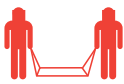


Highlights March 2019



5,443 m²
deemed as safe from explosives



12.28 km of roads
deemed safe from explosives



15 Landmine/ERW
Safety Training sessions
for UN personnel



Mine Risk Education
1160 participants

The UNMAS Integrated Clearance Team (ICT) and two Integrated Road Assessment and Clearance Teams (IRACTs) continued with clearance operations in the Abyei Area and the Safe Demilitarised Border Zone (SDBZ) throughout the month of March.

The UNMAS ICT completed clearance of a former military trench in Abyei town. UNMAS IRACT 1 continued manual mine clearance at a suspected mine field in Lopong, southern Abyei. Mechanical clearance could not be conducted in Lopong due to the unavailability of mandatory UNISFA force protection impacting on productivity and clearance likely to continue until end of April. On 13 March a PMA2 Anti-Personnel Mine was located and subsequently destroyed in-situ.

In March, UNMAS ICT and IRACT assessed 5,443 sqm of land as free from explosive hazards in the Abyei area. In addition to the land released, six Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) were located and destroyed in-situ. IRACT 2 continued with Road Assessment, Verification and Clearance (RAVC) of the eight newly identified patrol routes within the Tishwin area. These routes are all located within the SDBZ and will be utilised for ground patrols. On 7 March, UNMAS was prevented from continuing with the task by the South Sudanese Police. This issue was referred to the JBVMM HQ as well as the Senior National Monitors. On 13 March, a 'no objection letter' was received from the South Sudanese People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) authorising the team to continue with clearance activities. During the reporting period the team conducted RAVC of 12.275 km. No evidence of landmines and ERW was found on the routes assessed.

With its four Patrol Support Teams (PSTs), UNMAS is dedicated to support all the Ground Monitoring Missions (GMMs) in the SDBZ. In total, twenty two GMMs were organised for March.

In JBVMM Sector 1 Gok Machar, UNMAS PSTs continued patrols at Team Site (TS) 11 Safahah/Kiir Adem and TS 12 at Sumayah/War Abar. Seven GMMs were conducted from TS 11 and an additional seven from TS 12. Two Integrated Ground Patrol Training (IGPT) sessions were organised at TS 11, 21-23 March and 26-28 March. One IGPT was organised at TS 12 on 18-20 March.

In JBVMM Sector 2, one PST continued to be on standby in El Amira while waiting for a decision to move forward to the new TS 22 at Abu Qussa/Wunkur. The team conducted refresher training sessions throughout the period and organised one IGPT session on 20-21 March. The PST at TS 21 Tishwin continued to support JBVMM GMMs. In March, eight GMMs were conducted from Tishwin TS to the North Outer Limit and to the South Outer Limit of the Higlig-Bentiu border crossing corridor. One IGPT session was organised on 29-30 March.

On 6 March, UNMAS conducted destruction of 3 weapons, 70 rounds of ammunition, and 2 magazines confiscated by UNISFA. Regular maintenance of the Weapons and Ammunition Management (WAM) facility was also conducted.

During the month of March, UNMAS delivered Mine Risk Education (MRE) through direct presentation and public information sessions. In total, three MRE sessions were conducted, reaching a total of 568 men, women, boys and girls in the Abyei area. One of the presentations was held on 27 March, where UNMAS participated in the UNISFA Pre-Seasonal Movement Conference by providing an interactive session to the Misseriya and the Ngok Dinka communities. Additionally, UNMAS provided two landmine and ERW awareness induction training sessions to 24 UNISFA staff officers and military observers, 22 males and 2 females.



Quality control using Large Loop Metal Detector (LLMD) within the verified route in the Tishwin area (SDBZ)



Weapon cutting at the WAM site

Field Story: Manual Mine Clearance in Lopong, Southern Abyei

UNMAS is responsible for the identification and clearance of landmines and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW). In support of UNISFA, UNMAS teams conduct surveys, Mine Risk Education (MRE), area clearance, route verification, and explosive ordnance disposal activities for enabling peacekeeping operations as well as the delivery of humanitarian aid, the return of community members to previously abandoned communities and a peaceful migration by nomadic herdsman.

Lopong is an abandoned village, situated approximately 20 kilometres South-West of Abyei Town. The area was of economic and military importance due to its strategic location. The river running through this area makes the land highly fertile and resourceful. This area is claimed by both the Ngok-Dinka and the Misseriya tribal groups as their homeland, and cattle rustling remains an ongoing challenge. During the conflict period, armed elements laid a number of landmines, which continued to pose an active threat once the fighting ceased. A former SPLA engineer who laid landmines 18 years ago in the Lopong area reported the approximate location of the old minefield. The nomadic cattle herders traversing the area also reported a mine incident which occurred approximately 8 years ago in the same general area. UNMAS teams continued to collect more information through Non-Technical Surveys (NTS) in the area and began clearance activities. The suspected locations were cleared with metal detectors.

Exploratory lanes were established from the known safe area, working towards the trees, where information indicated that mines might be present.

On the 13th March, the first landmine was located by the UNMAS team conducting clearance activities around the trees. The landmine was identified as a PMA2 Anti-Personnel landmine. During this intrusive investigation, the deminer carefully excavated the ground from the safe area towards the signal and exposed the mine. Every effort was made to partially expose the mine without touching it. Once the team collected enough evidence, the mine was destroyed in-situ through an electrical initiation procedure. After the successful demolition, the specific area was rechecked and the team continued to investigate the remaining area. Manual mine clearance activities are ongoing as of the end of March.

Every year, hundreds of nomadic cattle herders with their livestock were crossing through or near this minefield, the majority of them risking their lives due to their lifestyle and economic reasons. UNMAS strives to provide a safe environment for the population of Abyei and remove all explosive hazards posing a danger to their lives.



General view of the suspected minefield in the Lopong area



P2P AP Mine located in the Lopong area



Location of the hazardous area in Lopong, Southern Abyei

**IF YOU SEE AN ITEM OF CONCERN,
DO NOT TOUCH IT!
CONTACT UNMAS IMMEDIATELY!
Inter-Mission: 176-3365 or 176-3860
Sudan: +249 962 970 253
South Sudan: +211 924 268 664**