SOUTH KOREA

KEY DATA

NO APMBC ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE:

State not party to the APMBC

AP MINE CONTAMINATION: 128KM^2

Massive
(National estimate at October 2021)

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS

Release of AP mined area	Release in 2025 (m^2)	Release in 2024 (m^2)
Clearance	43,808	Not reported
Technical Survey	Not reported	Not reported
Non-Technical Survey	Not reported	Not reported

Destruction of AP mines during clearance, survey, and spot tasks	2025	2024
AP Mines destroyed	38	167

MAIN AP MINE SURVEY AND CLEARANCE OPERATOR IN 2025:

- Republic of Korea Army Engineers

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Progress in operationalising the "Mine Response Activities Including Mine Clearance Act", which passed into law in February 2024, has generally been slow. In August 2026, however, a five-year "Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)" was announced by the Ministry of National Defence, marking a significant shift to a system of evidence-based survey and clearance in line with international standards, and permitting non-military entities to conduct operations. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) has continued to emplace anti-personnel (AP) mines in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea, with the risk that heavy rains could sweep the mines into South Korea. In September 2026, two AP mine explosions on the South Korean side of the DMZ injured three military officers. Following the discovery of four North Korean AP mines in the area, including the two that detonated, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff attributed responsibility for their emplacement to North Korea, describing it as a violation of the 1953 armistice agreement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- **The Republic of Korea (South Korea) should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.**
- **In the meantime, South Korea should report on AP mine contamination, survey, and clearance, and submit voluntary Article 7 reports annually under the APMBC.**
- **South 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.**

AP MINE SURVEY AND CLEARANCE CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

- Ministry of National Defence

NATIONAL OPERATORS

- Army engineers

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- United Nations Command (UNC)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines (KCBL)

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

The DMZ and the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ) immediately adjoining the southern boundary of the DMZ remain among the most heavily mined areas in the world due to extensive mine-laying during the Korean War and in the 1960s, in 1978, and in 1988. Restricted Protection Zones (including Military Protection Zones, established for national security purposes, often surrounding military installations), and rear areas (away from the DMZ) are also mined.

In September 2021, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reported to the National Assembly that South Korea had 1,308 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs) affecting 128km^2 (see Table 1).[1] More recent comprehensive contamination data were not available at the time of writing.

Table 1: CHAs in South Korea (at September 2021)[2]

	Controlled Protection Zones				
	DMZ	CCZ	Restricted Protection Zones	Rear Area	*Totals
No. of sites	786	433	22	**67	1,308
Area (m^2)	10,030,000	114,780,000	2,470,000	880,000	128,160,000
No. of mines	380,000	389,000	50,000	***9,000	**828,000

* Any AP mine clearance since 2021 has not been subtracted from this figure, including the 43,808m^2 South Korea reported cleared in 2025 and the 1,794 AP mines that South Korea has reported clearing since 2022.[3] ** This includes 37 minefields surrounding air defense bases (both operational and closed), and 30 minefields located on islands in the northwestern region.[4] *** Following clearance between 1998 and 2007, the Ministry of National Defence reported in 2019 that 3,000 of the 53,000 AP mines it emplaced between 1960 and 1980 had not yet been found and destroyed.[5]

Contamination data reported in 2021 were largely unchanged from those disclosed in previous years. A report presented to a side event at the 2019 APMBC intersessional meetings had similarly referred to 1,308 mined areas containing an estimated 828,000 mines.[6] Information from the Army's Joint Chiefs of Staff in 2018 indicated that 380,000 of the mines were emplaced in 786 sites within the DMZ.[7] These mined areas in the DMZ comprise 771 mapped minefields and 15 undocumented mined areas covering a total of 10.03km^2. In June 2026, the South Korean Defense and Security Forum (comprising defence experts, mine-clearance researchers, and technology companies) continued to cite the estimated figure of 128km^2 of contaminated area in and near the DMZ and CCZ, and suggested that it included unexploded ordnance (UXO) and other explosives.[8]

Estimates have put the number of mines spread across the border, which is 248km-long and 4km-deep, at 2 million. Experts assert that both North Korea and South Korea have poorly managed their mine-laying and do not know exactly how many they planted or where they are.[9] The Landmine Monitor claims that more than one million mines have been laid in the DMZ along the border with North Korea.[10] United States (US) forces also laid mines in the DMZ when in control of the area, but the proportion of US-laid mines is unknown, and the Status of Forces Agreement does not allow South Korea to make any claims about this.[11]

1 Press release from the Office of the Rep. Seol-Hoon, 21 October 2021 (unofficial translation), provided via email from Eum Soohong, member, Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines (KCBL), 16 August 2024.

2 Ibid.; and Yoo Hyun-min, "828,000 landmines buried nationwide... 59,000 even south of the Civilian Control Line", *Yonhap News Agency*, 9 October 2020.

3 Statements of South Korea on Universalization, APMBC Twenty-First Meeting of States Parties (21MSP), 24 November 2023; and APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 18–20 June 2024, 17–20 June 2025, and 15–18 June 2026.

4 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 15 August 2026.

5 Ministry of National Defence press release, 16 October 2019.

6 PowerPoint presentation by Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Han Cheol Ki, Side event, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, Geneva, 24 May 2019.

7 South Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROK JCS), cited in "Mine Action in the Korean Peninsula", unpublished paper by Eum Soohong, member, KCBL, September 2019.

8 South Korean forum urges wider clearance of DMZ land mines", *UPI*, 26 June 2026, https://bit.ly/4yXdEZp.

9 "North Korean landmines could float into South Korea, South warns", *Associated Press*, 17 July 2024, https://bit.ly/4dwBwYj; and "South Korean forum urges wider clearance of DMZ land mines", *UPI*, 26 June 2026.

10 *Landmine Monitor Report 2023*, p. 51.

11 Landmine Monitor, "South Korea", Last updated 22 September 2024.

In 2020, the United Nations Command (UNC) said CCZ contamination comprised 257 minefields and 176 undocumented mined areas covering a total of 114.79km^2.[12] The Ministry of National Defence reported emplacing some 53,000 M14 AP mines around 37 rear air-defence bases between 1960 and 1980. In operations between 1998 and 2007, it cleared around 50,000 of the mines. Floods, landslides, and changes in topography are also believed to have caused mines to move, with some 3,000 mines believed to remain.[13]

Similar data were included in a 2026 media report in which the Secretary-General of the Korea Association for Mine Action Technology cited data reported to come from the Ministry of National Defense and the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Commission. These indicated that about 60,000 M14 AP mines were laid at 40 air-defence bases nationwide between the 1960s to 1980s to block North Korean infiltration.[14] The article reiterated that some mines have been washed away by heavy rains, and indicated that removal operations have continued since 1998. Undetected mines are reported to remain around some 30 bases, however, including Mount Umyeon in Seocho District, Seoul; Namhansanseong in Gwangju, Gyeonggi; and Jangsan in Haeundae District, Busan.[15] Although the military are said to have conducted mine removal operations in these areas, sometimes multiple times, they have continued to designate all areas around air-defence bases as "mine risk zones" because the recorded number of planted mines does not match the number recovered.[16]

Between 2022 and 2025, South Korea reported to various meetings of States Parties to the APMBC that it had cleared a total of 1,794 AP mines, but it did not indicate where clearance took place.[17] In 2025, South Korea reported the total area cleared, but did not indicate whether the six anti-vehicle (AV) mines "removed", were included in the 43,808m^2 reported as cleared,[18] and in 2022, it reported that 822 AP mines were cleared from an area of approximately 377,000m^2, but again, did not state where clearance took place.[19]

In the "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", launched in August 2026, South Korea stated that it had been clearing mines that were no longer militarily necessary since the 1990s. Mine clearance had primarily been conducted in border areas, taking into consideration inter-Korean relations, development in border regions, and the prevention of disasters and accidents. In addition, mines laid for the defence of rear air-defense positions have also been cleared for reasons of public safety.[20]

The military are reported to have removed a total of 51,980 mines between 1998 and 2025. These comprised about 1,490 mines removed from 31 national mine-clearance operation sites (at Baekmagoji Hill during remains recovery; at Paju DMZ Peace Trail, during construction of the Taejongdae coastal road; and at Busan) between 2017 and 2025; 48,600 from 37 rear air-defence bases (minefields at rear air-defense positions and other locations where there was no longer any military utility) between 1998 and 2025; and 1,890 from 13 unconfirmed minefield sites (in areas where mines were discovered or accidents have occurred) which have been cleared annually under a medium-term plan.[21]

Mine clearance has to date been conducted by the military according to its own standards. However, because there was no legal basis for land release and the lack of evidence-based survey, land was routinely still not used after clearance. At rear air-defence positions in particular, despite repeated clearance operations over several decades, the absence of a system for land release meant that land that had been cleared continued to be treated as a minefield.[22]

In 2026, the UNC said that it was investigating "Landmines Crossing" the Military Demarcation Line (from North Korea) and that it had investigated and cleared a first site (for further details on AP mine clearance, see section "Land Release and Progress towards Completion" below).[23]

It is unclear when South Korea last used AP mines, including replacing mines in existing minefields, given the recent statements it has made.[24] In November 2022, South Korea reported to the Twentieth Meeting of States Parties to the APMBC (20MSP) that South Korea had not "installed any anti-personnel mines in several years".[25] In June 2023, however, the Ministry of National Defence stated that South Korea "did not plant any new *non-self-destructive* anti-personnel landmines in new areas during the calendar year 2022".[26] Similarly, in May 2024, the Ministry of National Defence stated that: "The Republic of Korea did not plant any new non-self-destructive anti-personnel landmines in new areas during the calendar year 2023."[27] These statements leave open the possibility that self-destructing AP mines might be used in the future. In June 2026, South Korea repeated, at the APMBC Intersessional Meetings, that "The Republic of Korea has not installed any mines for several years."[28]

12 UNC South Korea PowerPoint presentation in Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) side event, UN National Directors' Meeting, Geneva, 11 February 2020.

13 Ministry of National Defence press release, 16 October 2019.

14 "Jeong Tae-seong urges Korea to set mine standards and speed clearance, *ChosunBiz*, 18 February 2026, https://bit.ly/4fTLHc9.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid.

17 Statements of South Korea on Universalization, 21MSP, 22–25 November 2023; and APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 18–20 June 2024, 17–20 June 2025, and 15–18 June 2026.

18 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, Intersessional Meetings, 15–18 June 2026.

19 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, 21MSP, 20–24 November 2023.

20 "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027 –2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.

21 Ibid.; and email from Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 19 August 2026.

22 "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027 –2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.

23 UNC, "UNC Fact Sheet: DMZ Armistice Enforcement & Recent DPRK Activity", 23 June 2026, https://bit.ly/4wB72hK.

24 Landmine Monitor, "South Korea", Last updated 22 September 2024.

25 Statement of South Korea, 20MSP, 21–25 November 2022.

26 Landmine Monitor, "South Korea", accessed 6 August 2024.

27 Landmine Monitor, "South Korea", Last updated 22 September 2024.

28 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 15–18 June 2026.

For more information on use, please see the country profile on South Korea on the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* website.[29]

The South Korean authorities and media sources reported that beginning in late 2023 and during the first half of 2024, North Korea had started to emplace mines in the DMZ, including in areas it had previously cleared.[30] This included reports that North Korean soldiers had laid AP mines on three roads in the DMZ, in mountains and fields,[31] and along inter-Korean railroads.[32] The mines are understood to be a mix of AP mines and AV mines.[33] Although reports of North Korea emplacing mines in the DMZ tailed off after July 2024, one media source claimed that North Korean troops had begun emplacing mines in the DMZ again towards the end of the year: "Since late 2024, Pyongyang has intensified its efforts to strengthen border defenses, including laying additional landmines and erecting anti-tank barriers".[34] In June 2025, other media sources reported that North Korea was laying mines in the DMZ.[35] South Korea has ruled out mining roads in the South in response to the North's actions.[36]

Reports of North Korea continuing to emplace mines in the DMZ continued in 2026, with Human Rights Watch and a number of media reports in June 2026 highlighting the issue (see Mine Action Review's *Clearing the Mines 2026* report on North Korea for further information).[37] In a briefing of 5 October 2026, the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff summarised North Korean landmine emplacement developments along the DMZ since 2024, stating that North Korean operations to fortify the border, including the construction of barren land and emplacement of landmines, had been identified in some areas of the Military Demarcation Line (the MDL, which separates North and South Korea), and that in March 2025, the operations were expanded to cover the entire length of the MDL. In 2026, an average of 7,000 North Korean personnel were said to be deployed daily on these operations, which focused on minefield installation and barbed wire fences. The South Korean Ministry of National Defence has assessed that minefield installation along the MDL is 40–60% complete and is expected to be finished within two years. South Korea has identified several locations south of the MDL where North Korean forces are suspected of having planted landmines, with the average intrusion by North Korean forces south of the MDL said to be approximately 20 metres, and with daily North Korean intrusions reported since they were first identified in the eastern region in mid-August 2026. The situation is complicated by the fact that South Korea, North Korea, and the UNC interpret the location of the MDL differently.[38]

On 21 September 2026, during a South Korean military route-clearing operation in the DMZ, two landmine explosions occurred close to a suspected North Korean minefield and ten metres from the dividing line (the MDL, with the DMZ extending 2km on either side) between South Korea and North Korea injuring three military personnel. Following a joint investigation with the UNC on 26–29 September 2026, South Korea concluded that the explosions were the result of use of resin-cased AP mines by North Korea, buried to a depth of approximately 5–10cm, emplaced 12 months previously in a manner typical of a North Korean minefield.[39] South Korean officials found that at least four landmines had been emplaced by North Korea at the site of the blasts, including the two that exploded, and launched an operation in cooperation with the UNC to clear the site of any other North Korean-emplaced mines. North Korea has denied any involvement.[40]

The South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff have claimed that the emplacement of the mines by North Korea south of the DMZ is in breach of the armistice agreement that ended the 1950–53 Korean War, and the UNC found that at least one of the AP mines discovered after the initial blasts constituted such a breach. South Korea has demanded an apology from North Korea and called on Pyongyang to cease its border fortification operations.[41] South Korea has also said that if North Korea does not voluntarily remove the minefields installed south of the MDL, it will continue clearance operations to ensure peace in the DMZ.[42]

29 https://the-monitor.org.

30 "North Korea redeploys landmine near Gyeongui Line", *The Dong-A Ilbo*, 5 January 2024, https://bit.ly/3WVk4Y4.

31 International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), "International Campaign to Ban Landmines concerned at reported landmine use by North Korea", 20 May 2024 (updated 24 July 2024), https://bit.ly/4fnqDtL.

32 "Editorial: Resuming loudspeaker broadcasts demands preparedness for any N. Korean provocation", *The Chosun Daily*, 10 June 2024, https://bit.ly/3WMeg2V; and "Concentration of road blocking and fortification in the north… Joint Chiefs of Staff discloses surveillance and reconnaissance data on North Korea" (unofficial translation), *K-Force*, 10 October 2024, https://tinyurl.com/4e9uynp3.

33 ICBL, "International Campaign to Ban Landmines concerned at reported landmine use by North Korea".

34 "Exclusive look at the DMZ drama shaking the Korean Peninsula", *Bulgarianmilitary.com*, 9 April 2025.

35 "North Korea notifies UN Command of resumption of work on 'severance with South Korea' barrier-iron fence" (unofficial translation), *Dong-A Ilbo,* 27 March 2025; and "There is no answer to the repatriation of residents… North Korea notifies UNC to 'resume frontline work' after 8 months" (unofficial translation), *JoongAng Ilbo*, 30 June 2025, https://tinyurl.com/yc86p3tm.

36 "Map Shows Where North Korea Has Placed Land Mines in Demilitarized Zone", *Newsweek,* 30 April 2024, https://bit.ly/3LLpui2.

37 "Mine Ban Treaty Achieves Progress amid Challenges", Human Rights Watch, 4 April 2026, https://bit.ly/4fQxIW2; "Demilitarized no more? North Korea's DMZ fortifications creep south as Seoul, UNC differ over significance", *Korea JoongAng Daily,* 23 June 2026, https://bit.ly/3TSPUWj; and "[Exclusive] North Korea notifies UN Command to resume construction of "cut off from the South' barrier and barbed wire fence", (unofficial translation), *Donga.com*, 30 June 2026, https://bit.ly/4zaLNFi.

38 E-government website of the Republic of Korea, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Field Investigation Task Force Announces Final Investigation Results Regarding 25th Division DMZ Mine Explosion Incident", (unofficial translation), 5 October 2026, https://bit.ly/4icmkop.

39 E-government website of the Republic of Korea, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Field Investigation Task Force Announces Final Investigation Results Regarding 25th Division DMZ Mine Explosion Incident", (unofficial translation), 5 October 2026; "Military Concludes N. Korean Antipersonnel Mines Caused Sept. 21 DMZ blast", *KBS World*, 6 October 2026, https://bit.ly/47a03kZ; and "Mines in the border zone as Kim treats South Korea as an enemy", *The Times*, 6 October 2026, https://bit.ly/4hCAGOI.

40 E-government website of the Republic of Korea, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Field Investigation Task Force Announces Final Investigation Results Regarding 25th Division DMZ Mine Explosion Incident", (unofficial translation), 5 October 2026; "Military Concludes N. Korean Antipersonnel Mines Caused Sept. 21 DMZ blast", *KBS World*, 6 October 2026; and "(2nd LD) S. Korea blames N.K. for DMZ mine blast; UNC cites armistice breach over active mine", *Yonhap News Agency*, 30 September 2026, https://bit.ly/4yvz8fn.

41 E-government website of the Republic of Korea, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Field Investigation Task Force Announces Final Investigation Results Regarding 25th Division DMZ Mine Explosion Incident", (unofficial translation), 5 October 2026; and, "UNC cites armistice breach over active mine", *Yonhap News Agency*, 30 September 2026.

42 E-government website of the Republic of Korea, "Joint Chiefs of Staff Joint Field Investigation Task Force Announces Final Investigation Results Regarding 25th Division DMZ Mine Explosion Incident", (unofficial translation), 5 October 2026.

See also for more information on use, the country profile on North Korea on the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor* website.[43]

In recent years, South Korea has warned residents of the possibility that AP mines may be washed into South Korea from the North following heavy rains. In July 2024, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff highlighted the risk that AP mines emplaced by the North could float into South Korea during heavy rains, and even that North Korea might intentionally float mines to South Korea.[44] There was particular concern about a small plastic mine, shaped like a leaf containing 40 grams of explosive, which had already been found in South Korea according to its military. Another AP mine used by North Korea is a locally manufactured version of a Soviet box mine, with a wooden body. In the past, such box mines have been swept by water into South Korea and found on beaches and riverbanks.[45] In June 2025, the Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a further warning about the risk of AP mines floating from the North into South Korea.[46]

Similar warnings followed during the monsoon season in July and August 2026, when a landmine-like object was found along the Imjin River in Yeoncheon-gun, Gyeonggi Province,[47] and the authorities warned that heavy rains may again have washed landmines from the DMZ into rivers flowing across the inter-Korean border.[48] At the start of August 2026, 15 suspected North Korean landmines were found along coastal areas of Gwangwha county, in the north west of the country, which were believed to have swept in from North Korea during the recent monsoon rains.[49]

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The southern half of the DMZ is controlled by South Korea, but under the Armistice Agreement, the area between the Demarcation Line and the Southern Line Limit is under the jurisdiction of the UNC and any mine clearance is conducted with its approval. Demining in the CCZ between the Southern Line Limit and the Civilian Control Line and the rest of South Korea is overseen by the Ministry of National Defence and, to date, has been conducted exclusively by South Korean army engineers.[50]

Under the Law on Mine Response Activities Including Mine Clearance, enacted in February 2024, the Ministry of National Defense is to develop a "basic" mine action plan every five years and establish a Mine Response Activity Committee to oversee mine action activities. The law permits qualified organisations to conduct survey and clearance.[51] The legislation was due to take effect a year after promulgation—in February 2025—with preparation to operationalise the law due to take place during 2024.[52] According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), an "ad-hoc national mine action center" was set up at the Military Installation Bureau of the Republic of Korea in March 2024.[53]

In August 2024, the Ministry of National Defence contracted the Korean Campaign to Ban Landmines (KCBL) to develop South Korea's national mine action standards (KMAS), and a draft was submitted in February 2025 (see the section below, "Standards and Land Release Efficiency" for further details).[54] Other support was provided by UNDP, which shared its approach to building the capacities of a national mine action authority with the Korean authorities. Additionally, UNDP has consulted with the Ministry of National Defence on legislating the Presidential (Enforcement) Decree and the Ministry of National Defence Regulation, which are attached to the mine action law of February 2024. In the future, South Korea plans to build the capacity of the mine action sector through collaboration with international organisations, including the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).[55]

The Mine Response Activities Committee, which was to assume responsibilities similar to a National Mine Action Authority (NMAA), was due to be set up in February 2025,[56] but had still not been set up by the end of the year.[57] In 2025, a mine action team had reportedly been established under the Military Installations Planning Bureau of the Ministry of National Defence, but comprised only five personnel.[58] In June 2026, South Korea's Defense and Security Forum, called for broader government, military, and civilian cooperation to remove landmines and UXO near the DMZ, emphasising that cooperation with civilian specialists has become increasingly important as South Korea's military faces declining troop numbers and difficulties retaining experienced mine clearance personnel.[59]

43 https://the-monitor.org.

44 "North Korean landmines could float into South Korea, South warns", *Associated Press*, 17 July 2024.

45 ICBL, "International Campaign to Ban Landmines concerned at reported landmine use by North Korea".

46 "Military warns of North Korean land mines washing into South", *Korea JoongAng Daily,* 23 June 2025, https://bit.ly/4lkbs6a; and "Military urges caution against N. Korean land mines possibly being brought to South by heavy downpours", *The Korea Times,* 22 June 2025, https://bit.ly/3HnvLSm.

47 "Landmine-like Object" Found Along Imjin River, Confirmed as North Korean Antipersonnel Mine", *SBS World News,* 2 August 2026, https://bit.ly/3RK3DOB.

48 "North Korean land mines likely flowed south with runoff from monsoon rains", *Stars and Stripes*, 24 July 2026, https://bit.ly/4fNvLZ6.

49 "South Korea recovers landmines believed to have washed from North by monsoon floods", *Euronews*, 7 August 2026, https://bit.ly/4go1str.

50 Interview with Cho Jai Kook, Coordinator, KCBL, and Eum Soohong, KCBL, in Geneva, 13 February 2020; and emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 January 2024 and 23 August 2025.

51 Statement of the Republic of Korea on Universalization, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 18–20 June 2024.

52 Emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 January and 14 August 2024.

53 Email from Goosoon Kwon, Chief Technical Advisor for Mine Action, UNDP, 5 April 2025.

54 Emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 14 August 2024 and 2 April 2025.

55 Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense press release, 'Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'... Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'" (unofficial translation), 3 August 2026, https://bit.ly/4wfiLSd; and email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026.

56 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 14 August 2024.

57 Statements of the Republic of Korea on Universalization, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 16–20 June 2025 and 15–18 June 2026.

58 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 April 2026; and "Jeong Tae-seong urges Korea to set mine standards and speed clearance", *ChosunBiz,* 18 February 2026.

59 "South Korean forum urges wider clearance of DMZ land mines", *UPI*, 26 June 2026.

In a press statement of 3 August 2026, however, the Ministry of National Defense announced the "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", with a vision of, "A Korea Safe from Landmines". The statement set out that the Mine Response Activity Committee had been established and had held its first meeting in July 2026. Chaired by the Minister of National Defence, it comprises vice-ministers or vice-minister-level officials from eight ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, as well as deputy mayors or deputy governors of Incheon Metropolitan City, Gyeonggi Province and Gangwon Special Self-Governing Province, and civilian experts, who deliberate on key policies regarding landmine response activities (see the sections below "Information Management and Reporting", "Planning and Tasking", and "Land Release System").[60]

The plan applies to two types of mined areas: minefields that are no longer needed for military purposes, and suspected mined areas where civilian access is restricted even though there are no official records of mines being laid. In 2025, there were reportedly 200 such sites, covering about 85km^2, including areas near the CCZ and rear area-defence positions.[61] The plan only applies to humanitarian mine action. Mines assessed as militarily necessary remain under military control, and minefields within the DMZ are also not covered, as they fall under the jurisdiction of the UNC.[62]

FUNDING FOR AP MINE SURVEY AND CLEARANCE

The level of funding for AP mine clearance in South Korean in recent years is not known. A Joint Chiefs of Staff memo to the National Assembly reported an increase in the budget for mine clearance from KRW180 million (approximately US$161,000) in 2018 to KRW330 million in 2019, and to KRW8.2 billion (US$7.3 million) in 2020 (see also the section below on "Operators and operational tools").[63]

The budget for the five-year basic plan, according to a Ministry of Defense press release, is reported to be KRW78.7 billion (almost US$59 million).[64] For more information on funding, please see the country profile of South Korea on the *Landmine and cluster Munition Monitor* website.[65]

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The Law on Mine Response Activities Including Mine Clearance does not specifically mention gender and diversity. The Korean legal system, however, enshrines fundamental rights to groups falling under this heading, which should be reflected at the implementation level. The draft KMAS (yet to be finalised[66]) stipulated that gender and diversity should be addressed in the Korean context. With risk education, for example, the draft KMAS explicitly states that access must be guaranteed to people from abroad, disabled people, and people with little education, living in mine-affected areas.[67] The five-year Basic Plan for Mine Action sets out that the participation of residents and local authorities in mine action will be institutionalised in accordance with the annual implementation plans; no other information was available.[68]

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES AND ACTION

The draft KMAS were developed with reference to the latest International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) on environmental management in mine action (IMAS 07.13, second edition), and the revised standards on environmental considerations were incorporated.[69] No further information on how environmental considerations are incorporated into demining practice in South Korea to date was available.

60 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026; and Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defence, "Ministry of Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities…creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'" (unofficial translation), Press release, 3 August 2026.

61 "South Korea to open mine clearance work to private sector", *AJP*, 3 August 2026, https://bit.ly/4g1oOUo.

62 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'…Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", undated, (unofficial translation), launched on 3 August 2026; and email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026.

63 Memorandum from the Engineering Department of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the National Assembly, (unofficial translation by Eum Soohong, KCBL), October 2020.

64 "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026; and emails from Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 19 August 2026 and 7 October 2026.

65 https://the-monitor.org.

66 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026.

67 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 23 August 2025.

68 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'…Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'".

69 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 23 August 2025.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Little information is available about South Korea's information management and reporting system for mine clearance. South Korea has stated that the military collects and analyses all available data,[70] and at various APMBC meetings, as indicated, South Korea has provided partial clearance data.[71] However, information on its information management system is not available, and South Korea does not make public comprehensive, up-to-date contamination, survey, and release data for AP mined area or for the number of AP mines it destroys. South Korea is a State Party to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), and submits transparency reports under CCW Amended Protocol II (Mines, Booby-Traps and Other Devices), but they are not made public.

Under the new five-year plan, South Korea is to establish a mine action information management system which will systematically manage matters relating to landmine response activities.[72]

PLANNING AND TASKING

The five-year "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)" announced on 3 August 2026, has three key objectives: transition to a system of mine clearance and land release in line with international standards; establishing a National Landmine Response Framework and a market for private-sector contractors; and strengthening mine action capacity, including training for expert personnel and the use of advanced equipment.[73]

The landmines targeted for clearance, as indicated, comprise about 200 sites over 85km^2 (of a reported 125.5km^2),[74] including the CCZ and rear areas (where they are not used for military purposes). Annual implementation plans are still to be developed, and relevant information will be disclosed to local authorities and residents before landmines are cleared, and their participation in mine action will be institutionalised under the annual implementation plans.[75] The Ministry of National Defence was due to draw up an implementation plan for 2027 by the end of 2026, which will include the selection of areas for survey and clearance.[76]

Previously, little has been known about South Korea's planning and tasking for AP mine clearance. In 2019, the Ministry of National Defence announced that it had embarked on a three-year programme to complete survey and clearance of rear areas by October 2021. The proposal called for demining capacity to be increased from 6 teams with 200 personnel to 31 teams with 1,200 personnel. It also called for investment in upgrading detectors to detect plastic mines and in mechanical assets.[77] The extent to which the Army has progressed in implementing the plan remains unclear, and data provided by the Joint Chiefs of Staff on mine contamination in September 2021 appear to have remained largely constant since at least 2019 (see Table 1 above and explanatory text).

In the past, South Korea has reported using a risk management approach to residual contamination, though it has been reported that although the military has conducted demining for many years, very few areas have been released because of concerns about residual risk. By establishing land release and residual risk management systems consistent with international standards under the new First Basic Plan for Mine Action, cleared land should gradually be released for civilian use.[78]

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

KCBL, commissioned by the Ministry of National Defense, began developing national mine action standards in August 2024. KCBL collaborated with national and international demining experts, seeking to align the standards as closely as possible with IMAS while ensuring compatibility with domestic law and the specific circumstances in South Korea. Draft KMAS, comprising 22 chapters and 6 related technical documents, were submitted to the Ministry of National Defence in February 2025,[79] and were to undergo a review by the Ministry of Government Legislation to ensure consistency with existing legal frameworks.[80]

70 Presentation by the South Korean Ministry of National Defence and UNDP at the 27th International Meeting of Mine Action Directors & UN Advisors (NDM27), 29 April 2024.

71 Statements of South Korea on Universalization, 21MSP, 24 November 2023; and APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 18–20 June 2024, 16–20 June 2025, and 15–18 June 2026.

72 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.

73 Ibid.

74 Email from Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 6 August 2026.

75 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026; and Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 6 August 2026.

76 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and email from Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 6 August 2026.

77 Ministry of National Defence press release, 16 October 2019.

78 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026.

79 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 2 April 2025.

80 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 23 August 2025.

In its August 2026 press release announcing the five-year mine action plan, the Ministry of National Defence said that the KMAS should be in place by the end of the year, and that they would meet international standards while reflecting the level of explosive threat and the geographical characteristics of the country. The plan suggests that the number of standards and technical documents will be expanded, and testing and evaluation guidelines have been added to the suite of documents. Furthermore, a national land release system would be in place by 2031. A major feature of the five-year plan will be the introduction of evidence-based land release using non-technical survey (NTS) and technical survey (TS).[81]

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

It is not known how many South Korean military personnel were engaged in AP mine clearance in 2025 or in recent years. South Korea has highlighted how the army has developed demining expertise since 1990; that it launched a specialist unit in 2019; and that, in 2024, it could work simultaneously on up to 16 sites.[82] In 2021, the Army Engineering School initiated a demining training programme in which 249 officers participated;[83] and in 2022, 317 army officers attended the demining programme at the School.[84] The military's manpower structure is, however, changing with declining troop numbers, and the five-year mine action plan is said to respond to this.[85]

Under the plan, the Ministry of National Defence will contract non-military entities to undertake survey and clearance. The Ministry has spoken in terms of a "private-sector outsourcing scheme", though given there are currently no specialist mine-clearance companies in the country, it plans to begin implementation on a small-scale in the CCZ in 2027, and gradually expand the scope of the scheme as the sector develops.[86]

To date, in addition to running expert demining courses at its Engineering School, South Korea has sent team leaders on training courses run by the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD), Colombia's International Demining Centre (CIDES), and the Association of Southeast Asean Nations (ASEAN) Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) in Cambodia.[87] Under the new five-year plan objective of strengthening national mine response capacity, the Ministry of National Defence is committed to providing support for "world-class" KMAS-compliant training through military educational institutions for the military and civilian contractor organisations. It plans to develop tailored training programmes for each sector, enabling civilian contractors to operate overseas in the future.[88]

South Korea has previously said that it uses the latest demining equipment, highlighting various mechanical assets it deploys such as the Armoured Excavator, Vibrator Skeleton Bucket, and the Spider Excavator, as well as its use of remote-control systems. Moreover, the Ministry of National Defence said it was developing technology at its Future Innovation Centre, has adopted artificial intelligence (AI) detection technology, and uses robots to confirm data. It has also used laser technology to destroy surface mines, and mine and explosive ordnance detection robots that detect, mark, and clear mines.[89] In June 2026, however, representatives of South Korea's defence and technology companies suggested that there were limits to the technical equipment used in mine action in South Korea and agreed to collaborate to develop and test more advanced systems under field conditions.[90]

The five-year plan foresees the introduction of advanced technologies and equipment for survey and clearance. New equipment will include manned-unmanned integrated systems such as drones and explosive detection and clearance robots, and unmanned search vehicles to enhance safety and efficiency.[91] In November 2025, South Korea announced that it was allocating a budget of the equivalent of approximately US$239 million to 17 projects related to strengthening manned-unmanned hybrid combat systems, including the mass production of explosive detection and disposal robots.[92]

81 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026; see also: "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.

82 Presentation by South Korean Ministry of National Defence and UNDP, NDM27, 29 April 2024.

83 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, 20MSP, 24 November 2022.

84 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, 21MSP, 20–24 November 2023.

85 "South Korea to open mine clearance work to private sector", *AJP*, 3 August 2026; and "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.

86 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026; and Jai Kook Cho, KCBL, 6 August 2026.

87 Presentation by Ministry of National Defence and UNDP, NDM27, 29 April 2024.

88 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; and email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026.

89 Presentation by Ministry of National Defence and UNDP, NDM27, 29 April 2024.

90 "South Korean forum urges wider clearance of DMZ land mines", *UPI*, 26 June 2026, https://bit.ly/4yXdEZp.

91 Ministry of National Defence, "Korea Ministry of National Defense establishes '1st Basic Plan for Mine Response Activities'...Creating a 'Korea Safe from Landmines'"; "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026; email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 5 August 2026; and "South Korea to open mine clearance work to private sector", *AJP*, 3 August 2026.

92 "Bomb Disposal Robots Lead AI Automation Efforts", *DBR*, 13 November 2026, https://bit.ly/4fFhLlo.

DEMINER SAFETY

Media sources indicated two demining accidents in 2025. A training landmine detonator reportedly exploded during a reserve forces exercise at an air force base in Seogwipo, Jeju, causing minor injuries to seven people on 10 September 2025.[93] In November 2025, an explosion of unknown cause occurred in the DMZ on the western front of Paju-si, Gyeonggi-do. A sergeant, reported to be wearing mine protection equipment while on a landmine detection mission, was hospitalised with a non-life-threatening injury, thought to be an ankle fracture.[94] No further information was available about either incident.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

South Korea maintains that it is currently unable to accede to the APMBC. It reiterated at the Intersessional meetings a statement it had made in previous APMBC meetings, that due to the "unique security situation on the Korean Peninsula" it was, "not yet able to accede to the APMBC". It confirmed, however, that it shares the humanitarian objectives of the Convention and remains "concerned about the humanitarian impacts of the indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines".[95]

Comprehensive data for AP mine clearance for South Korea are not available. In 2025 and 2026, South Korea reported to the APMBC Intersessional Meetings that it "has been on a steady path of anti-personnel mine clearance where possible".[96] It said that, "In 2025, we voluntarily removed 38 anti-personnel mines and 6 anti-tank mines over an area of 43,808 square meters in adherence to the International Mine Action Standards."[97] South Korea did not indicate where the clearance took place. The number of AP mines cleared has been on a steep downward trajectory in recent years, with 167 AP mines reported cleared in 2024, 767 AP mines cleared in 2023, and 822 AP mines cleared from an area of approximately 377,000m^2 in 2022 (clearance location unspecified).[98] It did not provide data about the area(s) cleared or the location for 2024 or 2023. In addition, in 2026, as mentioned above, the UNC reported that it was investigating and clearing landmines that had crossed the Military Demarcation Line, and had already cleared one site.[99] Furthermore, in September 2026, South Korea cleared at least four AP mines in the DMZ, after North Korea was found to have emplaced the mines south of the MDL.

South Korea disclosed limited information on AP mine clearance for earlier years. In November 2022, in its statement to the 20MSP, South Korea reported it was "continuing with its mine clearing efforts, where possible, in a systemic and phased manner" and in line with IMAS, but did not provide information on the area cleared or number of mines found and destroyed.[100] According to online media, 120,000m^2 of minefields in rear air-defence sites south of the CCZ were cleared between April 2020 and July 2023 with 180 mines found and destroyed.[101] In October 2019, the Ministry of National Defence had declared its intent to clear all mines from the rear area although the task remained unfinished in 2023.[102]

South Korea has also conducted demining operations with a view to exhuming military casualties. From April to November 2022, South Korea resumed operations to exhume remains of Korean War casualties, with a total of 45 bodies found, and conducted demining in the Baekmagoji area of the DMZ. Operations had been suspended following threat of hostile actions from North Korea in the border area.[103] South Korea reported clearing 158 mines (not disaggregated by type) and 2,410 items of UXO in the course of operations to exhume remains of Korean War casualties around Arrowhead Hill in the DMZ in 2020. North Korea, however, did not participate in the clearance operation in the DMZ in 2020, as provided for in the September 2018 Declaration.[104]

In 2023, the Ministry of National Defence was planning to conduct exhumation operations in the Baekmagoji area from April to November and further demining around seven rear air-defence sites south of the CCZ.[105] The Agency for KIA Recovery & Identification under the Ministry of National Defence (MAKRI) is responsible for these operations; and MAKRI is also collaborating with the US Department of Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency to recover the remains of American soldiers from the DMZ.[106] It appears that the exhumation operations did not restart, at least in the Baekmagoji area, until two to three years later, when

93 "Seven injured after training land mine explodes during reserve forces exercise in Jeju", *Korea JoongAng Daily*, 11 September 2025, https://bit.ly/4g3nVuG.

94 Article translated from *Maeil Business*, 20 November 2025, https://bit.ly/4w85aMj.

95 Statements of South Korea on Universalization, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 15–18 June 2026 and 16–20 June 2025.

96 Ibid.

97 Statement of South Korea on Universalization, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 15–18 June 2026.

98 Statements of South Korea, APMBC Intersessional Meetings, 16–20 June 2025 and 18–20 June 2024; and 21MSP, 24 November 2023.

99 UNC, "UNC Fact Sheet: DMZ Armistice Enforcement & Recent DPRK Activity", 23 June 2026.

100 Statement of South Korea, 20MSP, 24 November 2022.

101 "Civilian, Government, and Military Collaborate for Public Verification… 'Beyond Normal' National Safety", Ministry of National Defence, 10 August 2023, https://bit.ly/3Phqc9i.

102 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 August 2023.

103 Emails from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 3 and 11 April 2022 and 26 August 2023; and Ministry of National Defence, "We will not forget the noble sacrifices of our national heroes", Press release, 30 November 2022, https://bit.ly/3szd2LQ.

104 Jung Bitna, "Unearthed 143 remains of this year's Arrowhead Bill", *Yonhap News Agency*, 19 November 2020.

105 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 4 September 2023.

106 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 August 2023.

human remains and demining operations restarted at White Horse Hill on 15 October 2025 and were conducted until 28 November 2025. Operations started again 1 April 2026.[107] It is not known how many AP mines were cleared during these operations in 2025. More recently, however, in its "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", South Korea stated that it removed a total of 51,980 mines between 1998 and 2025 across 81 sites (as detailed in the section above on "National ownership and programme management"), which included mine clearance during exhumation operations.[108]

Since 2024, there have been major advances in the infrastructure for humanitarian mine action in South Korea. The passing into law of the Mine Response Activities Including Mine Clearance Act in February 2024, and the advent of the Mine Response Activities Committee, and five-year Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031) in 2026, signal a move to evidence-based survey and clearance, the use of non-military contracted demining organisations, and a closer alignment with the IMAS. These positive developments should allow South Korea to move to more systematic AP mine clearance in future years, on which it is encouraged to report.

107 Email from Eum Soohong, KCBL, 26 April 2026; and "S. Korea launches this year's war remains excavation project at DMZ battle site", *Yonhap News Agency,* 1 April 2026, https://bit.ly/4byCEw5.

108 "First Basic Plan for Mine Action (2027–2031)", (unofficial translation), undated, launched on 3 August 2026.