



A MAG Battle Area Clearance (BAC) searcher in Kafar Sir investigates a sub-surface signal found by a metal detector

Introduction

Across Lebanon there are remnants of three conflicts from the 1970s to 2006: the civil war between the 1970s and 90s; Israeli occupation until 2000; and the summer conflict with Israel in 2006. Contamination takes the form of anti-personnel landmines along the Blue Line with Israel and in the Mount Lebanon area as well as cluster submunitions across the south of Lebanon. It is estimated that in 2006 a total of 96,000 munitions were fired into southern Lebanon, delivering over four million cluster sub-munitions. The cluster munition contamination continues to hinder the social and economical wellbeing of those living in the largely rural areas of south Lebanon. The Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC) estimates over 54.7million m² of land was contaminated with cluster munitions and 550,000 landmines were laid through the country. By April 2011, the LMAC identified that 66 per cent of land contaminated with cluster munitions and 25 per cent of land mines have been cleared. The majority of the remaining landmines (87 per cent) are on the Blue Line. The LMAC End State Strategy 2015 aims to have mitigated the threat to all 'high and medium impacted communities' of explosive remnants of war (ERW). The strategy prioritises cluster munitions clearance in the south, followed by high and medium impacted communities in the centre and north of Lebanon.

As a result of contamination resident populations are at risk from death or injury. This risk affects economic growth and limits their capacity to increase agricultural output and rebuild vital infrastructure. Additionally, the availability of safe land to rebuild villages and homes is severely limited, and the activities of relief and development agencies working to rehabilitate the affected region are impeded.

Clearance history and current capacity

In November 2000, MAG began operations and developed a team of 80 national staff members to conduct landmine clearance. MAG Lebanon received funding in 2002 to undertake a Landmine Impact Survey (LIS), which identified the effects of landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) on communities in Lebanon and supported strategic national planning and resource allocation decisions.

Since 2006 focus has been on clearing cluster munitions in south Lebanon. MAG was the only clearance Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) operating in Lebanon prior to the conflict and was in a position to play a key role in providing immediate support and coordination with the LMAC and the Mine Action Coordination Centre South Lebanon. MAG deployed four emergency teams into the field the day after the ceasefire, and during the first week of operations alone MAG cleared 955 items.

MAG currently operates from Nabatieh in 'Area 6' in southern Lebanon, continuing to conduct Battle Area Clearance (BAC) and minefield clearance from a sub-base in the Mount Lebanon area. MAG deploys eight BAC teams and two Mine Action Teams (MATs) with mechanical assets in support. Since 2006 MAG has cleared 24,600 cluster submunitions and UXO and 2,600 landmines in over 50 communities.

In Lebanon MAG is the only clearance operator with mechanical assets which can be used to remove vegetation or rubble that hinders manual clearance; search and cut access lanes in minefields; crush and sift suspected contaminated soil; and confirm an area clear after manual clearance. The programme has a team of specialised engineers and operators who modify and develop the mechanical assets to make them best suited to the conditions in Lebanon. The mechanical assets allow MAG to efficiently and effectively remove ERW from the more difficult and larger sites.

MAG works in close cooperation with the Lebanon Mine Action Centre (LMAC) and their Regional centre in Nabatieh (the RMAC), receiving clearance tasks based on national development priorities and level of threat to the surrounding populations.

Future clearance

MAG clears land based on national priorities defined by the LMAC as clearance moves towards the 2015 End State of



all high to medium impacted communities being free from ERW. MAG will continue to support this date through seeking continued funding to deploy BAC teams and MATs across southern Lebanon. MAG will continue to work on building national staff capacity through training and mentoring support ensuring a Lebanon has a strong national capacity for mine clearance.

Community Liaison

MAG's Community Liaison (CL) teams work closely with communities (particularly the most vulnerable), development agencies and local authorities to refine priorities, ensuring that land and remnants of conflict are effectively prioritised for clearance. CL teams are highly mobile, multi-skilled teams trained in data collection, information and statistical analysis, risk assessment, advanced GPS usage, cross cultural communication techniques, and livelihood/community mapping. Teams liaise with stakeholders to collect requisite baseline information before, during and after clearance. In 2011 MAG undertook a study to measure the impact of clearance on men and women in south Lebanon, and in particular to ensure MAG is meeting its commitments to gender in mine action standards.



Samiha Barakat in her yard

Yohmor- One Woman's Life Reflects a Whole Village

During the 2006 conflict Yohmor was subjected to bombardment and destruction, which spread thousands of cluster bombs over large areas of land from the entrance of the town, through the main road reaching the Litani River. In total nine Cluster Bomb Unit (CBU) strikes have been found in the town covering 850,000m² with sub munitions.

With the cessation of hostilities, MAG teams arrived and worked to open the main road leading to the town where hundreds of cluster bombs were preventing people from reaching their houses and land.

Since 2006 MAG has continued to work in Yohmor. One of the CBUs cleared in 2010 runs beside the main road of the town covering 137,000m², most of it is olive groves in addition to houses. In 2006 the teams carried out surface clearance of the road; in 2010 the teams returned to conduct sub-surface clearance and verification work. To date they have removed and destroyed M42, M46 and M77 sub munitions in addition to hand grenades and bullets, and recently the team found a Claymore anti personnel mine.

Because the MAG teams have been in Yohmor for more than four years, people now consider MAG staff an essential part of their community and depend on them in terms of removing the danger of their lives and livelihoods. Samiha Barakat is 77 years old and has become accustomed to watching the MAG staff working in the village on land and around their homes. She has lived alone in her small house for many years, her only daughter having married. Independent, Samiha depends on herself to

meet her daily needs. She gets oil from a small olive grove close to her house, she also collects herbs and wild plants to sell, and in addition she works in a workshop for tobacco cultivation during the season. She did not leave the village during the war in 2006 and remained with a few of the people, she recalls the immediate aftermath of the conflict: "We went out into the light after 33 days of the attacks to see horrifying scenes of destroyed houses and cluster bombs everywhere." She could not return to her home because cluster bombs were at the entrance of the house and inside. "Only workers from MAG gave me assistance to return home," Samiha adds. Today, after more than four years she remembers clearly: "Our fields were littered with cluster bombs, and the crops which did remain we were unable to harvest or care for olive trees; most of the homes were surrounded by cluster bombs, we actually lived in shock."

Samiha Barakat comments on the difference caused by the presence of MAG in her village, "Without MAG we couldn't return back to our land to plant it and benefit from it, always I ask God to keep them safe; they're work is very dangerous and they risk their lives in order to raise harm from people." She stands in the courtyard of her house and shows us the places where there were cluster bombs; also she refers to land and points to the place where her nephew found a cluster bomb while tilling the soil. She considers a bit, and then completes her thoughts: "I hope MAG will continue its special humanitarian activities, because without this support we weren't able to restore our normal life."

MAG's clearance operations in Yohmor have included areas for housing, agriculture (olives and commercial crops) and vegetables; but most importantly they have given the people of Yohmor, like Samiha Barakat the opportunity to rebuild and continue their lives in safety.



MAG is the only clearance operator with mechanical assets which can be used to remove vegetation or rubble that hinders manual clearance

MAG (Mines Advisory Group) is an international humanitarian organisation, working to improve human security and reduce the devastating effects armed violence and remnants of conflict have on communities around the world. MAG is co-laureate of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, awarded for its work with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which culminated in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty - the international agreement that bans antipersonnel landmines, sometimes referred to as the Ottawa Convention.

MAG has worked in around 35 countries since 1989 and currently has operations in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Vietnam.

Further information on MAG's work in Lebanon can be found at:

www.maginternational.org/lebanon



Impact Supporting conflict recovery and socio-economic development

Since 2000 land cleared by MAG Lebanon has been used for a variety of purposes including agricultural and infrastructure development, housing and industrial production. The villages and communities where MAG works in south Lebanon are primarily rural and dependent on agriculture and natural resources. Land cleared by MAG Lebanon is used for productive resources which incorporate subsistence and commercial agriculture and horticulture crops allowing families and communities to safely recover their livelihoods after the conflict and subsequent contamination. Since 2006 85 per cent of land cleared by MAG is used for agricultural purposes and 9 per cent for housing, either new or re-built after the conflict.

By creating a safe environment, MAG is supporting the reconstruction of Lebanon's primary infrastructure, which is vital for the mid-to-long-term recovery and development of the country. Priority clearance of access routes, homes and gardens was completed by the end of 2007, with the focus now on the clearance of agricultural and pastoral areas to assist local livelihood recovery.

Reducing the risk of accidents related to cluster munitions, landmines and UXO

The pursuit of clearance in this highly sensitive area would usher Lebanon several steps closer to being able to fulfil the requirements of the Ottawa Convention, should it become a signatory party. Thus MAG Lebanon will endeavour not only to continue clearance of cluster munitions, but also to transition along with the LMAC over the next few years to renew focus on the clearance of landmines, in accordance with the 2008-2012 Long Term Plan published by the LMAC, of a Lebanon free of landmines by 2012.

List of abbreviations

BAC - Battle Area Clearance.
CL - Community Liaison.
CBU - Cluster Bomb Unit.
ERW - Explosive Remnants of War.
LIS - Landmine Impact Survey.
LMAC - Lebanon Mine Action Centre.
MAT - Mine Action Team.
NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation.
RMAC - Regional Mine Action Centre.
UXO - Unexploded Ordnance (shells, mortar bombs, rockets, air dropped munitions etc).



MAG would like to thank the individual and institutional donors that supports its work in Lebanon: AusAID; European Union; German Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Japanese Government (Grassroots); MAG America/US State Department, Office of Weapon Reduction & Abatement; US Department of Defense, NVESD, Humanitarian Demining Research & Development Program; Rotary Club of Seattle ; Mid East Assistance; Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID)

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