

THAILAND

ARTICLE 5 DEADLINE: 31 OCTOBER 2023
(UNCLEAR WHETHER ON TRACK TO MEET DEADLINE)

PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

	2017	2016
Problem understood	8	7
Target date for completion of mine clearance	6	4
Targeted clearance	7	7
Efficient clearance	6	6
National funding of programme	6	6
Timely clearance	6	6
Land-release system in place	7	7
National mine action standards	7	7
Reporting on progress	7	6
Improving performance	7	7
PERFORMANCE SCORE: AVERAGE	6.7	6.3

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Thailand’s mine action community appears to be energised by a combination of proactive leadership in the national authority, progress in non-technical survey, the resulting cancellation of a high proportion of suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), and by the challenge of meeting its new and ambitious five-year deadline for eliminating mine contamination. Growing confidence in, and experience with, survey procedures have increased the pace of survey and the amount of land released.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Thailand should conclude early agreements with Cambodia to, at the least, pilot cooperation in border demining.
- Thailand should publish its overall plan for tackling all hazardous areas on its borders.
- Thailand should mobilise more funding for mine action to ensure it achieves its latest land release milestones.

CONTAMINATION

Thailand is affected by mines as well as by explosive remnants of war (ERW), the result of conflicts on its borders with Cambodia, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), Malaysia, and Myanmar. Re-survey in recent years has sharply reduced estimates of the extent of contamination.

A 2001 Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) estimated mine/ERW contamination totalled 2,557km², affecting 27 of Thailand’s 76 provinces, and impacting on the lives of more than 500,000 people.¹ Thailand’s Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) Article 5 deadline extension request, submitted in 2008, claimed it

had released 1,355km² of this area, leaving a total of 1,202km² of SHA. This included an estimated 528km² of “real minefield” that would require manual clearance.² Subsequent non-technical survey in partnership with Norwegian People’s Aid (NPA) has shown that only a small proportion of this area is contaminated.

By the end of 2017, Thailand reported suspected mined areas covering 391km², of which 84% was located in seven eastern and north-eastern provinces bordering Cambodia (see Table 1). Most of the rest was in Chiang Mai, bordering Myanmar, and in Pitsanuloke, on the border with Lao PDR.³

Table 1: Mine contamination by province (at end-2017)⁴

Region	Province	SHAs	Area (km ²)
North	Chiang Mai	4	25.62
	Pitsanulok	1	28.53
	Tak	1	0.37
	Uttaradit	1	3.35
North-east	Buriram	15	19.48
	Surin	27	29.17
	Sisaket	51	84.06
	Ubon Ratchathani	63	103.96
East	Sa Kaeo	23	9.21
	Chanthaburi	21	3.94
	Trat	68	80.23
South	Chumpon	1	3.17
	Yala	3	0.29
Totals		279	391.38

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Thailand created the National Committee for Humanitarian Mine Action (NMAC) in 2000, chaired by the prime minister and with responsibility for overseeing the national mine action programme, but after 2008 it never convened. The NMAC was reconstituted in May 2017, still with the prime minister as chairman. It was expected to meet for the first time before the Sixteenth Meeting of States Parties of the APMBC and thereafter to meet annually.⁵ The engagement of national leadership in the Committee was seen as important in facilitating policy direction and progress on issues affecting national security, notably regarding cooperation with neighbouring countries on clearing border areas.⁶

The Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC) was established in 1999 under the Armed Forces Supreme Command to coordinate, monitor, and conduct mine/ERW survey, mine clearance, mine/ERW risk education, and victim assistance throughout Thailand.

TMAC is also responsible for establishing a programme to meet Thailand's obligations as a state party to the APMBC.⁷ However, TMAC has had to contend with limited funding and, as a military organisation, with regular rotation of personnel at all levels.⁸ Lieutenant-General Sittipol Nimnuan took over as TMAC's director in October 2017, the eleventh director since TMAC was created in 2000 and the seventh in the last seven years.

Strategic Planning

Thailand's Second Article 5 Extension Request, submitted in August 2017, set out a two-phase programme for completing clearance, and seeking a deadline extension until 31 October 2023. Phase 1, spanning 2017 and 2018, projected release of 63.8km² of suspected contamination, leaving the remaining 358.8km² to be tackled in the requested five-year extension period.

Table 2: Planned land release 2017–2023⁹

Province	Area to be released in Phase 1 (m ²)	Area to be released in Phase 2 (m ²)
Sa Kaeo	366,850	9,192,948
Trat	19,199,151	67,454,225
Chanthaburi	754,820	3,936,224
Buriram	0	19,483,928
Surin	1,869,334	28,670,745
Sisaket	17,981,799	70,883,609
Ubon Ratchathani	22,478,947	89,945,265
Uttaradit	0	3,345,061
Pitsanulok	0	32,990,520
Tak	0	366,772
Chiang Mai	0	25,615,188
Chumphon	0	6,924,647
Yala	1,145,139	0
Totals	63,796,040	358,809,132

Potential obstacles to completion identified in the request included border demarcation disputes, difficult terrain, financial constraints, and unforeseen circumstances such as flooding and political upheavals. Border demarcation poses a particular concern. The request stated that Phase 1 is intended to release all SHAs outside border areas, leaving Phase 2 to tackle areas to be demarcated on its borders covering 358.8km², or 85% of the outstanding suspected contamination.¹⁰

Legislation and Standards

TMAC drafted its first national mine action standards with NPA's support in 2010, formally adopting them in June 2012. A revision of the standards was completed on 1 April 2015, mainly amending chapters on non-technical survey, technical survey and land release.¹¹ TMAC's Director reported in mid-2018 that it is again in the process of updating standards.¹²

Information Management

TMAC manages a database using Excel and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping. Its information management unit employs four people on three-year contracts avoiding rapid personnel rotation affecting other units.

Operators

TMAC completed accreditation of operators for the first time in March 2015, accrediting its four Humanitarian Mine Action Units (HMAUs), one international non-governmental organisation (NGO), NPA, and two national NGOs: the Thai Civilian Deminer Association (TDA) and Peace Road Organization Foundation (PRO). Operators are now required to renew their accreditations annually.¹³

Thailand's second extension request said TMAC would employ 330 operations personnel in the five HMAUs and 172 headquarters staff.¹⁴ TMAC has received a budget of about BHT 70 million a year (approx. US\$2.1 million) and expressed confidence that funding would continue at least at that level.¹⁵

NPA, the only international operator working in Thailand, has supported TMAC operations since 2011, conducting land release through non-technical and technical survey along the Thai-Cambodia border (in cooperation with HMAU 3) and in the north (with HMAU 4). In 2017, working with three teams and twelve field personnel, NPA had two teams working in Sisaket province in cooperation with HMAU 3, and a third team in Trat province, working with HMAU 2. NPA's two teams moved to Ubon Ratchathani province in March 2018 while the third team remained in Trat province.¹⁶

Thai Civilian Deminers Association, the only national NGO active in 2017, employed a total of 24 staff in 2017, including 17 field staff, conducting mainly non-technical and technical survey funded by the JAPAN-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).¹⁷ A second national NGO, PRO, suspended operations in 2015 pending receipt of further funding.¹⁸

LAND RELEASE

Thailand released a total of 30.98km² in 2017, 10% more than the previous year. As in previous years, Thailand's main focus remained on survey, seeking to define a realistic estimate of contamination and avoiding wasteful use of clearance assets. Less than 2% of the land released in 2017 was released by clearance.¹⁹

The total fell a little short of the 34.74km² planned for release in 2017 under Phase 1 of Thailand's 2017 Article 5 deadline extension request, but land release accelerated in the first half of 2018 and TMAC was confident of easily surpassing the 63.8km² target it set for 2017 and 2018 combined under Phase 1 of the request.²⁰ TMAC projected releasing 71.15km² in 2018, expecting more than 70% to be cancelled by non-technical survey.²¹

TMAC also expected to declare three provinces (Tak, Uttaradit and Yala) as mine free in 2018 and progress in the first few months of year appeared to put it on track to achieve those goals. TMAC said that by the end of April it had released 30km², almost as much as in the whole of 2017. TMAC reported it had completed Uttaradit in April and moved its teams from that province to Tak province bordering Myanmar. In Yala, contamination in the jungle bordering Malaysia consisted of decaying booby traps. After cancelling 0.56km² in Yala through non-technical survey in 2017 only around 5,000m² remained to be cleared in 2018, a task that TMAC expected to complete in the second half of the year.²²

Table 3: Land release in 2017²³

Province	Area cancelled by NTS (m ²)	Area reduced by TS (m ²)	Area cleared (m ²)	Total area released (m ²)	AP mines destroyed
Pitsanuloke	4,460,000	0	0	4,460,000	0
Ubon Ratchathani	6,034,332	2,355,662	78,913	8,468,907	856
Sisaket	4,809,399	0	0	4,809,399	0
Surin	46,469	1,102,649	246,036	1,395,154	3,789
Sakaeo	189,845	160,015	1,140	351,000	100
Trat	6,354,238	38,850	32,610	6,425,698	619
Chanthaburi	590,535	96,601	69,284	756,420	300
Chumphon	3,751,127	0	0	3,751,127	0
Yala	561,564	0	0	561,564	0
Totals	26,797,509	3,753,777	427,983	30,979,269	5,664

NTS = Non-technical survey TS = Technical survey AP = Anti-personnel mine

Survey in 2017

Thailand cancelled marginally less land as a result of non-technical survey in 2017 than the previous year but the area reduced through technical survey increased sharply to 3.8km² resulting in a 10% rise in the total amount of land released as a result of survey in 2017.

NPA's results, as in the previous year, underscored the consistently small proportion of Thailand's SHAs actually affected by mines. By the end of 2016, areas confirmed as hazardous averaged about 13.5% of the area surveyed. By the end of 2017, the average area confirmed had dropped to just below 10% of the SHA.²⁴

In 2017, NPA-HMAU teams surveyed a total of 11.44km², cancelling 10.76km² and confirming 0.68km². It had one survey team working alongside HMAU 2 in Trad province and two survey teams which started the year working in Ubon Ratchathani province before moving to Sisaket province in March 2017.

TDA conducted a process it describes as "Survey to Identify Mined Area", which combines non-technical survey, technical survey, and clearance, as well as undertaking spot tasks of explosive hazards posing an imminent threat. In 2017, it cancelled 100,000m² and confirmed 701,434m² in three districts of Surin province.²⁵

The pace of survey appeared to increase in 2018. NPA cancelled almost 12.75km² through non-technical survey in the first half of the year, more than in the whole of 2017, a result it attributed in part to increasing efficiency and experience of its surveyors. This included 4.5km² released in Sisaket province and 8.3km² in Trat. In this period it also confirmed 0.3km² of hazard in Sisaket and 0.6km² in Trat.²⁶

Clearance in 2017

TMAC's data showed clearance continued to account for a small part of land release, amounting to only 427,983m² in 2017 as the focus continues on survey. Most of the clearance occurred in Surin province (246,036m²) with small areas cleared in four other provinces.

TDA reported releasing 744,077m² in Surin, some of it through technical survey but mostly as a result of full clearance. In the process it said it destroyed 4,846 anti-personnel mines, 67 anti-vehicle mines, and 33 other items of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Thailand's Article 7 Report for 2017 did not record any clearance by TDA and appears to have recorded all its operations as technical survey.²⁷

Table 4: Mine clearance in 2017

Operator	Mined areas cleared	Mined area cleared (m ²)	AP mines destroyed*	AV mines destroyed	UXO destroyed
TMAC	0	427,983	5,664	145	92
TDA	3	744,077	4,846	67	33
Totals	3	1,172,060	10,510	212	125

* The number of mines destroyed includes those destroyed during technical survey. AV = Anti-vehicle

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Under Article 5 of the APMBC and in accordance with the five-year extension request granted in 2017, Thailand is required to destroy all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, but not later than 31 October 2023.

Thailand's extension request targets look highly ambitious set against the record of the last five years in which land release averaged less than half the levels the

request has projected. Thus, in 2013–17, cancellation by non-technical survey totalled 120km² while reduction by technical survey released a further 33.8km². During the same period, clearance released only 3.4km². Land release annually therefore averaged less than 35km². Results in 2018, when TMAC has targeted release of 71km², will therefore severely test the ability of operators to accelerate land release to the levels set out in the extension request (see Table 5).

Table 5: Extension request 2019–23: land release targets (km²)

2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
72.12	72.06	73.23	74.54	66.86

The high proportion of remaining contamination located in border areas that are the subject of decades-old demarcation disputes or which are inaccessible due to insecurity (348km² at the end of 2017; close to 90% of outstanding contamination) also presented a major potential obstacle.²⁸ Cambodian soldiers requested TMAC deminers to cease operations in particular locations on two occasions in June and December 2017 and on one occasion in January 2018, underscoring the potential for setbacks in the progress of border clearance.²⁹

Thailand’s extension request observed that earlier levels of cancellation through non-technical survey suggested the amount of land that would need technical survey and clearance in the extension period would amount to about 48.4km². If this is true, TMAC and partners would still have to release an average of 9.6km² a year through technical survey and clearance, considerably higher than the 7.4km² averaged in the past five years.

Improved relations between Thailand and Cambodia have opened the way for increased contacts with Cambodia on border cooperation. TMAC has previously had contacts with Cambodian Mine Action Centre. TMAC director Lieutenant-General Sittipol Nimnuan reported that Thailand was working with Cambodia’s mine action authorities to explore possibilities for cooperation.³¹

The extension request also presumed a sharp increase in mine action expenditure, with funding averaging about THB 240 million (\$6.15 million) a year during the extension period, compared with TMAC’s annual budget averaging about THB70 million (US\$ 2.1 million) a year in recent years.³²

Table 6: Mine clearance in 2013–17

Year	Area cleared (m ²)
2017 ³⁰	427,983
2016	394,238
2015	2,047,662
2014	228,911
2013	312,053
Total	3,410,847

- 1 Survey Action Center (SAC) and NPA, “Landmine Impact Survey: Kingdom of Thailand”, 2001, pp. 7, 17.
- 2 Revised Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 7 August 2008, pp. 15, 19.
- 3 APBMC Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D.
- 4 Ibid., Table D–1. The totals in the table are corrected as they are wrong in the Article 7 transparency report.
- 5 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 8 August 2017, p. 7; and interview with Lt.-Gen. Prasopchai Kongburan, Director General, Thailand Mine Action Centre (TMAC), in Geneva, 8 June 2017.
- 6 Interview with Lt.-Gen. Prasopchai Kongburan, TMAC, in Geneva, 8 June 2017.
- 7 “About us: Thailand Mine Action Center”, TMAC website, accessed 14 October 2015, at: http://www.globalhand.org/en/browse/global_issues/21/all/organisation/24341.
- 8 Interview with Col. Terdsak Trirattanagool, Assistant Director General, TMAC, Bangkok, 15 May 2017.
- 9 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 8 August 2017, p. 21.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 3–5, 21–23.
- 11 Thai National Mine Action Standards, 1 April 2015.
- 12 Statement by Lt.-Gen. Sittipol Nimnuan, Director, TMAC, to APBMC Intersessional Meeting, 7 June 2018.
- 13 Email from Aksel Steen-Nilsen, Country Director, NPA Thailand, 22 August 2018.
- 14 Revised Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 8 August 2017, p. 25.
- 15 Interview with Maj.-Gen Terdsak Trirattanagool, TMAC, Bangkok, 27 April 2018.
- 16 Email from Shushira Chonhenchob, Programme Manager, NPA, Bangkok, 23 July 2018.
- 17 Emails from Amornchai Sirisai, Director, TDA, 27 and 28 July 2018.
- 18 Embassy of Japan in Thailand, “The Government of Japan Provides Grant Assistance for the Project for the Clearance of Landmines/ UXOs along the Thai-Cambodia border through the Land Release Method”, accessed 11 June 2015, at: <http://www.th.emb-japan.go.jp/en/jis/2015/1507.htm>; Revised Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 8 August 2017, p. 25.
- 19 Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D, Table D–3.
- 20 Interview with Maj.-Gen Terdsak Trirattanagool, TMAC, Bangkok, 27 April 2018.
- 21 Ibid.; and Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D, Table D–4.
- 22 Statement of Thailand, Standing Committee meetings, Geneva, 7 June 2018; and interview with Maj.-Gen Terdsak Trirattanagool, TMAC, Bangkok, 27 April 2018.
- 23 Article 7 Report (for 2017), Form D, Table D–3. The totals for cancellation, reduction, and clearance outputs on Thailand’s Article 7 report do not correctly sum, based on the sub-totals. The correct totals have been used in Mine Action Review’s Table 3 on Land Release in 2017.
- 24 Email from Shushira Chonhenchob, NPA, 23 July 2018.
- 25 Emails from Amornchai Sirisai, TDA, 27 and 28 July 2018.
- 26 Email from Shushira Chonhenchob, NPA, 23 July 2018.
- 27 Emails from Amornchai Sirisai, TDA, 28 and 31 July 2018; Article 7 Report for 2017, Form D.
- 28 Border contamination at the start of 2016 included 215 areas affecting 256.3 km² on the Cambodian border, 7 areas affecting 32.9km² on the border with Myanmar, and 24 areas affecting 69.6km² on the border with Lao PDR.
- 29 Interview with Maj.-Gen Terdsak Trirattanagool, TMAC, Bangkok, 27 April 2018.
- 30 Thailand’s Article 7 Report includes only TMAC operating results.
- 31 Statement of Thailand, Standing Committee meetings, Geneva, 7 June 2018.
- 32 Second Article 5 deadline Extension Request, 8 August 2017, pp. 25–26; Interview with Maj.-Gen. Terdsak Trirattanagool, TMAC, Bangkok, 27 April 2018; exchange rate, US\$1 = THB 33.2699, at Oanda.com, 31 July 2018.