

SECURITY COUNCIL SIMULATION AT YALE OCTOBER 5-8TH, 2006

Organization of American States

Statement of the Question

“The landmine is eternally prepared to take victims. It is the perfect soldier.”

Several member countries of the OAS have been unstable states with inter and intra state conflicts, creating thousands dead and leaving behind minefields designed with military purpose. With the vast majority of such conflicts now at its end, the military purpose has subsided but the threat remains ever vigilant. “According to anti-land mine campaigners, in Cambodia alone, mines have resulted in 35,000 amputees after the cessation of hostilities. Removal of landmines is dangerous, slow and costly; however, some countries maintain that land mines are necessary to protect their soldiers in times of war.”¹

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of square feet of mine fields remain dangerous to communities and the civilians inhabiting them. The OAS needs to deal with the situation before further casualties are affected by wars long gone and conflicts long forgotten.

History of the Question and Past Actions (from OAS public information)²

The OAS began its de-mining efforts in Central America, following the years of conflict during the 1980s, and has continuously supported de-mining operations there since 1995. Its operations have focused on four countries: Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. (El Salvador has been considered landmine-free since 1994.)

In Nicaragua, which once had more than 135,000 mines in the ground, mine clearance is expected to conclude next year. The effort is being carried out by the Nicaraguan Army, both as part of the OAS-coordinated, internationally funded effort and in a direct bilateral effort funded by other donors. Besides supporting mine clearance in Nicaragua, the OAS has helped some 800 survivors of mine accidents receive medical treatment, prostheses, counseling and other assistance. In 2002, the Nicaraguan Survivors Assistance Retraining Program was created to provide job training and placement services for people injured by landmines. Thus far, 200 people have benefited from the retraining program.

In December 2005, Guatemala became the latest OAS member state to declare itself landmine-safe, following a seven-year effort that included an information campaign to some 1,800 communities. The Guatemalan program involved not only demining,

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_mines

² http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/key_issues/eng

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but also destroying unexploded ordnance such as grenades, mortars and bombs, which posed a threat in much of the country.

Costa Rica was the first country supported by the OAS Mine Action Program to complete its mine-clearance efforts, declaring itself safe from landmines in December 2002. Honduras followed, in October 2004. Over the course of more than a decade, the OAS assisted Honduras in destroying 2,297 mines and unexploded ordnance along the border with Nicaragua. Suriname joined the ranks of landmine-safe countries in April 2005 after the OAS provided technical assistance to clear a small number of anti-personnel landmines still remaining in the interior of the country.

In 2002 the OAS began supporting de-mining efforts in the border area between Ecuador and Peru, where tens of thousands of landmines are located as a result of the countries' longstanding territorial dispute. The two countries, which resolved their border dispute in 1998, both have destroyed their landmine stockpiles and are now clearing the mines that remain in the ground. The OAS has provided support in several activities, including minefield surveying and mapping, and coordinating operations between de-mining units in both countries. Since the beginning of the program, some 38 mined areas encompassing 96,221 square meters have been cleared, with 4,377 anti-personnel and 61 anti-tank mines destroyed, as well as a small quantity of unexploded ordnance. As a result of this coordinated effort and within the framework of their Bi-National Plan, the governments of Peru and Ecuador are nearing completion of agreement with the government of Japan for the construction of a bridge in a formerly mined area known as Macara-La Tina.

The OAS began supporting mine action programs in Colombia in 2003, initially providing assistance in the fields of mine awareness, victim rehabilitation and development of a mine action database. The program has also provided training to Colombian army personnel to help strengthen the national capacity for humanitarian de-mining. Since November 2005, the OAS has been working with Colombia's National Antipersonnel Landmines Observatory to clear landmines and destroy unexploded ordnance. The country has identified 33 mine-fields that need clearing; these are under the watch of Colombia's army. The program is also coordinating with a local nongovernmental organization, the Colombian Integral Center for Rehabilitation (CIREC), with the goal of helping to provide rehabilitative services to landmine survivors. Colombia has more landmine victims than any other country in the Americas, with more than 3,000 survivors and new accidents occurring on an almost daily basis.

From March 2005 to May 2006, financial contributions to the OAS Mine Action Program totaled some \$4.6 million, significantly below the \$6.42 million projected

³ http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/key_issues/eng

⁴ <http://www.icbl.org/problem/solution>

⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottawa_Treaty

⁶ http://www.oas.org/main/main.asp?sLang=E&sLink=http://www.oas.org/key_issues/eng

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need for this period. Although the OAS has been able to cover the program's basic needs, it has urged the international community to continue to support these efforts.

*The following member states and permanent observers have donated funds, equipment or personnel to OAS-coordinated mine action efforts: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, El Salvador, European Union, France, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Norway, Peru, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela. Various nongovernmental organizations have also made contributions.

Possible Solutions

Already the groundwork has been set to solving this problem with the "Inter-American Defense Board (IADB) which oversees technical de-mining operations, working with field supervisors from various countries. The actual mine clearing is done by teams of trained soldiers, security forces or other personnel from the affected country."³ The International Campaign to Ban Land Mines has outlined several key needs to tackle this problem.

Action is needed to:

- **remove mines** from the ground;
- ensure that **minefields are fenced off and marked** and that communities receive education about mine risks;
- **destroy mines in stockpiles**;
- **meet the needs of mine victims**—from emergency medical care and rehabilitation to programs for socio-economic reintegration and recognized rights for people with disabilities;
- ensure that **all countries join the Mine Ban Treaty** and undertake to never again produce, use or sell anti-personnel mines;
- make sure that once a state joins, it fully **implements the Mine Ban Treaty** by submitting transparency reports, meeting deadlines for stockpile destruction and mine clearance, and assisting the victims of landmines;
- ensure that countries outside of the Mine Ban Treaty abide by the spirit of the agreement and **refrain from use, production and stockpiling** of the weapon;
- persuade **non-state actors to ban landmines** and abide by the spirit of the treaty; and
- **condemn any use or production** by a state or non-state actor.⁴

Although, much has been done clearly much more needs to be done too. First, funding at current levels is not enough to meet the necessary need for this current year. Secondly, not all of the countries in the Americas have ratified the Ottawa Convention.

Points of View

United States

The United States delegation is interested in de-mining in the OAS nations and has

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provided funding support. However, due to its interests in South Korea, it has not signed the Ottawa Convention and has expressed that “the one million mines along the DMZ between North and South help maintain the delicate peace by deterring a North Korean attack.”⁵

OAS states (from OAS public information)⁶

For more than a decade, the OAS has coordinated a comprehensive international program to remove tens of thousands of anti-personnel landmines that posed a threat to civilians in countries affected by conflict. Thanks in large part to OAS efforts, four member states—Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras and Suriname—have completed their de-mining programs and are considered landmine-safe. Humanitarian de-mining operations continue in Colombia, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Peru.

Russia and China

Both of these countries have not signed the Ottawa convention but have ratified the Protocol 10 of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). Russia however has continued the manufacture of mines. Both seem to be following the United States’ lead and wish to preserve the use of their own sovereign powers.

European Bloc

The European nations have tended over the years to act in the interest of de-mining. The European Union (EU) has not only shown support by ratifying the Ottawa convention but also has continually given funding to OAS for the purpose of de-mining. They have a large degree of support for the de-mining efforts however not all European countries have ratified the treaty. Another good sign however is the treaty’s creation in the European country of Norway.

Topic B: Taking Action against Landmines