



PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE

For 2015

For 2014

Problem understood	5	5
Target date for completion of mine clearance	5	4
Targeted clearance	6	6
Efficient clearance	5	5
National funding of programme	7	7
Timely clearance	4	4
Land release system in place	4	4
National mine action standards	4	4
Reporting on progress	3	2
Improving performance	4	2
PERFORMANCE SCORE: POOR	4.7	4.3

PERFORMANCE COMMENTARY

Russia is continuing to progress in clearance of most or even all of Chechnya and Ingushetia, with the aim of completing clearance of these two North Caucasus republics by 2018. As such, Russia's performance score has increased accordingly.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Russia should accede to and abide by the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority, including the prohibition on use of anti-personnel mines.
- Russia should take the necessary measures to identify the extent and impact of mine contamination (in particular in Chechnya and the North Caucasus) and complete clearance of mined areas to humanitarian standards as soon as possible.
- Russia should be more transparent in detailing the extent of its mine contamination and clearance operations.
- Russia should ensure the protection of civilians from explosive hazards in areas it controls or occupies.

CONTAMINATION

Russia is heavily contaminated with mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) as a result of World War II, the two Chechen wars (1994–96 and 1999–2009), and armed conflicts in the Caucasian republics of Dagestan, Ingushetia, and Kabardino-Balkaria.

Anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines were used extensively in the two major conflicts in Chechnya. Estimates of the extent of contamination vary greatly because no systematic effort has been undertaken to assess the scope or impact of the problem.¹ In 2010, Russia's deputy prime minister and presidential special envoy to the Caucasus, Aleksandr Khloponin, claimed that mines affected 14km² of land and posed a major obstacle to development.² In contrast, Chechen officials and human rights organisations have previously estimated that 245km² of land was mined, including 165km² of farmland and 73km² of woodland.³

As at 2011, according to UNICEF, 3,132 civilians, including 772 children, had been killed (731) or wounded (2,401) by mines and ERW in Chechnya since 1994. Data collection, which was conducted by a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) partner Voice of the Mountains, was suspended in January 2011, due to lack of funding.⁴

Alleged Use of Mines in Crimea in 2014

Reports of minefields emplaced to demarcate border areas after Russia's annexation of the Crimea, appear to have concerned either 'phony minefields' or areas containing trip-flares. Trip-flares are not covered by the APMBC.⁵

On 8 March 2014, the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported that "Russian combat engineers were seen placing mines in the land bridge connecting the [Crimean] peninsula to the mainland in order to foil any Ukrainian attempt to retake Crimea."⁶ The photographer Evgeny Feldman of the Russian publication *Novaya Gazeta* photographed an apparent minefield laid near a road leading into Crimea and close to the villages of Chongar and Nikolaevka, in Kherson Province, Ukraine. The photographs show a line of mounds of earth in a field and 'Danger Mines' warning signs.⁷ Other photographs, shared with Human Rights Watch by a photojournalist, showed an area near Chongar marked with 'Danger Mines' signs and evidence of stake-mounted, tripwire-initiated flares in the ground, also known as 'signal mines'.⁸

1 UNMAS, "Portfolio of Mine Action Projects 2009", New York, 2008, p. 284.

2 "Medvedev emphasizes vision of Chechnya's future with personal visit", *Russia Today*, 14 June 2010, at: www.rt.com/politics/chechnya-medvedev-first-visit/.

3 "MoE sappers to demine arable land in Chechnya", *Caucasian Knot*, 3 April 2009, at: www.kavkaz-uzel.ru/; "In Chechnya MES deminers destroyed 25 explosive devices", *Caucasian Knot*, 5 October 2009; and "Human rights activists: 25,000 hectares of Chechen territory are still mined", *Caucasian Knot*, 7 May 2008.

4 Email from Eliza Murtazaeva, Project Officer, Child Protection, UNICEF Vladikavkaz, 2 May 2011.

5 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) Amended Protocol II defines a phoney minefield as "an area free of mines that simulates a minefield. The term 'minefield' includes phoney minefields." Art. 2(8), CCW Amended Protocol II.

6 A. Pfeffer, "Shots fired to warn off European monitors from Crimea", *Haaretz*, 8 March 2014, at: www.haaretz.com/news/world/premium-1.578588.

7 "Between Crimea and Ukraine there are already minefields, armoured vehicles and army camps", *Novaya Gazeta*, 8 March 2014, at: www.novayagazeta.ru/photos/62620.

8 Landmine Monitor, Mine Ban Policy Ukraine; and "email from George Henton to HRW", 10 March 2014.

Members of the local population informed Ukrainian partners of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) that Russian Special Forces operating in Kherson Province had laid mines, but it was not possible to confirm the reports, including whether any mines laid were anti-personnel or anti-vehicle.⁹ On 7 March 2014, Ukrainian media reported that the Russian military had mined areas around the main gas line into Crimea, but this allegation has not been independently verified.¹⁰

At a meeting of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) in April 2014, Ukraine alleged Russian use of TM-62 anti-vehicle mines and unidentified anti-personnel mines in Kherson province just north of Crimea.¹¹ At the same CCW meeting, Russia denied using anti-personnel mines, asserting “the Self Defence forces of Crimea, before the referendum, placed the minefields with relevant markings, around Chongar”. Russia said “they placed only signal mines and put proper signage around the fields”.¹²

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

There is no formal civilian mine action programme in Russia and no national mine action authority. Mine clearance is carried out by Federal Ministry of Defence engineers, demining brigades of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and by the Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES), through its specialised demining units (EMERCOM Demining and the “Leader” Center for Special Tasks).¹³

Russia has reported that its armed forces established an International Demining Action Centre in 2014. The Centre serves as a base for specialist training in detection and clearance of explosive devices, demining, and operation of mobile robotic tools, and does not function as a mine action centre (MAC) as the term is generally understood in mine action.¹⁴

Clearance of explosive ordnance in 2015 was reportedly undertaken by 6,229 armed forces personnel, using an array of manual and mechanical demining equipment.¹⁵

LAND RELEASE

In its CCW Amended Protocol II and Protocol V transparency reports for 2015, Russia reported that its armed forces engineering units inspected and checked for explosives in 80 regions, over 622km² of land, 1,222km of road, and in 46 buildings. In total, more than 370,498 explosive objects were destroyed.¹⁶

In May 2010, a representative of the Chechen branch of Russia’s MES claimed that 2.47km² of land had been cleared during the past five years, and that 5,143 explosive devices and 21 air-dropped bombs had been “neutralised”.¹⁷ In 2012, the head of the Armed Forces’ engineers, Lieutenant-General Yuri Stavitsky, announced that the Federal Ministry of Defence had sent military engineers to Chechnya to clear about 0.5km² of farmland. He said a special battalion of deminers employing contract servicemen was undergoing training for deployment in Russia’s southern military district, including Chechnya.¹⁸

9 ICBL, “Reports of Russian landmine use in Crimea requires immediate response”, Geneva, 10 March 2014, at: www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Library/News/RussiaMineUse3-2014.

10 Ibid.

11 Presentation by Dr. Kateryna Bila, Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Implementation of the Protocol II by Ukraine”, CCW Amended Protocol II Meeting of Experts, Geneva, 1 April 2014.

12 Statement of Russia, CCW Amended Protocol II Meeting of Experts, Geneva, 1 April 2014

13 See, e.g., “It is planned to establish special groups for demining of lands within MES”, *Caucasian Knot*, 23 July 2009; and “Autumn demining is completed in Chechnya”, *Vesti Kavkaza*, 28 October 2009.

14 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report, Form B, 31 March 2015; and meeting with Andrey Grebenshchikov, First Secretary, Department for Nonproliferation and Arms Control, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in Geneva, 9 April 2015.

15 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 2015), Form A.

16 CCW Amended Protocol II Article 13 Report (for 2015); and Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 2015), Form A.

17 V. Dzutsev, “Chechen Officials Press Moscow to Assist with Demining as Blasts Still Claim Lives”, *Georgian Daily*, 11 May 2010.

18 “Russia begins mine clearing in Chechnya”, *Novosti*, 4 April 2012.

In March 2014, the engineering unit of the Russian Ministry of Defence was reported in an online article as having started a new phase of clearance in Chechnya. The engineering unit planned to clear 80km² of contaminated land in Achkhoy-Martan and Grozny districts, and in the highlands of Shatoy and Vedeno districts. In 2013, the same unit reportedly demined more than 20km² of agricultural lands, destroying over 1,700 explosive items.¹⁹

Further online media reports in November 2014 reported that the demining battalion of the 11th Engineer Brigade of the Russian armed forces had been conducting mine clearance in Chechnya and Ingushetia. During clearance, mechanical assets were used first, followed by mine detectors, and in some instances mine detection dogs (MDDs). According to the article, demining has been conducted since spring 2012 and planned results for three years had been achieved in only two. In 2014, 32km² of land was verified with more than 3,500 explosive devices found and destroyed.²⁰

Mine clearance operations by engineering units of the Russian armed forces have continued in Russia's "Southern Military District", including Chechnya and Ingushetia.²¹ In August 2015, engineers reported completing demining of 1.5km² in Chechnya and Ingushetia over a four-month period, with destruction of around 200 explosive items, including landmines. More than 33km² are said to have been cleared to date in Chechnya and Ingushetia.²² This includes completion of clearance of two districts of Chechnya, Itum-Kali and Achkhoy-Martan, where more than 20km² have been cleared. The land cleared included 7km² for the construction of the "Veduchi" ski resort in Itum-Kale district, and 0.3km² of land for the construction of a thermal power plant in Grozny.

The next stage of demining, to take place in forested areas, was planned to start in March/April 2016 to clear mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from more than 70km².²³ Both manual and mechanical assets are being deployed, including the new Uran-6 robotic demining system.²⁴ The Deputy Chief Engineer of Russia's armed forces, Colonel Ruslan Alahverdiev, has reportedly promised to complete clearance of Chechnya and Ingushetia by 2018.²⁵ However, in the online media report, it was unclear whether Colonel Alahverdiev was referring only to clearing all roads and forests, or if roads and forests are the only remaining mined areas in Chechnya and Ingushetia.

For 2016, Russia planned to clear 62.7km² of ERW, including 13.9km² in the Western Military District, 28.1km² in the South Military District, and 10.6km² in the Central Military District.²⁶

ARTICLE 5 COMPLIANCE

Russia is not a state party or signatory to the APMBC but nonetheless has obligations under international human rights law to protect life, which requires the clearance of mines as soon as possible.²⁷

19 "In Chechnya, servicemen start another phase of demining", *Caucasian Knot*, 15 March 2014, at: www.eng.kavkaz-uzel.ru/articles/27565/; and TVC, "Russian Ministry of Defence to start demining Chechen mountains in 2014", December 2013, at: www.tvc.ru/news/show/id/24657.

20 "How to search for mines in Chechnya", 18 November 2014, at: http://defendingrussia.ru/a/kak_ischut_minny_v_chechne-1083/.

21 "Uran-6 Mine-Clearing Robot, Russia", accessed 13 October 2016, at: <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/uran-6-mine-clearing-robot/>.

22 At: <https://kavkaz.versia.ru/chechnyu-i-ingushetiyu-razminiruyut-cherez-dva-goda>.

23 *Кавказский Узел*, 8 December 2015, at: <http://www.kavkaz-uzel.eu/articles/273864/>.

24 At: <http://www.army-technology.com/projects/uran-6-mine-clearing-robot/>.

25 At: <https://kavkaz.versia.ru/chechnyu-i-ingushetiyu-razminiruyut-cherez-dva-goda>.

26 CCW Protocol V Article 10 Report (for 2015), Form A.

27 Russia is a state party to the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, Article 2 of which requires that member states respect and protect the right to life.