

Non-State Armed Groups

This fact sheet contains new information on Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG)¹ and antipersonnel mines obtained subsequent to the publication of *Landmine Monitor Report 2006*.

Mine Ban Policy

Four NSAGs in Burma/Myanmar unilaterally renounced the use of mines by signing the Deed of Commitment administered by the NGO Geneva Call: the Lahu Democratic Front (LDF), the Pa-laung State Liberation Front (PSLF) all in April 2007, and the Pa-O People's Liberation Organization (PPLO) and the Chin National Front/Army (CNF/A) in August 2006. All four are members of the National Democratic Front of Burma, an armed anti-junta alliance.

The CNF/A has been identified as a mine user and producer since 2001 in Landmine Monitor reports. The PPLO was reported to be a mine user in the 2002-2004 Landmine Monitor reports. In its 2002 annual report, the Landmine Monitor reported that the Lahu National Organization declared a no-mine-use policy and issued a command to its soldiers to neither use nor acquire antipersonnel mines. Lahu militias within Shan State linked to the military junta have also been alleged to be involved in mine use. Upon committing to a ban CNF Secretary of External Affairs, Dr. Suikhar, stated, "Leaders of both sides of the conflict focus on the military and political issues we are facing today, however, they overlook the impact of landmines both now and in the future."²

Also in August 2006, the Kuki National Organization (KNO) in Northeast India renounced use of antipersonnel landmines by signing the Deed of Commitment. The KNO was not previously identified to use mines by Landmine Monitor. The KNO entered into a ceasefire agreement with the government of India in 2005. In signing the Deed, the KNO president stated, "The KNO has never used antipersonnel mines."³ The Kuki ethnic group straddles the Burma-India border.

In November 2006, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) and the government of Nepal concluded a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to bring an end to the civil war. The CPA incorporates the prohibition on mine laying included in the May 2006 Code of Conduct ceasefire agreement and adds mine action obligations (see below).⁴

In May 2006, factions of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice & Equality Movement (JEM) entered into the Darfur Peace Agreement with the government of Sudan. Under Article 24, "laying of mines" is specified as a prohibited act and obligates some cooperation on mine action (see below).⁵

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), more armed groups agreed to join the peace process. These militia will be bound by the Mine Ban Treaty upon reintegration into the national army. In March 2007, the rebel militia loyal to Jean-Pierre Bemba began to reintegrate into the national army and surrender its weapons. In February 2007, rebel General Laurent Nkunda agreed to end his armed campaign and return his forces to the national army. In November 2006, three remaining rebel groups in Ituri—the Front de Resistance Patriotique en Ituri (FRPI), the Movement des

¹ Non-State Armed Groups include any identifiable group that uses armed methods, and is not within the *formal* structure of a recognized state. This includes: 1) counter-state armed political movements, guerrilla movements and rebel armed forces; 2) militias or civil patrols often operating under the sanction of official entities, but not within the legal state structure; and, 3) criminal groups, among others. There are exceptions and complications to the above categories, and Landmine Monitor makes its own determination on a case-by-case basis, within this general framework.

² "The Chin National Front of Burma renounces the use of anti-personnel mines," Geneva Call, Press Release, 10 August 2006.

³ "The Kuki National Organisation (KNO) of Northeast India commits to the anti-personnel mine ban," Geneva Call, Press Release, 9 August 2006.

⁴ Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Kathmandu, 21 November 2006, text from www.reliefweb.int

⁵ Darfur Peace Agreement, Abuja, 5 May 2006, text from www.unmis.org

Revolutionnaires Congolais (MRC) and the Front des Nationalistes et Intégrationnistes (FNI)—signed *Accords cadre pour la paix en Ituri* with the government. They agreed to be disarmed and could choose to integrate into the national forces. In May 2006, a Mayi Mayi militia headed by Kyungu Mutanga agreed to halt armed struggle and be disarmed under the national process. During 2006, the National Demobilization and Reintegration Commission (CONADER) received antipersonnel mines from demobilized combatants, and in March 2007 a demobilizing FNI soldier turned in two antipersonnel landmines.

On 7 September 2006, the Palipehutu-FNL and the government of Burundi signed a Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement. Article II (Point I.1.3) requires the “banning of any mine-laying operations or the hindering of operations to remove mines.” A joint verification and monitoring mechanism, involving international monitors, was set up under the agreement.⁶ The Palipehutu-FNL was identified as a mine user in previous Landmine Monitor reports.

On 26 August 2006, the Lord’s Resistance Army/Movement and the government of Uganda entered into a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA). The CHA requires the parties to cease all hostile military action, but does not specifically mention use of mines, nor does its November 2006 Addendum.⁷ The LRA has been identified as a mine user in previous Landmine Monitor reports. The Vice-President of the Government of South Sudan has been a mediator for talks aimed at a full peace accord.⁸

In the Nairobi Action Plan (Action #5), States Parties agreed to: “Seize every appropriate opportunity to promote adherence to the Convention in bilateral contacts, military-to-military dialogue, peace processes....” With respect to peace processes, this is being done only sporadically. States Parties can do more to promote adherence to the Mine Ban Treaty in peace processes outside their own borders. The activities of South Africa in Burundi and Norway in Sri Lanka are noteworthy examples of States Parties promoting adherence to the mine ban norm within peace processes.

Use

Since the publication of *Landmine Monitor Report 2006*, new use of antipersonnel landmines or explosive booby-traps by NSAGs has been reported in Afghanistan, Burma, Colombia, India, Iraq, and Pakistan.⁹ There have been as yet unconfirmed allegations of new use in Georgia, Lebanon and Sri Lanka.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has admitted to mine use, but not specifying antipersonnel mines. Coalition armed forces have stepped on antipersonnel mines while on patrols in pursuit of Taliban or other armed groups, and have claimed these were placed by fleeing rebels. In Burma, the Karen National Liberation Army, the Karenni Army, the Shan State Army (South), the United Wa State Army, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army and several other, smaller non-state armed groups continued to use antipersonnel mines in 2006 and early 2007.

In Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and National Liberation Army (ELN) continued to use antipersonnel mines. In central India, the Communist Party of India- Maoist has been using an increasing number of antipersonnel mines and victim-activated improvised explosive devices. In Pakistan, rebel militias in Baluchistan have been using antipersonnel mines. In Iraq, insurgents fastened explosive booby-traps to the bodies of dead U.S. soldiers.

⁶ Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement, Dar es Salaam, 7 September 2006, text from www.unburundi.org

⁷ Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, Juba, 26 Aug 2006 & Addendum 1, Juba, 1 Nov 2006, www.santegidio.org. The CHA designates sites in the DR Congo and southern Sudan for the LRA to assemble its forces while talks on a full peace accord proceed. The LRA has complained that the assembly site in southern Sudan is not acceptable due to large numbers of unmarked mines in the area.

⁸ The Government of South Sudan is comprised of members of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement, formerly a non-state armed group and a mine user. As a part of the Government of National Unity in Sudan they are bound by the Mine Ban Treaty.

⁹ *Landmine Monitor Report 2006*, covering 2005 and the first half of 2006, did not identify use by NSAGs in Afghanistan, but did identify use in Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Nepal, Russia (Chechnya), and Somalia, as well as Burma, Colombia, India, Iraq, and Pakistan.

Some sporadic—and as yet unconfirmed—mine use by unknown actors has been reported in Lebanon and the Georgian province of South Ossetia. The Sri Lankan Army has repeatedly alleged new use of antipersonnel mines by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam, but Landmine Monitor has not been able to verify this to date.

In Turkey, there are regular reports of military personnel and civilians falling victim to landmines. Landmine Monitor has not been able to determine from the information available if these casualties are caused by newly laid antipersonnel mines. There have been a few allegations of mine use in Somalia, but such reports cannot be verified at this time.

In addition, there were reports of NSAG use of antivehicle mines in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Temporary Security Zone between Ethiopia and Eritrea, Lebanon, Pakistan, Senegal, Somalia, and Turkey.

Production, Transfer, and Stockpiling

Compared to a decade ago, most non-state armed groups today have limited access to factory made antipersonnel landmines.¹⁰ Some non-state armed groups have access to arsenals of previous regimes (Afghanistan, Iraq), but most armed groups produce their own improvised devices. The sophistication of mines produced by armed groups varies greatly. Some manufacture mines that can last for years, with many types of fusing mechanisms. Identified explosives include TNT, ANFO, Urea Nitrate and C4/RDX. Detonators are usually purchased from commercial companies, although a few groups have manufactured detonators.

In December 2006, the Sri Lankan Army claimed to have destroyed landmine production facilities of the LTTE. In October 2006, Colombian authorities recovered 1.5 tons of explosives as well as assembled antipersonnel mines from an area under FARC control. In January 2007, in Andhra Pradesh, Indian authorities recovered landmine production materials, reportedly of the CPI-M, at a clandestine storage site in Koyyuru. In October 2006, according to news reports, Indian authorities raided small-scale arms traders in Calcutta who were about to sell plastic mine casings with detonators. The news reports state that one member of the group was also a sub-contractor providing plastic mine bodies to a state owned ordnance factory, and another member of the group was a serving military officer who had pilfered ammunition from a state arsenal for sale with the mine components.

Non-state armed groups in states *not* party to the Mine Ban Treaty have also acquired mines by lifting them from the ground, capturing them, stealing them from arsenals, and purchasing them from corrupt officials. Within the past six months this has taken place in Burma (lifted and captured). Insurgents in Iraq are alleged to continue to remove landmines, among other weapons, from unguarded stockpiles of the former regime.

Stockpile Destruction

In February 2007, in Western Sahara, the Polisario Front (the Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro) destroyed 3,321 stockpiled antipersonnel mines at Tifariti. Polisario had destroyed another 3,172 antipersonnel mines from their stockpile in February 2006. The Polisario Front has indicated since 1999 its willingness to sign the Mine Ban Treaty, and in November 2005 unilaterally renounced use of antipersonnel mines through the Geneva Call Deed of Commitment.

NSAG Mines Recovered, Seized, Turned In

In March 2007, Bangladeshi border forces recovered antipersonnel mines from near the Burma-Bangladesh border. Two armed groups have stated that the mines could have been theirs. In March 2007, Algerian authorities seized 108 antipersonnel mines trafficked across the border from Morocco.

¹⁰ This likely reflects that halt to trade and production, and the destruction of stocks, brought about by the Mine Ban Treaty.

In September and October 2006, Colombian authorities reported recovering antipersonnel mines from NSAGs. In July 2006, EUFOR troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina found an illegal arms cache with enough antivehicle and antipersonnel mines and shells to “fill a truck.” In July 2006, coalition forces and national authorities in Afghanistan recovered antipersonnel mines among other weapons in cache seizures.¹¹

In July 2006, eight antipersonnel mines were turned in to the CONADER site in Nizi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and delivered to the UN mission for destruction. There were also reports of a small number of antipersonnel mines found or seized by authorities in Australia and Kenya. In May 2006, the Serbian Defense Ministry indicated it had recovered some “mines” without specifying if they were antipersonnel. The Philippine press continues to cite the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) as having recovered antipersonnel mines. In most cases in the past, Landmine Monitor and the Philippine Campaign to Ban Landmines have determined that these reports refer to command-detonated IEDs.

States Parties should report any discoveries, seizures or turning in of antipersonnel mines in their annual Article 7 transparency report.

Antipersonnel mines have also been recovered in non-states parties Egypt, India, Iraq, Pakistan, Russia, Serbia, and Sri Lanka. What happens to these weapons is not usually reported.

Mine Action

In Western Sahara, the Polisario Front is cooperating with international efforts to determine the extent of landmine and other explosive hazards and to increase their capacity for clearance. Landmine Action UK, under contract with the UN Mine Action Service until January 2007, and since with Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs support, conducted training for Survey, Battle Area Clearance and First Aid/Trauma management. Since October 2006, Saharawi survey teams have been conducting a general survey in the Polisario-controlled zone of Western Sahara, where they have mapped 92 Dangerous Areas (minefields, cluster strikes) and 112 spot clearance sites. As of February 2007, Landmine Action had conducted limited Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) which destroyed 54 explosive devices ranging from antipersonnel mines to 500-pound aircraft bombs. Former Polisario military engineers and other Saharawi trainees completed an International Mine Action Standards Level 3 EOD training on 17 April 2007 and EOD will now be done by Saharawi teams, with technical assistance from Landmine Action.

In Burma, the Committee Serving Internally Displaced Karen People has started a Dangerous Areas Survey, a Mine Risk Education program and a survey of mine casualties in rebel controlled and contested sections of Karen State, with technical assistance from DanChurchAid. The program intends to gather initial information for an eventual comprehensive mine action program, and has mapped 81 dangerous areas, most due to mine contamination, collected data on 464 mine casualties and provided mine risk education to 8,200 people living within the conflict zone until December 2006.

The Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist is required under the November 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement to clear the explosive hazards and dangerous areas they created during the time of armed conflict, provide information, and disarm or remove them. It is not known to what extent the CPN-M has been able to fulfill this obligation.

Within the Comprehensive Ceasefire and Final Security Arrangements of the Darfur Peace Agreement, all parties are obliged to provide maps which verify the location of minefields, including nuisance mines, to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). The deadline for compliance with the obligation has passed and the current status of this activity is unknown.¹²

¹¹ In Afghanistan many other seizures of arms have taken place, some of which simply state “landmines” were recovered without designating whether they were antipersonnel or not.

¹² Darfur Peace Agreement, Abuja, 5 May 2006, text from www.unmis.org

Following the war in Lebanon in July-August 2006, Hezbollah volunteers in local communities undertook some initial clearance of explosive hazards until professional clearance agencies were able to arrive in the area. Some of these volunteers were injured or killed while attempting to remove dangerous items.

In January 2007, in southern Senegal combatants of a faction of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) attacked demining operations involving Moroccan troops. The MFDC faction demanded that the Moroccan deminers halt activity and leave the area because they felt the removal of the mines would leave them open to attack by government troops.

In South Sudan in August 2006 the LRA was reported to have ambushed a convoy of the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD) near Juba and to have killed two deminers. As a result of the incident, RONCO, another mine action operator, suspended a field site and withdrew to its camp until the situation stabilized. Armed conflict and insecurity in late 2006 in both South Sudan and Darfur led to the curtailing, suspension or relocation of demining tasks. In November 2006, the lack of sufficient force protection for operators in areas requiring an armed escort was among issues highlighted as impacting mine action in Juba. In January 2007, an Indian peacekeeper in South Sudan was killed and two wounded by unidentified attackers while on an escort mission in support of a mine clearance team.

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