

THAILAND'S CHALLENGES IN MINE ACTION

Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) was established in 1999 to be the focal point for all Mine Action with policy direction from the National Mine Action Committee.

The landmine problem in Thailand is concentrated on the border areas and was initially thought to be limited and easily managed using military resources. A landmine impact survey completed in 2001 identified a much larger problem by a magnitude of over 2500 square kms of potentially contaminated land. Furthermore the number of casualties from landmines, on Thai soil alone, is over 170 per year.

After three years of effort it is clear that the degree of effort that will be required to control much less eliminate the landmine problem in Thailand is much more than originally anticipated and the military alone does not have the resources required to address the problem in a timely manner.

Thailand Mine Action Center (TMAC) has initiated a number of studies, reviews and discussions to present options for a Way Ahead to the National Mine Action Committee which will meet in the near future. A clear need has been identified to develop and promote civilian mine clearance capacity supported by the military established training centers and on the ground coordination assets provincial authorities as well as local NGOs will be encouraged to support Mine Action to allow for process to quickly manage the landmine problem and allow the reduction of casualties as well as the development of border areas. Establishing such capacity short-term estimated to be two years. Support will be required in terms of equipment particularly mechanical as well as technical support to meet international standards and Mine Action requirements.

Thailand can address the landmine problem within its resources but this will take some time. In the interim support is required from the international community which has experience in humanitarian mine clearance and knows the initially intensive effort required to put in place the required capabilities. With a little support from our international partners Thailand stands ready and willing to assist our neighbours to remove landmine in our region, and to join in our common effort to make the world mine free.

Thank you very much

Maj. Gen. Gitti Suksomstarn

(Speech at Geneva on 20 September 2002)