

Towards a Mine-free Cyprus

April 2016

Landmines in Cyprus: The Facts

Today, it is estimated that more than 7,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines still remain in the ground across the island of Cyprus, affecting two million square meters of land.

During the events of 1963/64 and 1974 minefields were laid within and outside the UN buffer zone by both the Greek Cypriot National Guard and the Turkish Armed Forces. Landmines do not become inactive with age. If anything, they can become more unstable over time.

On 8 December 2005, the General Assembly declared that 4 April of each year shall be observed as the International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action. It called for continued efforts by States, with the assistance of the United Nations and relevant organizations, to foster the establishment and development of national mine-action capacities in countries where mines and explosive remnants of war constitute a serious threat to the safety, health and lives of the civilian population, or an impediment to social and economic development at the national and local levels.

Most mines in Cyprus are United States and Chinese-made anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. Five main types can be found:

More than

2 million

Square metres of land unusable because of mines



VS-50 Anti-personnel blast mine: Though unlikely to kill, the explosive charge contained within the mine is quite sufficient to maim when stepped on.



M2A4 Anti-personnel bounding fragmenting mine: The firing mechanism is functioned only by a 3 to 10 pound pull on a tripwire or by a force of 8 to 10 pounds on one or more of the prongs protruding from the top of the fuse.



M15 Anti-tank landmine: Is a large circular anti-tank blast mine, first deployed during the Korean war. It contains 10.3 kg of composition B and its operating pressure is 160-340 kg.



GLD112 Anti-personnel blast mine: Is pressure actuated of relatively recent Chinese manufacture. This type of mine is now less widely used and can only be found in Cyprus



M48 Trip flare: This is an alarming device which an approaching enemy sets off. Fixed to one end is the firing mechanism, consisting of a pull-type spring to which the trip wires are attached.



Mine Risks: Lives and Livelihoods



United Nations Demining Projects

Between 2004 and 2011

27,000

Landmines cleared from the buffer zone

Over eight years, UNDP Partnership for the Future (UNDP-PFF), the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and UNFICYP worked together with the two communities to remove over 27,000 landmines from the Cyprus buffer zone. Eighty per cent of the funding for these activities came from the European Union.

More than

14,000,000 euros

Spent so far on removing mines in Cyprus



UNFICYP Initiatives

In 2014, UNFICYP became concerned that wet weather had washed mines from outside the buffer zone into new areas inside the buffer zone. UNFICYP undertook two surveys of Suspected Mine Hazard Areas – one near Mammari and the other near Dherynia – to ensure that these sites could be given the all-clear. UNFICYP carried out these surveys with the assistance of the UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon and their 21-member specialist demining team from Cambodia, finding and destroying one anti-tank mine near Mammari. In May 2015, a similar operation was conducted in Mammari by a Cambodian demining team through inter-mission cooperation with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon; they cleared two anti-tank mines, four anti-tank mine components, and one anti-personnel mine fuse. The Cambodian team went on to clear 1,847 m² around Lefka-Aplici, and also conducted a technical survey of Deryneia as part of confidence-building measures to open up new crossing points, as agreed by the leaders on 28 May 2015.

Mines on the Move

Thanks to the efforts of UN deminers, most of the Cyprus buffer zone is now mine-free. However, minefields adjacent to the buffer zone threaten to re-contaminate the areas already cleared. Wet weather and mudslides continue to cause mines to wash into the buffer zone, posing a dangerous hazard for farmers, communities and UN peacekeepers. UNFICYP works quickly to identify and secure these areas and to obtain funding and support to re-clear affected sites. However, the only solution to prevent new mines shifting into areas that have already been cleared is to remove all the minefields in and along the buffer zone. The last mine strike was on 28 September, 2015 near Mammari; fortunately there were no injuries.

Since 1964, there have been 6 deaths and 6 injuries as a result of landmines. Even with training, mine disposal experts expect that for every 5,000 mines cleared, one worker will be killed and two workers will be injured by accidental explosions.

For decades, mines have posed a danger or delay to the everyday activities of the people living and working in Cyprus, threatening:

Farmers working to cultivate their land

The natural environment, flora and fauna

Residents of areas close to the buffer zone

UN peacekeepers on patrol in the buffer zone

The opening of new crossing points

Efforts to rehabilitate historical areas and build ings within and outside the buffer zone

In 1979 Mr. Chrysostomos Seas was ploughing a field in Kaimakli when his tractor drove over and accidentally detonated an anti-tank mine. UN Police rescued Mr. Seas who was badly injured and lost his right leg in the accident.

In 2009, Felisberto Novele, a team leader from Mozambique working for the Mine Action Center Cyprus (MACC) died from an explosion in a now cleared minefield near Geri, some 10 kilometres southeast of Nicosia. It was the group's first fatality in five years of work on the island.

How Much does Demining Cost?

Tragically, removing landmines is far more expensive than putting them into the ground in the first place. The cost of removing a landmine is ten times more than the price for its production and installation.

70 Euros

The maximum cost of one landmine

1000 Euros

The maximum cost to remove and destroy one landmine

More than

7,000

Landmines remaining in Cyprus

Which means it could cost as much as

7 million Euros

To clear Cyprus of all its landmines

“Mine action is an investment in humanity. It helps nurture peaceful societies, where those in need can receive aid, and refugees and internally displaced persons can safely return home, and children can go to school. It provides the safe space to undertake development and reconstruction activities, and lay the foundations of sustainable peace.”

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message for the International Day of Mine Awareness, 2016





What Needs to be Done to Clear all the Landmines in Cyprus?

For the United Nations, demining is a humanitarian issue and should be addressed immediately on its own merits. The UN Secretary-General has consistently called on both sides to facilitate, without delay, access to all remaining mined areas in and outside the buffer zone.

In recent years, the two sides have continued to prevent access for demining to the four known mined areas in the buffer zone, of which three are under the control of the National Guard and one under that of the Turkish forces.

Both the Republic of Cyprus and Turkey are party to the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction – known as the Mine Ban Treaty. Under its terms, both parties are obliged to report the location of all mined areas that contain, or are suspected to contain, anti-personnel mines under their jurisdiction or control. With this obligation in mind, the Secretary-General has consistently called upon both sides to share any information on the location of minefields across the island.

UN Security Council Resolution 2263 (2016) calls on “both sides to allow access to de-miners and to facilitate the removal of the remaining mines in Cyprus within the buffer zone, and urges both sides to extend the demining operations outside the buffer zone.”

The United Nations stands ready to provide support and assistance, and continues to advocate at the political level to encourage the parties to make concrete steps towards a mine-free Cyprus.

“I am pleased that, in December 2015, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution underlining the need for mine action to remain at the top of the international agenda, especially in humanitarian crises. On this International Day, let us work together to advance the goal of a world free of the threat of mines and explosive remnants of war.”

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his message for the International Day of Mine Awareness, 2016

“The opening of the crossing points at Lefka-Aplici and Deryneia is one step closer thanks to the demining operation. UNFICYP remains committed to supporting the efforts of the leaders as they work towards a sustainable and comprehensive settlement.”

Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Cyprus Ms. Lisa Bittenheim on mine clearance operations in Cyprus in 2015

In 2015

4

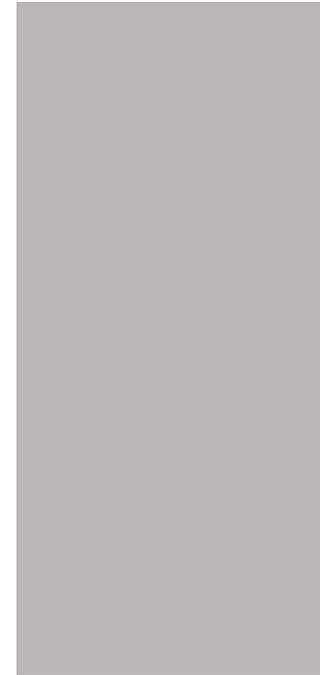
Minefields remain inside the buffer zone

And

More than

35

Minefields are still scattered across the island





Mind your Step - Mine Safety

Mines present a danger to anyone travelling by foot and by vehicle near the cease fire lines. Be aware that not all minefields along the buffer zone are fenced completely or marked with mine signs. In some cases, due to wet weather conditions, mines may have moved outside their designated areas. UNFICYP monitors these areas and works swiftly to reduce the threat by fencing them off, but you should still exercise extreme caution.



In general, anyone entering the buffer zone should have up-to-date permits, so please make sure that your paperwork authorizing your activities in the buffer zone is up-to-date. UNFICYP needs to know who is in the buffer zone, when and where, so that we can do our best to ensure your safety.

You should also follow these safety guidelines:

Avoid approaching the cease fire lines

Always respect the mine signs and fences

If you see sign a mine sign like the one in the picture, leave the area immediately.

If you see a suspicious object, report it immediately by calling the numbers below.

Do not approach or touch suspicious objects.

Comply with UNFICYP's instructions

If you accidentally enter a minefield,

STAY WHERE YOU ARE

Warn people to keep away and call for help

Wait for assistance

UNFICYP contact telephone numbers: Once you are connected to the Mission Directory, please dial '0' to speak with the Operations Centre.

From south: 22 614000

From north by landline: 601 4000

From north by mobile: 0392 601 4000

Further Reading

United Nations Demining Webpage
www.un.org/en/globalissues/demining

United Nations Mine Action Gateway
www.mineaction.org

Removing Barriers to Peace and Reconciliation - UNDP Partnership for Future in Cyprus www.cy.undp.org/content/dam/cyprus/docs/PFF%20Publications/RemovingBarriersToPeaceAndReconciliationFinal.pdf

Landmine and Ordnance Clearance in Cyprus - UNDP Partnership for Future in Cyprus www.cy.undp.org/content/cyprus/en/home/operations/projects/partnershipforthefuture/landmine-and-ordnance-clearance.html

International Campaign to Ban Landmines