

LIBYA



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Libya's Government of National Accord should ensure that forces loyal to it do not use mines.
- Libya should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.

CONTAMINATION

Mine contamination in Libya is a legacy of the Second World War as well as subsequent armed conflict with Egypt in 1977 and with Chad in 1980–87, which resulted in mines being laid on Libya's borders with these two neighbours. The border with Tunisia is also believed to be affected. During Colonel Muammar Qaddafi's four decades in power, mines were emplaced around a number of locations, including military facilities and key infrastructure.

Mines were used by both sides in the 2011 conflict leading to Colonel Qaddafi's overthrow. The only confirmed instance of landmine use by rebels occurred in Ajdabiya,

but other locations where pro-government elements laid mines included Brega, Khusha, Misrata, and the Nafusa Mountains.¹ The escalation of conflict in Libya in 2014 brought new reports of mine use by armed groups fighting around Tripoli airport.²

Table 1 lists national contamination data from the Libyan Mine Action Centre (LibMAC) Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database as at February 2017. However, this is believed to significantly underreport the total extent of contamination as most suspected areas have not been surveyed.

Table 1: Reported mine contamination (as at February 2017)³

District	City	SHAs	Area (m ²)	CHAs	Area (m ²)
Misrata	Taminah	0	0	2	832,720
Sirte	Abu Grain	1	222,934,834	0	0
Sirte	Sirte	0	0	2	95,824
Sirte	Wadi Jarif	0	0	1	7,498,699
Sirte	Wishka	0	0	2	40,557,456
Totals		1	222,934,834	7	48,984,699

SHAs = Suspected hazardous areas CHAs = Confirmed hazardous areas

Six of the listed CHAs, totalling almost 41.5km², are contaminated by anti-personnel mines, while the seventh, of some 7.5km², is contaminated by anti-vehicle mines. The massive single SHA, of almost 223km², is suspected to contain only anti-vehicle mines.⁴ It is likely that further survey will drastically reduce these figures.

In addition, during non-technical survey in 2016, Danish Demining Group (DDG) identified a suspected mined area, not reflected in Table 1, in Tawargha.⁵

New contamination was added to the problem in 2016, with locally produced mines suspected to have been laid during 2016 by Islamic State in areas that they controlled, such as in Sirte.⁶ In July 2017, the engineering divisions of Operation Dignity⁷ continued to clear landmines and booby-traps left by Islamic State fighters from Benghazi, but also warned civilians from attempting to return to their homes before clearance work was finished.⁸

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no national mine action authority, policy, or strategy for Libya. Mine action exists in a fragmented and violent political context. Following years of armed conflict, a new United Nations-backed “unity” government, the Government of National Accord, was formally installed in a naval base in Tripoli in early 2016. Through early 2017, however, it continued to face opposition from two rival governments and a host of militia forces.

LibMAC was mandated by the Minister of Defense to coordinate mine action in December 2011. As at March 2017, it was operating under the UN-backed Government of National Accord. Its headquarters are in Tripoli, in the west of the country. In 2015 and 2016, it did not have an office in the east, though it coordinated with institutions in Benghazi, and in April 2016, a regional Operations Manager was appointed for the east.⁹ In July 2016, LibMAC also established a small office in Misrata.¹⁰ The operating costs and salaries for LibMAC are funded by the United States Department of State and administered by ITF Enhancing Human Security (ITF).¹¹

Standards

National standards in English and Arabic, developed with the support of UNMAS, were finalised in March 2017.¹²

Information Management

LibMAC received technical support for IMSMA from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) and UNMAS in 2016.¹³

Operators

Mine action operations have been conducted by the army engineers, a police unit, and the Ministry of Interior’s National Safety Authority (NSA), also known as Civil Protection.¹⁴ These institutions liaise with LibMAC but are not tasked or accredited by them, nor do they provide clearance reports to the Centre. The deteriorating security situation resulted in the withdrawal of UNMAS and international mine action operators from Libya in mid-2014. UNMAS has been operating from Tunis since November 2014, from where it supports mine action in Libya, through training and advice to LibMAC and coordination of the international mine action response.¹⁵

In 2016, DDG was newly accredited for non-technical survey, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD), and risk education, and went on to conduct operations in the south of Libya. By the end of 2016, it had three non-technical survey teams and one EOD team, mainly operating in Sabha, in the south-west of the country.¹⁶

National NGO Free Fields Foundation (3F) has a formal partnership with DDG for organisational development and technical capacity building but has not yet attained the requisite standard to carry out non-technical survey and EOD independently. It has, however, been granted permission to operate under DDG’s accreditation and under its supervision. 3F, which is mentored and monitored by technical advisors remotely via Skype from Tunis, is operational in the west of Libya, with two EOD teams and two non-technical survey teams.¹⁷

Handicap International (HI) trained two local partners in non-technical survey in 2016: Peace Organisation from Zintan, and World Without War (3W) from Misrata. Both organisations received accreditation for non-technical survey from LibMAC after the training. Following the training, Peace Organization conducted non-technical survey under remote management by HI from Tunis.¹⁸

A number of other Libyan civil society organisations are also reported to carry out mine action operations, but they are not accredited by LibMAC.

LAND RELEASE

Non-technical survey of former confrontation areas was conducted in 2016 to identify suspected and confirmed mined areas, but no contaminated area is believed to have been released through clearance during the year.

Survey in 2016

In 2016, non-technical survey was conducted in Sirte municipality by LibMAC, army engineers, the police, and 3F; in Misrata municipality, including Tawargha town, by the army engineers, volunteers, and 3F; in Benghazi by the NSA and army engineers; in Sabha municipality by DDG; and in Al-Gwalish in the Nafusa mountains by HI's national partners.¹⁹

In Benghazi, a total of 18 SHAs in areas earmarked for critical infrastructure development were surveyed by the police, NSA, and army non-technical survey teams.²⁰ As at February 2017, however, no resulting data had been approved for entry into IMSMA.²¹ Peace Organisation, with HI supervision, conducted non-technical survey in Al-Gwalish over an area of 148km², confirming six hazardous areas (total size not specified).²² This data has also not been approved for entry into IMSMA.²³ Other data, entered into the IMSMA database, is reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Non-technical survey of mined areas (January 2016–February 2017)²⁴

Operator	SHAs identified	Total area (m ²)	CHAs identified	Total area (m ²)
DDG/3F	1	222,934,835	4	41,390,175
LibMAC	0	0	3	7,608,573
Totals	1	222,934,835	7	48,998,748

Clearance in 2016

No mine clearance was reported for 2016. Battle area clearance (BAC) was reportedly conducted in 2016 by the national authorities and volunteer groups in several locations across the country. However, this clearance was not coordinated with LibMAC, and no land release certificates were issued.²⁵ DDG started EOD operations at the end of 2016.²⁶

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Libya is not a state party to the APMBC. Nonetheless, it has obligations under international human rights law to clear mines as soon as possible, in particular by virtue of its duty to protect the right to life of every person under its jurisdiction.

- 1 Human Rights Watch, "Landmines in Libya: Technical Briefing Note", 19 July 2011, at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/19/landmines-libya-technical-briefing-note>.
- 2 Human Rights Watch, "Libya: New evidence of landmine use", 5 November 2014.
- 3 Email from Abdullatif Abujarida, IMSMA Manager, LibMAC, 20 February 2017.
- 4 Emails from Abdullatif Abujarida, LibMAC, 20 February and 9 March 2017.
- 5 Email from Lutz Kosewsky, Operations Manager, Danish Demining Group (DDG), 23 February 2017.
- 6 Email from Lutz Kosewsky, DDG, 22 February 2017.
- 7 Khalifa Haftar launched Operation Dignity to take Benghazi under his forces' control from what he described as Islamist militants and terrorists in May 2014. See, e.g., "Operation Dignity in east Libya declares full control of Benghazi", *Libyan Express*, 5 July 2017, at: <http://www.libyanexpress.com/operation-dignity-in-east-libya-declares-full-control-of-benghazi/>.
- 8 Landmines in Africa blog, July 2017, at: <https://landminesinfrica.wordpress.com/tag/libya/>.
- 9 Skype interview with Ezzedine Ata Alia, Administration Manager, LibMAC, 20 March 2017.
- 10 Interview with Col. Turjoman, Director, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017.
- 11 Email from Roman Turšič, Head of Implementation Office Libya/Afghanistan, ITF, 26 February 2017.
- 12 Skype interview with Ezzedine Ata Alia, Administration Manager, LibMAC, 20 March 2017. See <http://www.lmac.gov.ly/>.
- 13 Email from Lyuba Guerassimova, Programme Officer, UNMAS, 28 February 2017.
- 14 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017.
- 15 UNMAS, "Programmes: Libya," January 2017, at: <http://www.mineaction.org/programmes/libya>.
- 16 Email from Lutz Kosewsky, DDG, 22 February 2017.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Email from Catherine Smith, Mine Action Desk Officer, HI, 22 February 2017.
- 19 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017.
- 20 PowerPoint Presentation by Col. Turjoman, 20th International Meeting of National Mine Action Programme Directors and United Nations Advisers, Geneva, 8 February 2017.
- 21 Email from Abdullatif Abujarida, LibMAC, 20 February 2017.
- 22 Email from Catherine Smith, HI, 22 February 2017.
- 23 Email from Abdullatif Abujarida, LibMAC, 20 February 2017.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Interview with Col. Turjoman, LibMAC, in Geneva, 10 January 2017; and Skype interview with Abdullatif Abujarida, LibMAC, 20 March 2017.
- 26 Email from Lutz Kosewsky, DDG, 22 February 2017.