

Observations and Comments of the CCM Article 4 Analysis Group on the Extension Request submitted by Mauritania in accordance with Article 4.5 of the Convention

The Analysis Group is grateful for the efforts made by Mauritania in preparing its Article 4 Extension Request submitted on 30 June 2021 in accordance with the outline recommended in the CCM Extension Requests Guidelines adopted at the 8MSP. The Group notes that Mauritania had previously declared completion of its clearance obligations and is the first CCM State Party to apply for an extension request following the discovery of new previously unreported cluster munition-contaminated areas. The Group takes this opportunity to compliment Mauritania for the transparency exhibited in this matter. The Group also commends Mauritania for requesting only the estimated necessary time for Mauritania to comply with its obligations as well as providing a work plan that allows for progress to be monitored.

While the Analysis Group agrees that the Mauritanian Request meets the basic requirements for States Parties to the Convention to consider the submission, it has also observed a number of key elements which require further elaboration by the requesting State to strengthen the request. Moreover, by providing these additional clarifications, States Parties to the CCM will be able to attain a better understanding of the challenges faced by Mauritania in implementing its Article 4 obligations. In this regard, the Analysis Group requests additional information or further clarification from Mauritania by **Friday 23 July 2021** on the following points:-

The government of Mauritania would like to thank the CCM Article 4 Analysis Group for its initial feedback. Please see responses in blue below:

1. More information on the **classification** of the newly identified cluster munition contaminated areas in Tiris Zemmour:
 - (a) Need to clarify in accordance with current IMAS whether each of the nine areas can be designated as a Suspected Hazardous Area (SHA) or a Confirmed Hazardous Area (CHA) and indicate how these would be dealt with.

According to IMAS a Confirmed Hazardous Area (CHA) refers to an area where the presence of explosive ordnance contamination has been confirmed on the basis of direct evidence of the presence of Explosive Ordnance. Under this definition all nine areas can be considered to be Confirmed Hazardous Areas although additional survey work will still be necessary in order to further define the exact perimeter of these nine areas.

- (b) Methodologies and categorization utilized need to be in compliance with international standards, including International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) in accordance with Article 4.3.

Agreed and acknowledged that now and in the future Mauritania will strive to work in accordance with international standards, including IMAS.

- (c) Mauritania indicates that the presence of cluster munition contamination has been visually confirmed in all the nine areas (direct evidence). Have the exact locations of these items been recorded?

Yes the location of the majority of these items has been recorded and is available upon request.

2. The **Nomes Mauritaniennes de l'action antimines (NMAM)** which are Mauritania's national mine action standards, were approved by the National Humanitarian Demining Program for Development (PNDHD) and Mauritanian Government in 2007. There is no information on whether these national standards have been amended since their adoption in 2007 have been amended in light of IMAS updates. Therefore, Mauritania should provide clear information on whether the standards are up to date and in accordance with current IMAS, and if not, whether Mauritania plans to review and update its national standards.

The PNDHD acknowledges that the NMAM still need to be updated to be in line with the new IMAS updates. The program will work on updating these national standards before any further survey and clearance activities are implemented.

3. It is noted that Mauritania has not provided much information on the **methodologies** that it will employ. In addition, it is noted that Mauritania intends to deploy four BAC teams to address the newly identified cluster munition contaminated areas with a total area of 14,017,596 m². More information should be provided on the size and composition of these BAC teams. It would also be beneficial to mention if the teams will consist of only staff from the Corps of Engineers.

Mauritania intends to conduct battle area clearance activities in order to clear the cluster munitions contaminated areas. Four BAC teams consisting of ten searchers each is the planned team structure. In order to build a capacity to respond to any further residual risk, and to reduce costs, staff will be seconded to PNDHD from the Mauritanian Corps of Engineers.

4. The **Work Plan** included in the extension request outlines activities to be carried out during the extension period, i.e. 1 August 2022 to 1 August 2024.

- (a) What activities pertaining to CCM Article 4 are being carried out prior to 1 August 2022?

The Government of Mauritania and PNDHD are currently working on resource mobilization in order to be able to conduct further survey and clearance activities of the recently identified contaminated areas. Once resources have been identified then the program will proceed with mobilizing the teams as quickly as possible. These teams will then start conducting the needed survey and clearance work.

- (b) In the Plan on page 11, it states the period of "February – December 2024" follows the period of "January 2023". Kindly explain the delayed commencement or correct the typographical error in the year stated.

This was a typo. As pointed out and acknowledged the correct period should be February – December 2023.

5. The Request would benefit from the provision of additional information on Mauritania's **resource mobilization plan**, in particular:

- (a) Which potential international implementing partners and States has Mauritania identified to be in a position to provide assistance to its cluster munition clearance activities?

Mauritania intends to re-engage with states parties who have previously supported the countries activities in the past. This includes appeals to the governments of Norway, Germany and Japan as they were the most recent donors to the programme.

- (b) How does Mauritania intend to engage with the above mentioned partners and States?

Mauritania will proactively reach out to these states parties identified above, in connection with the upcoming CCM meeting and the submission of this extension request.

- (c) What is Mauritania's contingency plan in case of lack of sufficient resources?

If the government of Mauritania and the PNDHD are not able to fully mobilize sufficient resources then the programme will need to extend the timeline necessary in order to reach completion.

6. Mauritania has not provided any information on **risk education** in its Request.

- (a) What efforts have been carried out or are being carried out to ensure the safety and awareness of civilians that could come into contact with the cluster munition contaminated areas?

MRE activities have previously been conducted by the PNDHD that include safety messages related to cluster munitions contamination.

- (b) Has an assessment of needs and vulnerability been carried out to identify the targeted communities or groups to provide risk education to?

Yes, an initial needs assessment has been conducted. It should be noted that the identified cluster munition contaminated areas are located in the far northern part of the country where the land is used by nomadic populations. This is the target population for any future risk education activities.

7. **Gender and diversity** are mainstreamed in the Lausanne Action Plan that will be adopted by States Parties at the Second Review Conference (2RC).

- (a) How does Mauritania intend to ensure that gender and diversity are considered and integrated into all appropriate activities related to survey and clearance of cluster munition remnants? For example, will Mauritania seek to achieve gender-balanced and diverse survey and BAC teams?

Gender and diversity are considered to be important cross cutting issues to the programme in Mauritania. The program will seek the inputs of all sectors of the population including men, women, boys and girls when designing and implementing all activities. The program will also seek to achieve gender balanced and diverse survey and BAC teams to the extent this might be possible, while acknowledging that there may be some limitations to achieving gender balance from the staff that would be seconded by the Corps of Engineers.

8. Mauritania assures that it has the **political will** to comply with CCM Article 4 and indicates its willingness to contribute financially and in-kind towards the cost of the request activities.

(a) However, Mauritania lists a “lack of national political will” as a risk factor of noncompliance. Please clarify this apparent contradiction.

Mauritania currently has the necessary political will to comply with CCM Article 4 and the assumption is that this situation will continue into the future, thus there is an expectation that this identified risk factor will not materialize.

(b) Constraints listed include – inability to mobilize resources; lack of national political will or international support; security situation; and impact of pandemic. Could more information be provided including on what are the potential security problems, etc.?

Potential security problems are related to the north-eastern areas of Mauritania that border Mali. These areas are considered dangerous due to their proximity to Mali, where armed groups engaged in an active insurgency carry out cross-border attacks into Mauritania. The government of Mauritania does not maintain a substantial presence in these areas and thus police are unable to respond to most incidents there.

Battle Area Clearance (BAC) Methodology Summary

Introduction

Battle Area Clearance (BAC) is the term used to describe a systematic search of an area contaminated by Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). BAC assets are an important component in any mine action operation. To be fully effective, BAC resources should be carefully managed and controlled to ensure that they are properly employed and that clearance is able to proceed safely, efficiently and effectively.

Aim

This chapter covers the minimum requirements for the conduct of BAC procedures by the Mauritania clearance teams. The aim of all activities is to release land that is confirmed to be, or suspected to be contaminated by ERW.

General Procedures

In general BAC methods are not used in an area with a threat from landmines. However, with appropriate risk management procedures or confirmation of the threat by technical survey, BAC methods can be used in areas contaminated with high-metal content landmines only.

BAC can be conducted in any of the following three (3) applications as described below (*Visual Search, Instrument Aided Visual Search, Shallow Search*) individually or in combination, depending on perceived threat, risk assessment and PNDHD requirements.

Surface Search Method

Visual Search is conducted as an effective method to locate surface ERW within an area with given boundaries.

Instrument Aided Visual Search is conducted as an effective method to locate surface and partially buried ERW within an area with given boundaries where vegetation and ground conditions may prevent an efficient visual search only. This method shall be assisted by the use of metal detectors/ locators.

The above two surface search methods are carried out in the same manner with the exception that the second method is assisted with metal detectors/ locators.

Subsurface Search Method

Shallow Search is conducted as an effective method to locate sub-surface buried ERW to a specified depth, normally 13cm, within an area with given boundaries. This method requires the use of metal detectors/ locators.

Procedures Surface Search Methods

Prior to searching the area, the BAC team should conduct the set up and marking of the search boxes/ areas.

The searchers should line up across the base line facing the area to be searched with the Team Leader (TL) suitably located to allow good command and control of the team. The surface search method should be conducted as a visual search or as an instrument aided visual search enabling a non-intrusive search of vegetation and other obstacles.

The search line shall progress forward and cover the full width of the defined search area. The search shall progress in a systematic manner to ensure that all the area is covered. Each searcher shall search the ground to the left and right and in front of him, ensuring overlap with the adjacent searcher. When reaching the end of the search area/lane, the search party should repeat the search until the whole area has been completed.

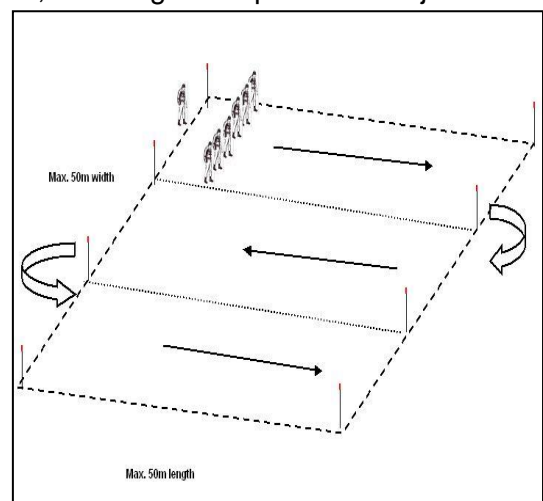
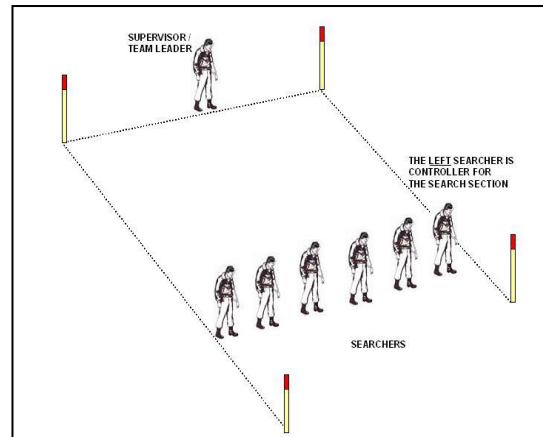
Start point and end point, left and right, for the search party shall be marked using flags, coloured small bags or wooden pickets. They shall be used as a guide for the search party ensuring a clear definition on what area that has been searched within the designated search area/box. The marking will also aid the team ensuring that an appropriate overlap of a minimum of 1m is achieved throughout the search.

During the search, progressive marking may be used depending on the size of the search areas/ boxes, using the same marking material as for the start point. The search party should mark left-hand and right-right hand search perimeters. The marking should be placed / inserted to the ground and be at a maximum every 15 m.

Any member of the search party, who identifies an ERW item and/or suspicious item, shall immediately stop, raise his hand and alert the remainder of the search party and the Team Leader. On hearing the alert the remaining searchers in the party shall stop and stand still.

After an assessment by the Team Leader, the ERW shall be suitably marked and recorded before continuing with the search.

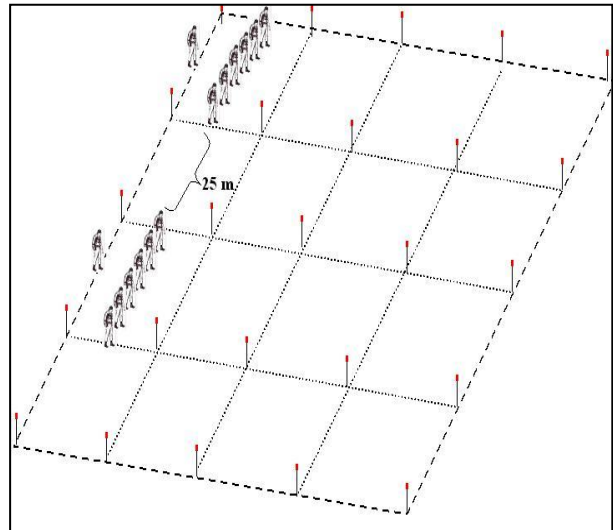
The ERW may be marked using a tall marker, in case the area is widely contaminated, with tape attached to it. The marker will be placed at a minimum 30 cm away from the item and the ground checked with an instrument before inserting the marker.



Once an area has been searched and all ERW located has been marked, the search party can move onto the next BAC search box/area.

Except for search instructions and on the identification of an ERW by one of the search party, searching shall always be carried out in complete silence.

Any number of working parties may be employed on an area provided that appropriate command and control is in place, and a minimum safety distance of 25m is maintained between each search party depending on the threat.



All items that have been located, investigated and identified should be either destroyed in situ or if determined safe to do so, moved to a central demolition site (CDS) for disposal.

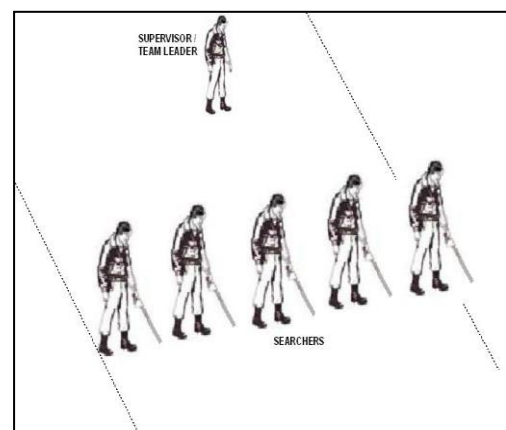
Areas of thick vegetation or rubble that require an intrusive search shall be marked off and addressed at a later stage with an appropriate search method.

Procedures Subsurface Search Methods

Shallow Search Method

Shallow Search is normally subsequent to a visual search however, there may be situations whereby a site may not be first subjected to a visual search but may go directly to a shallow search. This may be dependent on the perceived threat.

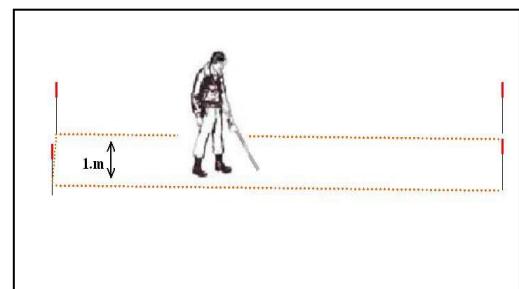
The method used to conduct a shallow search should depend upon the location of the task and the ERW threat, i.e. built up areas, cultivated areas or open ground. The method employed should ensure that each search/clearance lane and/or box is systematically searched and all readings are investigated.



Search boxes/areas may be subdivided into search lanes with ropes, pickets and/or tape depending on the type of metal detector/ locator to be used.

Searchers should operate in search parties as per surface search procedures or individually.

When operating as individuals, searchers should be assigned a box/ lane where he should carry out the instrument search. Each searcher should be responsible for the movement of the box/lane marking ropes.

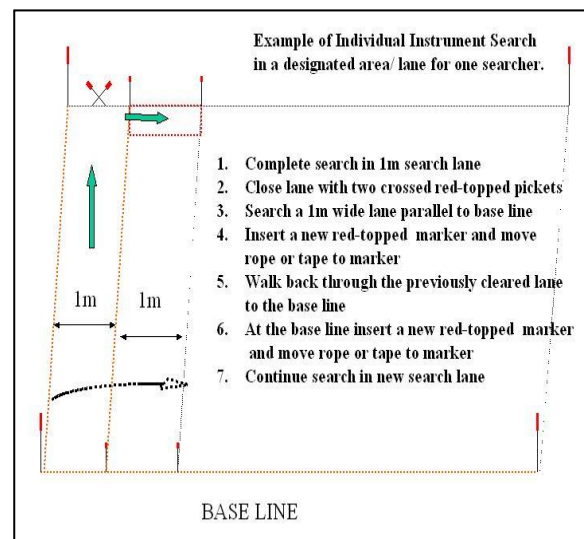


The lane should be marked with two lines 1m apart to a maximum of 50m in length, depending on the terrain. The lanes should be searched using a designated instrument/locator. On the completion of each lane, the left hand line (if search

direction is to the right) should be moved over the right hand line by 1m to create the new working lane.

On completion of each lane, the searcher should close the lane with two crossed red-topped pickets or two rocks to indicate the boundary between cleared and un-cleared areas.

If the detector/ locator gives no signal, the searcher should progress along the 1m lane at a slow walking pace until he reaches the end of the lane at which point he should search a 1m wide overlap parallel to the base line and insert a peg 1m from the last. He should then move the left hand rope over the right hand rope and attach it to the peg. He should return to the base line through the cleared lane and move the left hand rope over the right rope on to the next peg whereby creating a new search lane. This procedure should be repeated until the box has been completed.



If the detector gives a signal, the searcher should investigate the signal and carry out investigation drills as per the Mauritania SOP for Manual Demining and apply the appropriate level of PPE.

All searchers in adjacent boxes should work in the same direction across the search box to maintain safety distances. The Worksite Supervisor or the Team Leader shall ensure that the minimum safety distances are maintained at all times.

If an ERW is confirmed during the investigation drill, it shall be marked in accordance with NPA procedures. The searcher should report the find to the Team Leader, who should confirm the type of ERW and ensure that the appropriate action is taken.

All items located, investigated and identified as ERW should either be destroyed in situ or if determined safe to do so, moved to a central demolition site (CDS) for disposal.

Investigating a Contact During BAC Search Methods

To investigate a reading/signal, a searcher equipped with a handheld detector (sensitivity set according to target) shall pinpoint the signal and investigate the indications. A minimum safety distance to other personnel should be applied based on the perceived threat.

In general, when unexploded munitions are encountered during BAC search operations, they have already malfunctioned and usually have a high metal content, on or near the surface and constitute less of a hazard than mines. A thorough risk assessment shall be made by the Operations Manager or Worksite Supervisor on what type of explosive ordnance could be encountered when investigating indications.

If the source of the signal is an item of ERW, then the searcher shall inform the Team Leader who shall assess the finding and take appropriate measures depending on the type of item located.