

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE ARF DEMINING SEMINAR PALMERSTON NORTH, 7-11 APRIL 1997

INTRODUCTION

1. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Demining Seminar was held from 7-11 April 1997 in Linton Military Camp, Palmerston North, New Zealand at the ARF ISM on Peacekeeping in April 1996 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to host such a seminar.
2. The Seminar was attended by most ARF members. There were presentations from a representative from the Mine Clearance Policy Unit of the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and by representatives of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre, the Lao Unexploded Ordinance Programme and the Mozambique Accelerated Demining Programme.
3. The meeting was chaired by Col Paul Southwell, Chief of Staff, Support Command, New Zealand Army. The chief of the New Zealand Defence Force, Lt. Gen A.L. Birks and the Deputy Secretary of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Colin Keating, addressed the opening session of the meeting.
4. The Seminar considered the following issues: measures currently being undertaken by the international community to address the world-wide landmine problem; New Zealand's landmine policies and perspective; the New Zealand Defence Force approach to and involvement in international demining operations; the United Nations and demining; the practicalities (political, organisation, operational, training, personnel and technical) of a demining operation, and the lessons learned and the way ahead. Consideration of these issues was augmented by a field demonstration of demining operations and techniques and case studies of the Cambodian, Lao and Mozambique demining operations.
5. A formal report was not produced for endorsement by the seminar participants. The following summary prepared by the New Zealand Chair endeavours to capture the sense of the seminar on a range of demining issues. A set of proposed recommendations is included for consideration by the ARF SOM.

5.1. The Worldwide Mine Problem and International Responses to Control Landmines

- 5.1.1. Participants noted that forging an international consensus on this complex issue would remain elusive.

5.2. National Statement on Demining

5.2.1. A number of participants took the opportunity offered by the Chair to make statements on their national demining policies. The Seminar noted that such exchanges of information were useful in promoting confidence and understanding among ARF members.

5.2.2. Participants agreed that there should be continued international efforts to assist those countries with significant mine infestation.

5.3. Practical Aspects of Demining Operations

5.3.1. The Seminar participants welcomed the opportunity to view, compare operational techniques and gain first-hand experience of some of the practical elements and techniques associated with field demining operations.

5.4. Case Studies Mozambique: Laos and Cambodia

5.4.1. The participants noted that the Cambodian, Lao and Mozambique programmes were good examples of how local management and international technical expertise could be combined to create an effective demining programme.

5.4.2. The Directors of the Cambodian, Lao and Mozambique demining programmes highlighted the value of their being given the opportunity to meet and discuss demining issues with counterparts from similarly mine infested countries.

5.5. Lessons Learned and the Way Ahead

5.5.1. The important role of United Nations in international demining operations was acknowledged.

5.5.2. There was agreement on the desirability of the UN creating a single body under the direct control of the Secretary General manage and implement all aspects of UN demining operations.

5.5.3. There was general support for further exchanges of demining ideas and techniques as provided for by the ARF Demining Seminar.

5.5.4. The participants agreed that the Seminar proceeding should be made available to all countries who are afflicted by mine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The following Recommendations are included for consideration by the ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials Meeting in Langkawi:

6.1. National Statement on Demining

6.1.1. That ARF participants be encouraged to continue to support international efforts to assist those countries with significant mine infestation.

6.2. Lessons Learned and the Way Ahead

6.2.1. That the ARF participants make a recommendation to the United Nations that responsibility for all aspects of UN demining operations reside within a single UN body under the direct control of the UN Secretary General.

6.2.2. That the ARF participants consider, where possible, further exchanges of demining ideas and techniques as provided for by the ARF demining seminar.

6.2.3. That the ARF participants make the seminar proceedings available to all countries afflicted by mine infestation.