

Sudan

Following a three-year peace process, the government of the Sudan and the southern-based rebel Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army SPLM/A signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement on 9 January 2005, thus putting an end to their lengthy conflict. Mines were part of the war arsenals used by the government forces and the rebels. As a result, landmine contamination still plagues many regions of South and North Sudan.

South Sudan

World Food Programme (WFP) support with road clearance and reconstruction for post-war development

The first half of the year witnessed a continuation of the FSD/WFP Road Clearance Project; the goal of this project was the clearance of high-priority humanitarian access routes prior to their reconstruction by civilian road construction companies. During this period, the FSD deployed four road clearance teams, supported by MV4 mini-flails, and a mechanical support team equipped with a ScanJack heavy flail. The WFP's clearance priorities remained essentially unchanged after 2005, and the FSD continued to focus on key routes from Kenya to the southern capital, Juba and from Uganda to Juba, as well as the domestic route from Juba to the regional capital, Bor.

Unfortunately, the FSD/WFP project suffered from a lack of funds. As a result, operations ceased in May 2006, and the project was terminated at the end of June.

Emergency survey operations in support of the United Nations Mine Action Office

The FSD continued to support the peace process in South Sudan by continuing to supply two emergency survey teams and one mine clearance team for the UN Mine Action Office, with funding provided through the UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS). This component of the FSD/UNOPS Survey and Mine Clearance Project continued to focus on the identification and reporting of dangerous areas in affected communities and on the clearance of areas considered necessary for the ongoing support of the peace-building objectives established by the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS). The most notable task was the clearance of mines and UXO around the runways and aprons of the Juba airport.

This project also concluded in June in accordance with the provisions of the UNOPS contract and in anticipation of a number of new UNOPS contracts in South Sudan.

Providing a Line of Disengagement from conflict

In May 2006, the FSD responded to a UNOPS Invitation to Bid for a number of new contracts in South Sudan and was selected to provide a Line of Disengagement Clearance Capacity to support UNMIS priorities co-ordinated by the UN Mine Action Office.

A Line of Disengagement refers to the areas surrounding former Government of Sudan "garrison towns" that became the front lines of the conflict. These areas, heavily defended by both sides, were extensively mined. When the comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed in early 2005, the two warring parties first started the process of "disengaging" or withdrawing from conflict in these areas.

The project called for the provision of two Lines of Disengagement (LoD) clearance teams, each consisting of one Minewolf medium ground processing machine supported by a standard manual mine clearance team. In October, a mine detection dog team was also added to the capacity to further increase the pace of clearance. The Minewolf is able to use either a tiller unit or a standard flail arrangement (depending on the threat from anti-tank mines) to process the ground in a dangerous area and thus allow rapid follow-up clearance by the mine detection dogs or the manual clearance team.

National capacity building: the FSD supports the first national mine action NGO, the Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service (SIMAS)

In November, the FSD started work on a new project focusing on the development of the technical and managerial capacities of our local partner NGO in South Sudan. The Sudan Integrated Mine Action Service, or SIMAS, has been a partner of the FSD since October 2004 and has provided significant assistance to the FSD during the recruitment,

training and implementation phases of our current and past projects. The project is bilaterally funded by Switzerland and aims to help SIMAS to become:

- a. Fully registered with the local authorities;
- b. Administratively and logistically self-sufficient;
- c. Technically competent, and
- d. Fully accredited for mine clearance operations.

The project provides equipment and vehicles while covering salaries and operating costs for the SIMAS management team and for one complete mine clearance team.

The project is funded for twelve months, and the FSD is supplying an international adviser to provide managerial, administrative and logistic assistance to the SIMAS management team. The FSD is also supplying a mine clearance technical adviser to the mine clearance team. Furthermore, the FSD has also provided support for the purchase of project vehicles and equipment.

North Sudan

Nuba Mountains and Kadugli

Once again, due to the UNOPS contract cycle, northern operations around the Nuba Mountains and the regional capital of Kadugli were completed in two distinct operational phases. For the first six months of the year, the FSD continued to provide the capacities required by the FSD/UNOPS Survey and Mine Clearance Project, namely two survey teams and two mine clearance teams. Survey operations continued to focus on route assessments in the northern region, while clearance operations were dominated by high-priority tasks in support of UNMIS peace-building activities in the politically important area around Abyei.

In June, this project concluded in accordance with the provisions of the UNOPS contract.

The FSD successfully bid on a much larger project in North Sudan to provide a significantly enhanced capacity to the UN Mine Action Office to support UNMIS peacekeeping operations. The project mobilisation phase took place during the rainy season (July and August), and the training of over 80 mine clearance professionals, 10 medics, and 16 drivers was conducted in September. The FSD agreed to provide the following capacities to the Northern Region Mine Action Office in October 2006:

- a. Eight manual mine clearance teams;
- b. One ground preparation machine – the FSD fielded a D-2 mini-flail, a small remote controlled system manufactured by the Swiss NGO, Digger DTR.
- c. Two route assessment and survey teams, and
- d. A management capacity.

Initial mine clearance tasks included six high-priority tasks in the Nuba Mountain region. Two mine clearance teams and the mini-flail are now permanently deployed to the strategically important town of Kurmuk, located on the Sudanese/Ethiopian border, in order to clear a large anti-personnel minefield that sits astride the main road into Ethiopia.

Route assessment tasks were divided so that one team remained in the Nuba Mountains while the second team shifted its base to Kurmuk in order to support the UN Mine Action Sub-Office in the eastern part of the Sudan.

Support for UN Development Programme Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Efforts

In April 2006, the FSD was funded by the UNDP to provide a rapid response survey team (RRST) similar to the team used in Darfur to support the ongoing disarmament and demobilisation of former warring militias that were not to be absorbed into the regular armies of the North or South. The RRST team was initially deployed to Malakal, located on the banks of the Nile River. However, the start of the rainy season forced a suspension of operations from May until September. Since resuming operations, the RRST Team has been completing UXO disposal tasks north of Kadugli and in Kassala and the Red Sea States. This project will continue until May 2007.

Kassala and the Red Sea States

In May 2006, the FSD began to train a national staff to support a new project to conduct survey and mine clearance operations in the politically and strategically significant region of Kassala and the Red Sea States. The region, which lies on the border between Eritrea and the Sudan, has been the scene of a low-level conflict over independence from the Sudan for a number of years.

The FSD completed training operations by the end of May and deployed the following capacity in June:

- a. one emergency survey team;
- b. one technical survey team,
- c. one mine clearance team.

Unfortunately, the political and security-related sensitivities of the time precluded immediate deployment of the teams to Kassala. The project was temporarily based in Khartoum, conducting survey and clearance tasks in support of the UN Mine Action Sub-Office in the eastern region around the town of Damazine. In September, the survey team was permitted to commence route assessment operations in the area north of Kassala, on routes leading to the key town of Hamash Korieb. In early November, the remaining two teams were also able to be deployed in the area; since then, clearance and survey operations have concentrated on the Hamash Korieb area.

Japanese Grant Assistance for a Grassroots Human Security Project

In March, the FSD was provided with a grant from the Embassy of Japan in the Sudan for the purchase of four "Rhamba" mine resistant vehicles and associated spare parts. The vehicles were to be used to support the FSD's survey and mine clearance operations in the Sudan. Two Rhambas were delivered to Juba in South Sudan and have been used to support the "Line of Disengagement" project by conducting route assessments ahead of the road clearance operations currently underway there. The other two vehicles will be allocated to the two UNOPS project Route Assessment Teams to help conduct surveys of high threat routes in areas where the use of standard 4WD vehicles would be considered too risky.

Darfur

The FSD continued to provide support for mine action efforts in Darfur during 2006. January to October saw the continued deployment of a rapid response survey and EOD team (RRST) consisting of two international EOD technicians and one international medic. In October, the first team was joined by a second RRST. Initially operations focused on North Darfur while the team continued to be based in El Fashir; however, as the year progressed, the focus changed to include South Darfur. As the security situation became more and more uncertain in Darfur, and the threat of local militia units hijacking the team vehicles increased, deployments reverted to the area around El Fashir and North Darfur, where security has been less of an issue. Activities tended to focus on the rapid assessment of routes and tracks in addition to spot EOD tasks close to population centres.