

**Forum:** General Assembly 4 (SPECPOL)

**Issue:** Ensuring the Safe Removal of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in Former Conflict Zones

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## Introduction

The conclusion of conflict is always accompanied by the delight of the innocent people. However, it also begins a series of casualties and other losses for a country. A majority of these casualties in the aftermaths of conflicts are caused by landmines, Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). According to the United Nations, more than 65 countries are currently contaminated with landmines and ERW. An example of a conflict that had resulted in a large amount of ERW is World War II. Though half a century has passed since the end of WWII, UXO from WWII is still able to be found around the world. Recent examples may include the WWII UXO that was found and disposed of in Batchelor, Australia, on January 15th, 2019, and the unexploded bombs from WWII that have been discovered in Germany and disposed of every year.

UXO, ERW, and landmines threaten the lives of residents as they decrease the scale of usable agricultural lands, limit the access to potable water, and prevent the construction of schools and other infrastructure. UXO has also caused a large number of casualties. By May 2000, 72% of deaths and injuries in Eritrea were caused by UXO. That is even larger than the casualties caused by landmines. The statistics of Accidents in Kosovo, collected from 1999 to 2001, had shown that UXO caused a greater amount of deaths compared to landmines. In addition, 64% of accidents in Afghanistan were caused by UXO instead of landmines.

For every discovered UXO, there will be Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams sent to remove or, most preferably, to dispose of the UXO. Although EOD personnel are trained experts for UXO disposal, there are still casualties made through the process of UXO disposal. One of the most significant examples was in 2010 when three disposal experts were killed in central Germany while defusing a bomb from WWII. The disposal of that UXO wasn't successful, as the bomb exploded when the EOD team members were trying to defuse it. As a result of this accident, three disposal experts died, and a total of six experts were injured.

UXO are threats to many people's lives, even the disposal experts. A method to remove a UXO without any possibility of casualties has not yet been discovered. It is very important to establish such a method so that the residents living in former conflict zones may have more peaceful and healthy lives.

## Definition of Key Terms

### **Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)**

Unexploded Ordnance is explosive weapons that failed to explode when employed. UXO are threatening as they may still remain explosive after being launched for a number of years. The influence of UXO to a country is not only the increase of casualties but more of the economic conditions its residents. These will be more detailed explained later on in this report. UXO may be found in areas such as military training grounds and former conflict zones, which are regions that were once involved with military weapons.

### **Explosive Remnants of War (ERW)**

Explosive Remnants of War, also known as ERW, is the name that generalized all forms of explosive weapons that were left in former conflict areas. ERW includes Unexploded Ordnance (UXO), Abandoned Explosive Ordnance (AXO), cluster munitions, et cetera. A landmine is not a form of ERW.

### **Conflict Zones**

Conflict zones are regions that are involved in wars. As wars are associated with weapons, former conflict zones, in most cases, are left with a number of ERW and landmines. These are threats to residents living in or around the former conflict zones. For instance, Germany is a former conflict zone of the Second World War. More than 5 thousands of unexploded bombs are discovered each year in this country. The existence of those weapons may threats to the lives of residents, as mentioned below in the Background Information section.

### **Landmines**

Landmines are explosive mines that are planted underground and are activated by pressure. Landmines are planted so that they will explode when a person or animal steps on the ground above it. According to data from UNICEF, landmines had caused 15,000 to 20,000 people to be killed or maimed each year with the majority of victims being children. Children are one of the greatest victims of landmines as they lack knowledge regarding the presence and danger of landmines.

### **Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD)**

Explosive Ordnance Disposal is the process of defusing ERW. Many countries and organizations establish their own EOD teams for the removal of ERW. EOD teams normally consist of trained personnel that are experts on ERW and their removal. However, EOD is still a very harsh process as there are still instances of EOD personnel being killed or injured during their tasks.

## **Mine Action**

Mine actions are actions or efforts with the goal of eliminating the threats of ERW and landmines. Mine actions can be presented in many ways such as removing the explosive devices, providing mine-risk education, and assisting victims of explosive devices.

## **Background Information**

### **Impacts of Unexploded Ordnance**

When mentioning the impacts of explosive devices, the first impression of the majority of people might be injuries and deaths. Nevertheless, these explosive devices may affect a much broader area in society. UXO impact areas such as the economy and public health.

#### ***Economy***

UXO does not affect a country's economic status as directly as it may injure a person. There are many other aspects that contribute and lead to the change in the country's economic status. These include the mentality of residents, agriculture, and constructions.

The presence of UXO will cause fear in the residents, which is one of the greatest factors that contribute to how UXO may affect the economy overall. Residents living around areas where UXO have been found will be afraid of using the land for the purposes of infrastructure and agriculture. Not using those lands will greatly affect the economic status of families that depend on agriculture and works for land development.

As mentioned above, the existence of UXO will result in the land becoming inactive and unused. This may cause a country to lose a great amount of usable natural resources. The reconstruction of the damage of wars and natural disasters and the constructions of new infrastructure such as schools and transportation facilities will become a more difficult task. Notice that without enough transportation facilities, a country's commerce will not be very efficient.

In places containing UXO or landmines, there is a high possibility that the residents are dependent on agriculture. The existence of landmines and UXO have prevented the residents

from farming, which will not only decrease the residents' personal economic status but also decrease a country's agriculture scale. In addition, landmines that are planted underground will reduce nutrient levels of the surrounding lands. The decrease in nutrient levels will lead to a decrease in the fertility of agricultural lands and thus decrease the production of agricultural products. These factors may contribute to the decrease in a country's economic status.

### ***Diseases***

"Mines/UXOs lead to public health problems not only because of the death and disability that they cause, but also because they render large tracts of land unusable and prevent whole communities from accessing essential commodities" (WHO). The lack of essential commodities, such as nutrient in soil and sanitation, may lead to an increase in the occurrence of disease. countries affected by UXOs are normally out of medical and basic living resources. The combination of these factors can lead to widespread disease.

### **Risks of Removing Unexploded Ordnance**

UXO are known to be threatful because of their potential to explode. The removal of UXO is dangerous as it may easily cause an explosion to occur. Although removing UXO are usually tasks of EOD personnel, there is still the possibility that they will accidentally stimulate the explosive devices. The explosion of UXO can cause deaths of and injuries to people surrounding it. Common injuries from UXO include ruptured eardrums, amputations of limbs, and blindness from fragmentation or from the blast. In many former conflict zones, children take up most of the population of ERW and landmines victims. For instance, as much as two-thirds of UXO victims in Kosovo are children; 50 percent of landmine casualties in Cambodia are children as well. The reason children take a high percentage of ERW and landmine casualties is that of their ignorance on the appearance and threats of these explosive weapons. Other than casualties, the explosions of UXO will pollute the surrounding environment and destroy the natural resources provided by that area. This will lead to poor sanitation, lack construction materials, and a decrease in economic status due to the shortage of natural resources.

## **Major Countries and Organizations Involved**

### **Germany**

A discovery of UXO in Germany is no more a piece of surprising news. Since the end of the Second World War, UXO was commonly found in Germany's territory. A data in 2011 had shown that an estimated 5,500 unexploded bombs from WWII are found in this country every year. An estimation from 2017 said that there are still more than 100,000 bombs from WWII that remain uncovered. To minimize

the casualties cause by UXO, a forcible call of evacuation in affectable residential areas will be made immediately after a UXO is found. Following by the completion of evacuation, EOD experts will begin their bomb disposal. It is without a doubt that Germany has a very effective system for minimizing casualties from UXO, as the casualties caused by UXO since the end of WWII are significantly low.

## Vietnam

According to Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Vietnam is one of the world's most landmines and UXO-contaminated country. Being a part of the Second Indochina War's (Vietnam War) conflict zone, Vietnam was left for an approximation of 8 hundred thousands tons of unexploded bombs. In between years 1970 and 2009, Vietnam reported 2,661 casualties from ERW. That is, in fact, a pretty large amount of casualties. Although the Vietnam War had ended for more than 40 years, Vietnam still suffers from the dangers of UXO.

## Lao People's Democratic Republic

Being involved in the Vietnam War, Laos was left with 2 million tons of bombs. The existence of UXO in Laos had negatively affected the country's socio-economic development. The government of Lao had established the Lao National UXO Programme (UXO LAO), a programme that, along with the support from UNDP, UNICEF, and other partners, had done some mine actions such as clearing UXO and providing risk education to residents.

## Cambodia

Due to the geographic location and political movements in Cambodia, this country was frequently involved in wars and was left with hundred thousands of UXO. Cambodia is as well a victim of the Vietnam War, which left them with a number of landmines and ERW. Other than the Vietnam War, the conflict between the Khmer Rouge and Lon Nol regime had also contributed to a large amount of landmines and unexploded weapons in the country's region. A demining organization, Cambodian Mine Action Center (CMAC) was established in Cambodia in 1992, aiming to save lives and to support the development for Cambodia. CMAC supports their country through clearing mines and UXO, providing risk education, and release lands that were once contaminated by factors such as wars and UXO.

## Afghanistan

The presence of UXO is a serious issue in Afghanistan. A news report published in 2015 reported that the international troops moving out of Afghanistan left a great amount of UXO that killed and injured an approximation of 40 people per month. Afghanistan is a country that is often involved in wars, hence it is certain that there are a huge amount of landmines and ERW in this country. According to the United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan, in 2014,

there were 369 casualties caused by UXO, including 89 deaths with the majority of victims being children.

### Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

Mines Advisory Group (MAG), is a nongovernmental organization that aims to give the victims of UXO a safer life through searching and clearing out landmines, cluster munitions, and UXO in areas involve or was once affected by conflicts. MAG was found in 1989. Since the establishment, they worked in 68 countries and had helped more than 18 million victims of war to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. This organization contains skilled bomb disposal personnel that go all around the world to clear out landmines and unexploded bombs. Other than bomb disposal, MAG also provides risk education to residents living in former conflict zones. Risk education is important as it prevents people from becoming victims of UXO through teaching residents in former conflict zones how to recognize, avoid, and report threats such as UXO and landmines.

### United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS)

The United Nations Mine Action Services (UNMAS) is a service under the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). UNMAS is responsible for managing operations to clear landmines and ERW. They implement programmes and projects to reduce the threats of explosive devices. UNMAS has taken actions to prevent the occurrence of more ERW victims. For example, in 2017, they provided risk education to more than 2 million people around the world.

### World Health Organization (WHO)

World Health Organization (WHO) is a United Nations agency that works to solve or better the international public health problems. The presence of UXO made lead to many health problems ranging from injuries to diseases. WHO personnel had gone to countries suffering from UXO to support them with medical techniques and facilities.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
September 02, 1945	The Second World War ended on this day. World War II is important at this point as it had left a huge amount of ERW to the former conflict zones.

April 30, 1975	The Second Indochina War, also known as the Vietnam War, ended on this day. Being one of the most recent war in Asia, the Second Indochina War had brought ERW and landmines to many of its former conflict zones. Residents in those conflict zones are still suffering from the crisis of ERW and landmines.
1989	The Mines Advisory Group (MAG) was found. Since then, this organization had went to many countries and support the residents from being harmed by UXO and landmines.
October, 1997	The UN Mine Action Services (UNMAS), a service that is responsible for clearing ERW and landmines, was found.
November 28, 2003	Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War was adopted on this day. By definition, Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War is an international treaty that addressed countries' responsibility on ERW and suggested methods for removing ERW.
November 12, 2006	Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War was put into force.
June 02, 2010	This is one of the most recent and significant example of accidents that happen through bomb disposal. On this day a group of EOD experts went to Göttingen, Germany, for defusing an UXO from WWII. Unfortunately, the UXO exploded and caused three EOD experts to death and two with serious injuries.

## Relevant UN Resolutions and Treaties

- Protocol on Explosive Remnants of War, 12 November 2006 **(CCW/MSP/2003/2)**
- The Types of Munitions Which Become Explosive Remnants of War Factors which Contribute to the Occurrence of Explosive Remnants of War, 14 May 2002 **(CCW/GGE/I/WP.5)**
- International Humanitarian Law Principles and Explosive Remnants of War, 25 August 2005 **(CCW/GGE/XI/WG.1/WP.19)**

## Possible Solutions

**A possible solution for ensuring the safety of UXO removal is to hire or train more EOD experts.** It is proved by several data that UXO removal by EOD experts does not ensure a 100% safety. However, countries suffering from the crisis of UXO are still in need of these experts as they have knowledge of correctly reacting against different kinds of UXO and defusing those UXO in a safest-possible way. The presence of EOD experts may not be able to reduce all casualties from explosive ordnance, yet they have the capacity to minimize the casualties caused by UXO.

**Support from the More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) and respective Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) would be an efficient way of contributing to solving the issue at hand.** Notice that most countries suffering from the crisis of UXO are less economically developed. These Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs) might not have the ability to afford the finance needed for training a team of EOD experts. Support does not have to be financial. There are many ways to support these LEDCs such as providing training materials, EOD instructors, and tools required for bomb disposal. A disadvantage of this solution is that the process of forming an EOD group requires a period of time. Hence this solution might not be so efficient for countries that need immediate support with UXO disposal.

**To minimize the casualties caused by UXO, a system that gives direction for evacuation and informs the EOD personnel in the shortest amount of time is essential for areas that are affected by UXO.** Due to the unpredictable explosion of UXO, evacuation of residents should always be considered as a priority and should be completed in the least amount of time. However, due to the differences in geography, the system of evacuation must be different for each area. This is one of the disadvantages of this solution it requires a lot of work to prepare systems of evacuation for each area that is affected by UXO.

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