

Landmine Monitor Report

Toward a Mine-Free World

2001



International
CAMPAIGN TO BAN
LANDMINES

LANDMINE MONITOR REPORT 2001

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International Campaign to Ban Landmines

Landmine Monitor Core Group:

**Human Rights Watch · Handicap International (Belgium) ·
Kenya Coalition Against Landmines · Mines Action Canada ·
Norwegian People's Aid**

This One



CFRG-YLD-GL7F

possible to track all victims through the various stages of rehabilitation and eventual reintegration back into society."¹²¹

NAGORNO-KARABAKH

Key developments since May 2000: From September to November 2000, some 3 million square meters of land in the Askeran and Martakert regions were cleared of mines. At the same time, the Defense Ministry cleared 270,000 square meters of arable land in the Hadroust region, which was handed over to the families of war disabled, including mine victims. In 2000, fifteen people fell victim to landmines.

Background

Nagorno-Karabakh is an autonomous region in the South Caucasus. In 1988 it voted to secede from Azerbaijan and join Armenia, which resulted in armed conflict from 1988-1994. The region declared independence as the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR) on 2 September 1991. The NKR has not been recognized by the United Nations. On 12 May 1994 Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenia signed a cease-fire agreement, which is still in effect. Negotiations for the final settlement of the conflict under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk group are still in progress. As a result of the conflict, parts of the region and Western Azerbaijan are plagued with landmines.

Mine Ban Policy

Statements from Nagorno-Karabakh political and military leaders indicate that it would not join the Mine Ban Treaty if it were eligible to do so. On 14 September 2000, Nagorno-Karabakh Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, A. Ghouljian, told the coordinator of the Nagorno-Karabakh Committee of the ICBL, "The lack of settlement of the conflict hinders Nagorno-Karabakh from joining the Convention unilaterally."¹ The position of the Nagorno-Karabakh military is that as long as the potential for renewal of hostilities remains, mines are necessary; however, immediately after a final and comprehensive settlement is reached, it will be necessary to clear mines from the entire territory of Nagorno-Karabakh.²

The Nagorno-Karabakh Committee of the ICBL is educating the public through coverage in mass media about the Mine Ban Treaty, including stories in the newspaper *Azat Artsakh*.

¹²¹ "UNMIK Mine Action Programme Annual Report 2000," MACC, 30 January 2001, p. 10, available at <welcome.to/maccosovo>, accessed on 12 June 2001.

¹ Meeting between the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and the coordinator of the Nagorno-Karabakh Committee of the ICBL, 14 September 2000, covered in *Azat Artsakh* (Independent Karabakh, newspaper), 16 September 2000.

² Discussions with soldiers and members of the special mine clearing regiment, including Lt. Col. Anatoly Galayan, Commander of the mine-clearing regiment, Nagorno-Karabakh Ministry of Defense, in late 1999 and early 2000.

Production, Transfer, Stockpiling, Use

According to Deputy Chief of the Field-Engineer Service of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army, Lt. Col. Marsel Pogosian, Nagorno-Karabakh has never produced or exported mines, and has not purchased new mines since 1995.³ The types and quantities of antipersonnel mines held in stockpile are unknown, but most likely are of former Soviet origin.

According to Lt. Col. Pogosian, since 1995 no new mining operations have been performed, with the exception of the line of contact.⁴ On 18-19 May 2001, for the first time in the history of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, Azeri Colonel Elhan Husseinov and General Vitaly Balasalian from Nagorno-Karabakh, accompanied by the three negotiators from the OSCE's "Minsk Group" (Carey Cavanaugh of the US, Nikolai Gribkov of Russia and Philippe de Surmaen of France), crossed the line of contact between the armed forces of Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan in the vicinity of the city of Agdam. The area of crossing was cleared of mines beforehand and later mined again.⁵

Landmine Problem

Approximately 150 million square meters of land, roads and forests must remain to be surveyed in Nagorno-Karabakh for future mine clearance.⁶ Nearly 50 million square meters of this land is arable. The Minister of Agriculture Armo Tsaturian stated that 30% of the territory's agricultural lands are not being used because of the mine danger. He pointed out that these lands are the most productive areas in the valleys and foothills. The Minister also reported that 80,000 square meters of vineyards are also inaccessible because of the mines.⁷

Mine Action Coordination

In 1993, Nagorno-Karabakh created a Working Group on Mine Problems (WGMP), under the auspices of the Special Commission on Mine Issues. Its initial task was to begin to collect information on the landmine problem. Headed by a special representative of the prime minister its activities were expanded to include coordination among the various relevant ministries dealing with the various aspects of the mine problem including mine clearance, minefield marking and mapping, mine awareness activities, and provision of basic medical aid courses. Aside from the official structures, NGOs like the HALO Trust and ICRC are members of the WGMP. The Nagorno-Karabakh Committee of the ICBL was included in the WGMP by a Prime Minister's decree on 23 March 2000.

³ Lieutenant-Colonel Marsel Pogosian, Deputy Chief, Field Engineer Service, at a meeting of the Working Group on Mine Problems (WGMP), 21 November 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ "Mines cleared, uneasy commanders eye Nagorno Karabakh peace," *Agence France Presse*, 24 May 2001; Mamed Azerogly, "Karabakh, site of conflict?" reporting for *Kavkaz Center*, 22 May 2001.

⁶ Program of the Nagorno-Karabakh Special Commission, presented at the 8 June 2000 meeting of the WGMP.

⁷ *Azar Artsakh* (independent Karabakh, newspaper), 4 April 2000.

According to the head of the WGMP, Mels Akopdzhanyan, Nagorno-Karabakh has prepared a national mine clearance plan, but international assistance will be necessary to implement it.⁸ Additionally, according to Lt. Col. Pogosian, an order from the Defense Minister obliging field-engineer units to carry out mine clearing of arable lands has been worked out.⁹

Mine Clearance

Special units of the Emergency Situations Department, jointly with HALO Trust and elements of Defense Ministry, carry out mine clearance in Nagorno-Karabakh. During the mine clearance operations the most frequently found mines are OZM-72, PMN-2, POMZ-2.¹⁰

In January 2000, HALO resumed operations in Nagorno-Karabakh. HALO conducted refresher training and equipment refurbishment for the existing humanitarian deminers in Nagorno-Karabakh, and conducted specialist training for the staff of the Department of Emergency Situations, before going on to establish its own independent Battle Area Clearance teams. Initially with support from Fondation Pro Victimis and Anti-Landmijn Stichting and subsequently with support from the Royal Netherlands Government, HALO has deployed three Battle Area Clearance teams which cleared a total of 97 mines and 4,587 UXO between June and November 2000. Between September and November 2000, three square kilometers of land was cleared of UXO by these teams in the Askeran and Martakert regions. In late 2001 HALO plans to augment the present capacity with two manual mine clearance teams.¹¹

In 2000, Defense Ministry teams cleared 27 hectares (270,000 square meters) of arable land in the Hadrut region and handed it over to families of war invalids, including mine victims.¹² In addition to mine clearance, the marking of minefields is in progress, particularly in the central and northern regions of Askeran and Martakert.

Uncertainty about the future prevents mine action programs in many areas, especially along the line of contact between Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan.

Mine Awareness

In 1999 the authorities of Nagorno Karabakh created the Mine Awareness Working Group (MAWG). Meetings convened regularly by the MAWG offer the opportunity to share information with other structures involved in the mine/UXO problem and to regulate their various activities. In 2000 the MAWG, with the support of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), organized 10 meetings.¹³

⁸ Mels Akopdzhanyan, head of Working Group on Mine Problems, at a meeting of the WGMP, 21 November 2000.

⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Marsel Pogosian, Deputy Chief, Field Engineer Service, at a meeting of the Working Group on Mine Problems (WGMP), 21 November 2000.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Email to Landmine Monitor (HRW) from Richard Boulter, Desk Officer Europe, The HALO Trust, 26 July 2001.

¹² Lieutenant-Colonel Marsel Pogosian, Deputy Chief, Field Engineer Service, at a meeting of the WGMP, 21 November 2000.

¹³ Information provided by the ICRC, 11 July 2001.