engineers who in turn provided the training to the Korean People's Army.⁹

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

It is not known how, if at all, the environment is taken into consideration during planning and tasking of survey and clearance of mines in North Korea in order to minimise potential harm.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

No clearance or land release is known to have occurred in 2022.

South Korean officials confirmed on 22 October 2018 that clearance of the Joint Security Area in Panmunjom by North and South Korea had been completed.¹⁰ Officials said North Korea had notified the government it had cleared 636 mines while South Korea found none.¹¹ At the request of the Korean People's Army, South Korean troops trained by the US Army cleared one area on the northern side of the Joint Security Area (JSA) that was heavily contaminated by box mines. Deminers used US-supplied Minehound dual-purpose detectors.¹² North Korean forces also reportedly cleared a 1.3km-long mine belt in the Arrowhead Hill region.¹³

Reviving tensions between North Korea and the United States in 2019 have held back further progress in demining.

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- 2 Sewon Kin, "Soldiers injured as North Korea deploys landmines at Sino-Korean border to stop escapees", *Radio Free Asia*, 22 October 2020; "N. Korea lays landmines in border areas to fend off coronavirus: NIS", *Yonhap*, 3 November 2020; Lee Chae Un, "Storm Corps trooper killed in landmine explosion on border with China", *Daily NK*, 10 November 2020.
 - 3 Song Young-moo and No Kwang Chol, "Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain", National Committee on North Korea, 19 September 2018, Annex 2, p. 7, at: <http://bit.ly/2XXbuXd>; and "Korean leaders sign agreement for North Korea to take further steps to denuclearize", *ABC News*, 20 September 2018, at: <http://abc7.ws/2XZM0bq>.
 - 4 Jung Bitna, "Unearthed 143 remains of this year's Arrowhead Bill", *Yonhap News Agency*, 19 November 2020.
 - 5 Emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 3 and 11 April 2022.
 - 6 Statement of the Republic of Korea, 20MSP, 24 November 2022.
 - 7 "Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain", 19 September 2018, Annex 2, p. 7; and "Korean leaders sign agreement for North Korea to take further steps to denuclearize", *ABC News*, 20 September 2018.
 - 8 Presentation by Col. J. P. Lloyd, Command Engineer, UNC, Side event, National Directors' Meeting, Geneva, 11 February 2020.
 - 9 Emails from Col. John P. Lloyd, UNC, and Maj. Mark S. Born, UNC, 14 April 2020.
 - 10 "Koreas finish removing land mines from border village", *Associated Press*, 22 October 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/2GhPFvN>.
 - 11 "Two Koreas Complete Mine Removal in JSA", *KBS World Radio*, 19 October 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/2XT18Kk>; "Minister: N. Korea eliminated 636 mines from Panmunjom area", *Yonhap*, 12 November 2018, at: <http://bit.ly/2Nbv2Fc>.
 - 12 Emails from Col. John P. Lloyd, UNC; and Maj. Mark S. Born, UNC, 14 April 2020.
 - 13 PowerPoint presentation by Maj. Gen. (ret.) Han Cheol Ki, Side event, Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 24 May 2019.