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Humanitarian demining - Non-technical survey in the land release process

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English version

Humanitarian demining - Non-technical survey in the land release process

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European foreword

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- Stewart Grainger (BACTEC Ltd)
- Franco Curatella (Airbus)
- Linus Gisslén (Swedish Defence Research Agency [FOI])
- Rosalind Malcolm (University of Surrey)
- Dominic Kelly (CBRNE Ltd)

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Introduction

The present document is the technical notes describing the topic 2 of the CEN Workshop started in the frame of project FP7 D-BOX. The title of the topic is: “Humanitarian Demining Non-Technical Survey Procedure”.

This CWA will provide a standard workflow for the acquisition of information in NTS to identify Hazardous Areas, provide more exact estimations of the boundaries of hazardous areas and cancel land. The workflow need to be instantiated and specialized to consider local contingencies.

Furthermore, the approach used to define the workflow is also interesting for End Users, as process definition has always been considered a complex activity in Humanitarian Demining.

The workflow is composed of Tasks (which could be divided in sub-tasks or activities). For each task/activity in the workflow, the standard produces:

- A description.
- A list of information requirements for the execution of the task (to be further developed).
- A list of information sources which could provide the required information (to be further developed).

The list of information requirement and of information sources could be specialized and instantiated to consider local specificities and local source of information.

This CWA will support end users as well as technology suppliers. It will support end users by providing a general framework to be specialized to consider local needs and to define criteria for land release. The workflow will suggest for each task, the information to be used and the information source (including tools).

1 Scope

This CWA concerns demining non-technical surveys (NTS). NTS involve collecting and analyzing existing and new information about suspected hazardous areas. Its purpose is to check whether there is evidence of hazards in an area, to ascertain, if possible, the type and extent of hazards within an area and to define, as far as is possible, the boundaries of hazardous areas, without physical intervention.

This CWA will provide a standard workflow for the acquisition of information (which includes a list of referral source of information) to identify Hazardous Areas and provide more exact estimations of the boundaries of hazardous areas and the removal of suspicion about parts or all of an original hazard area.

1.1 Rationale outlining the need to address this topic

The rationale for this CWA is that it will establish a commonly accepted approach to the process of gathering information based on the use of similar technical language so as to establish a uniform approach to the NTS process. This harmonized approach will support the efficiency of planning for the demining operation. It will also capture similar site situations which will increase knowledge and understanding of the planning requirements for demining and enhance the learning progress of demining managers.

1.2 Current shortcoming and/or need for the improvement of existing standards that this new topic will seek to address

Current shortcomings include the lack of sequencing in the workflow approach to planning. International Mine Action Standard (IMAS) set out the requirements of NTS and an outline of the process. However, the IMAS is open to interpretation by individuals and could overlook important information sources. The proposed sequenced approach will avoid gaps from the outset and will also enable information gathered later in response to unfolding situations.

1.3 Negative impact on field operations that this shortcoming will cause or has caused and/or the improvement that is expected

Negative effects which are currently in existence in relation to field operations because of the lack of a harmonized approach to NTS include inefficiency through lack of information. This may lead to endangering the public and deminers through the inaccurate definition of hazard areas. There could be the waste of resources (e.g. tools purchased which are inappropriate for particular areas and type of hazards). Safety issues for deminers in missing minefield characteristics as part of the planning stage may require additional time-intensive reconnaissance and survey operations at a later stage and thereby affect the rate and cost of clearance operations.

The improvement expected from the use of the proposed standard procedure will broadly lead to a smoother rollout for the demining operation with resources focused more precisely and thereby speed up the clearance process. It will ensure that vital information is not missed and can ensure that critical issues are promptly dealt with at the point when they arise rather than incurring novel costs after initial estimates have been made.

The provision of a standard NTS process will also provide knowledge and support for a new entrant to the industry (or to a non-expert) to conduct an NTS since it will ensure that no area of data is overlooked and will provide prompts where the data is leading to unexpected results. It will also ensure that the experienced operator is prompted to ask all the necessary questions rather than rely on previous practice without reviewing the necessity for the collection of other data.

The lack of a standard approach to NTS means that the company or NGO, plus the public at large, are exposed to the competence and experience of employed individuals. The results will vary according to the proficiency of those individuals and will determine costs, safety and confidence. By adopting this standard and computer based procedure, with the incorporated updating and amending facilities, the basis for future NTS will be tuned for the best possible definition of hazard areas.

1.4 Relevance for technology suppliers

As highlighted in the IMAS 07.11, Land Release and NTS are evidence based decision making process. They require the collection of data, and the transformation of data in information useful for decision makers. Effectives NTS and Land Release should be surrounded by effectives information management systems.

The proposed process for NTS (and its specializations) will include a list of information requirements and of information sources supporting this way both end users and technology suppliers in the definition of enhanced Information Management Systems tailored on end user practices.

2 Normative references

The normative references for Humanitarian Demining operations are defined by each Nation affected by Landmine and ERW contamination.

National Mine Action Authorities are charged with the policy, regulation and overall management of a national mine action programme, as well as resource mobilization, particularly from the government. The operational arm of the NMAA is the Mine Action Centre (MAC). The MAC is the focal point for mine action activities on the ground. It carries out the policies of the NMAA and coordinates the day-to-day work of the various organizations and agencies conducting mine action operations. Together, the NMAA and the MAC should be the principal organs managing and coordinating mine action in a mine, cluster munition and ERW-affected country.

At international level, the recognised standards are the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) issued by the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in cooperation with the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

Relevant for this document are:

- [1] IMAS 07.11 "Land Release", UNMAS, Ed1, Am2, March 2013, New York.
- [2] IMAS 08.10 "Non-Technical Survey", UNMAS, Ed1, Am 2, March 2013, New York.

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