

KEY DATA

ANTI-PERSONNEL (AP) MINE CONTAMINATION:

UNKNOWN

AP MINE
CLEARANCE IN 2023

UNKNOWN

AP MINES
DESTROYED IN 2023

UNKNOWN

LAND RELEASE OUTPUT



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Uzbekistan should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Uzbekistan should clear anti-personnel (AP) mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible, consonant with its obligations under international human rights law.
- Uzbekistan should detail the extent of its mine contamination and clearance operations.

DEMINING CAPACITY

MANAGEMENT*

- Uzbekistan has no functioning mine action programme.

NATIONAL OPERATORS*

- Army Engineers

INTERNATIONAL OPERATORS

- None

OTHER ACTORS

- None

* This is based on information from earlier years. It is not known if the information remains accurate.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

Uzbek forces have laid mines along Uzbekistan's international borders at various times, including on its border with Afghanistan in 1998, with Kyrgyzstan in 1999, and with Tajikistan in 2000. While Tajikistan and Uzbekistan settled most of their 1,283km-long border dispute following the collapse of the Soviet Union, certain areas have not yet been

delineated and therefore the exact location of mined areas is not known.¹ In 2010, the Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN), Ban Ki-moon, criticised as "unacceptable" Uzbekistan's emplacing of mines along parts of its border that have not been delineated.²

1 Email from Muhabbat Ibrohimzoda, Director, Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC), 25 April 2018.

2 "Ban calls Uzbekistan land mines 'unacceptable'", *The Hindu*, 6 April 2010, at: <http://bit.ly/2Z3WYgN>.

Soviet troops also laid mines on the Uzbek-Afghan border. Uzbekistan had reportedly cleared 95% of the minefields along the Tajik border by the end of 2007 in demining operations conducted by Uzbek army engineers in cooperation with Tajik border troops.³ The clearance, however, has not been verified by independent organisations, and, as at 2018, civilian casualties were still being reported on the Uzbek-Tajik border.⁴

In 2018, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan agreed to set up a joint commission to investigate mined areas along the Uzbek-Tajik border.⁵ As at August 2024, Uzbekistan had not made public details of any progress. Tajikistan also had still to report on any follow-up action but reiterated, in its updated work plan submitted to the APBMC Meeting of States Parties in November 2023, that it will "continue to provide updates on the development of cooperation with regard to land release along the Tajik-Uzbek border in Article 7 reports and to the Meetings of the States Parties".⁶

The first State visit of the President of Uzbekistan to Tajikistan in March 2018 saw several agreements signed between the two countries, including one on demarcation of the separate regions of the Tajik-Uzbek border. According to online media, during the visit the leaders of the two States agreed that their common border would be cleared of landmines by the end of 2019.⁷ Online media sources reported that by October 2018 demining along the border had started,⁸ and that the Tajikistan National Mine Action Centre (TNMAC) and the Tajik Ministry of Defence (MoD) "got acquainted" with mine maps before starting clearance. The size of the mined areas was not publicly shared, but unofficial reports indicated it was 9.5km.⁹ Mine clearance along its border with Tajikistan by Uzbekistan was reportedly completed by January 2020,¹⁰ following which the Uzbek and Tajik authorities progressed from delimiting their border to demarcating it.¹¹

Online sources from 2021 indicated that a "joint Tajik-Uzbek commission for delimitation and demarcation of the mutual

border" was still active and that working groups met in August 2021 in Dushanbe and in the Uzbek city of Namangan in November 2021,¹² following discussions in May of the same year.¹³ Delineation talks between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan reportedly continued throughout 2023¹⁴ and a meeting of the working groups of the Joint Tajik-Uzbek Demarcation Commission took place on 29 April to 4 May 2024 in Dushanbe. It is reported that "mutually agreed upon proposals were prepared on the project demarcation line of the Tajik-Uzbek border, and a corresponding protocol was signed." The next meeting was planned to take place in Uzbekistan.¹⁵

In 2005, media reports cited Kyrgyz officials in Batken province as saying Kyrgyz border guards had checked previously mined areas of the border around the settlements of Ak-Turpak, Chonkara, and Otuksu, which had been cleared by Uzbek deminers, and confirmed that they were free of contamination.¹⁶ In March 2021, the prime ministers of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan reached an agreement to end all territorial disputes between the two countries. The agreement entailed land swaps and facilitation of movement between the two countries.

According to online media reports, the Kyrgyz head of security services, Kamchybek Tashiyev, announced that "issues around the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border have been resolved 100 percent" and that "there is not a single patch of disputed territory left".¹⁷ However, other sources suggested that, in April 2021, just a month later, Mr Tashiyev had told residents of some disputed areas in Kyrgyzstan's southern provinces that the agreement was "not completely a done deal".¹⁸ It has also been reported that the March 2021 agreement was not ratified after Kyrgyz citizens voiced dissatisfaction over terms concerning use of a reservoir.¹⁹ Subsequently, it was reported that Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement on 3 November 2022, covering disputed sections of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, particularly around Andijan (also referred to as Andijon in the Uzbek language)²⁰ reservoir (also known as the Kempir-Abad reservoir). The agreement

3 Email from Jonmahmad Rajabov, Director, Tajikistan Mine Action Centre (TMAC), 16 February 2009; Tajikistan Article 7 Report, "General situation", 3 February 2008, p. 3; and "Uzbekistan started demining on Tajik border", Spy.kz, 23 October 2007.

4 "Demining the Tajik-Uzbek Border: What have we learned from the Tajik experience?", *The Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction*, November 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/3q7lxw>.

5 Tajikistan's 2019 Article 5 deadline Extension Request, p. 16.

6 Tajikistan Mine Action Programme General Land Release Operational Plan for October 2023 to December 2025, p. 14.

7 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; and "Uzbekistan completes demining of its border with Tajikistan", *Asia Plus*, 3 January 2020 at: <https://bit.ly/3Bpu0Pd>.

8 "Putting an end to 20 years of death along the Tajik-Uzbek Border", *RFERL*, 13 October 2018; and "Report: Tajik-Uzbek Border Cleared of Mines", *RFERL*, 6 January 2020.

9 "Demining of Tajik-Uzbek border began", *Regnum*, 9 October 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/3vx2WXP>; "Tajikistan and Uzbekistan start demining their common border", *Sputnik Tajikistan*, 9 October 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/3gAJm8I>; and "Dushanbe and Tashkent begin demining Tajik-Uzbek border", *Radio Ozodi*, 8 October 2018, at: <https://bit.ly/3xAPzHv>.

10 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; "Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to finalise border demarcation", *Azernews*, 7 January 2020; and "Uzbekistan completes demining of border with Tajikistan, say officials", *Central Asia News*, 4 February 2020.

11 "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020; and "Uzbekistan, Tajikistan to finalise border demarcation", *Azernews*, 7 January 2020.

12 Tajik-Uzbek border delimitation and demarcation commission meets in Uzbekistan", *Asia Plus*, 30 November 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3zDDNzJ>.

13 "Uzbekistan and Tajikistan discuss demarcation of state border", *KUN.UZ News*, 22 May 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3iSbky7>.

14 "Demining Mountains: Tajikistan's Struggle Against Landmine Contamination", *NCT CBNW*, 7 February 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4d5WdKy>.

15 "Tajikistan and Uzbekistan discussed border demarcation – a protocol signed", *Central Asian Light*, 6 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3LK8bpc>; and "Uzbek-Tajik demarcation commission held a meeting in Dushanbe", *KUN.UZ*, 4 May 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3LMK5bx>.

16 "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan: Landmine threat along Uzbek border removed", *IRIN*, 31 October 2005, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sezaey>.

17 Ibid.

18 "No Issues Remain? Not So Fast. Kyrgyz-Uzbek Border Disputes Don't Appear To Be Decided", *Radio Free Europe*, 2 April 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3zrFrEK>.

19 "Kyrgyzstan reports deaths after Uzbek border troops open fire", *Aljazeera*, 6 May 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3zuh4pT>.

20 "Andijan", *Central Asia Guide*, accessed 6 August 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/4dy2VJn>.

was reported to include a land swap between the two countries and stipulate that Uzbekistan will supply water to Kyrgyz villages.²¹

In April 2024, it was reported that the border dispute between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan had been fully resolved. In accordance with the terms of a bilateral agreement, Barak, a 208-hectare portion of Kyrgyz territory entirely surrounded by Uzbekistan, was absorbed by Uzbekistan, with Kyrgyzstan receiving an equivalent parcel of Uzbekistan's Andijon

Province in exchange. Barak residents had been given until 15 April 2024 to leave for resettlement in that area.²²

Uzbekistan has not reported plans to clear mines laid on its 150km border with Afghanistan.

It is not known whether contamination data is disaggregated by weapon type in Uzbekistan's national database, or if contamination is classified into suspected hazardous areas (SHAs) and confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs).

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no functioning mine action programme in Uzbekistan.

In October 2023, mine action specialists and practitioners from the military, law enforcement, security services, and humanitarian agencies of five central Asian countries, including Uzbekistan, completed a three-week regional explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) Level 2 course at the Regional Explosive Hazards Training Centre of Tajikistan's MoD.²³

In March 2021, Russia and Uzbekistan were reportedly considering bilateral cooperation in mine action clearance

and training of Uzbek military personnel at the Russian Mine Action Centre.²⁴

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), of which Uzbekistan is a member, reported that on 24 June 2022, following a meeting of the Council of Defence Ministers of the CIS countries, that Russian Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu, had said that a joint unit of humanitarian demining would be created in the CIS.²⁵ No timeline for this was given and Mine Action Review has not been able to source any further updates on the matter.

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The extent to which gender and diversity are mainstreamed into mine action in Uzbekistan is not known.

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 Uzbekistan in order to minimise potential harm from clearance.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Mine Action Review has been unable to source any information on any efforts in Uzbekistan to implement or maintain a national mine action database.

PLANNING AND TASKING

It is not known whether Uzbekistan has a national mine action strategy in place. Nor is it known if Uzbekistan has annual work plans for the survey and clearance of AP mines or criteria for the prioritisation of clearance tasks.

²¹ "Resolution of Uzbek border disputes heralds increasingly united Central Asia", *Central Asia News*, 12 January 2023, accessed at: <https://bit.ly/3r0lp4z>.

²² "Farewell Barak: Uzbekistan Absorbs Kyrgyz Exclave As Part Of Historic Border Deal." *Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty*, 23 April 2024, at: <https://bit.ly/3LTIVFm>.

²³ "OSCE supports regional explosive ordnance disposal course for specialists from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Serbia", Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), 27 October 2023, at: <https://bit.ly/3WQQdQA>.

²⁴ "Uzbekistan, Russia looking at joint training of bomb disposal specialists", *Tass (Russian News Agency)*, 30 March 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3gDKjfN>; and "Military delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan visits the International Mine Action Centre of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation", Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation, 30 March 2021, at: <https://bit.ly/3WPGCtg>.

²⁵ "Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said that a joint unit of humanitarian demining will be created in the CIS", *Commonwealth of Independent States*, 27 June 2022, at: <https://bit.ly/3b1ulgN>.

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

It is not known whether Uzbekistan has national mine action standards in place.

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

Mine Action Review has been unable to source any recent information on Uzbekistan's national operational capacity for AP mine survey and clearance.

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

There are no detailed reports of survey or clearance output in 2023. According to online media sources in January 2020, mine clearance on the Uzbek side of the border with Tajikistan was completed.²⁶ Mine clearance was said to have been carried out exclusively by Uzbekistan and assistance from Tajikistan was refused, as the clearance conducted was exclusively on Uzbek territory.²⁷

²⁶ "Uzbekistan reportedly completes demining work on Tajik border", *The Diplomat*, 10 January 2020.

²⁷ Ibid.