

CASE DESCRIPTION

In 1994 the two warring sides in the Angolan civil war signed the Lusaka peace accords and subsequently have slowly retreated from their entrenched positions. However, due to the heinous number of landmines Angola will remain a country afflicted by the scourge of war for decades to come because the devices act as a silent enemy, not allowing the population to progress and rebuild. Estimates of the number of Angolan land mines range between 10 and 20 million which equates to at least 1 to 2 land mines for every person in the country. U.N. estimates put the number of Angolan amputees resulting from the silent killers at 70,000. For three decades mines were scattered in Angola's fields, villages, roads, and other unexpected places to intimidate, maim and kill innocent victims. Land mines have a devastating affect upon the environment by restricting the movement of people, deterring farming, disrupting economies, and killing and mutilating many innocent men, women, and children. In 1993 a UN General Resolution moratorium on the sale and export of antipersonnel land mines was passed. However, international consensus has yet to be achieved and Angola's problem continues unabated.

Angola is blessed with abundant natural wealth including petroleum, diamonds, agriculture, and fishing resources and is destined to become one of Africa's richest nations. The country has a population of approximately 11 million people and a territory of approximately 480,000 square miles or about twice the size of Texas.

Landmines cost as little as \$3 to manufacture and are classified into two different groups, large tank mines and antipersonnel mines. Anti tank mines were first used during World War II and require several hundred pounds of pressure to detonate. Anti-personnel mines are much smaller, difficult to detect (often being made of predominantly plastic materials) and are designed to injure rather than kill because an injured soldier is more of a burden to an army than a dead one. However, what is rarely considered in the design process and the strategy of deploying the landmine is its use after the conflict has been concluded.

U.N. estimates claim that Afghanistan is riddled with 12 million and the former Yugoslavia saw the laying of 60,000 mines a week at the height of its recent conflict. The U.S. State department estimates that there are more than 85 million land mines scattered throughout 56 countries. U.N. estimates are higher at as many as 105 million, one for every 50 people on the earth. Costs for clean up are put at about \$1,000 per mine or between \$200 and \$300 billion in total.

In countries such as Afghanistan and Cambodia international

assistance has made a dent in the removal of land mines, but Angola has not received any significant help due to its protracted civil war.

Some 340 types of mines are manufactured in 48 countries. China and Romania have state owned manufacturers, while the U.S. and Italy have private companies supplying lucrative top secret contracts. Because of the secretiveness of the industry figures are difficult to find which complicates attempts to comprehend the magnitude of the problem. Often the finger is pointed at the Chinese and Romanians for irresponsibly supplying both sides of an interstate conflict, but the U.S. and its allies are not innocent. During the Gulf war allied forces scattered over one million land mines through multiple-launch system sub-munitions (an artillery shell technique which detonates in mid air and scatters landmines). Such a technique does not leave the mines in pre-arranged patterns as demanded by international convention and customary law.

In 1992 with Senator Patrick Leahy and Representative Lane Evans as its sponsors, a bill was passed in both U.S. houses which placed a moratorium on the sales and export of U.S. anti-personnel mines. Later in the year, as the ban was nearing its end, the two sponsors were successful in extending the ban to the end of 1996. The very fact that the bills were passed is extraordinary considering the lobbying power of the U.S. weapons industry.

With help from several international human rights organizations such as Vietnam Veterans of America, Human Rights Watch, Physicians for Human Rights in America and The Mines Advisory Group in England enough international interest and support was galvanized to pass a U.N. General Assembly Resolution on December 16, 1993 placing a one year international ban on the export and sale of antipersonnel mines. In some respects the U.N. Resolution was an important step because it showed that responsible nations were no longer willing to allow irresponsible countries to export mass quantities of mines to interstate conflicts around the world. However, U.N. resolutions are only recommendatory and countries such as China, Italy, and Romania continue to sell and export antipersonnel mines.

The principle source of rules governing the use of land mines and other similar explosive devices is the Land Mines Protocol. The protocol:

restricts use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious and to have indiscriminate effects. It applies only to international armed conflicts and to a limited class of wars of national liberation.

During the 10 years of independence struggle and the 20 more years of civil war as many as twenty million land mines were laid in the fertile and resource rich Angolan soil. According to Human Rights

DISARMAMENT CRISIS

Watch they kill 120 Angolans every month. The civil war may have ended, but land mines have replaced soldiers and are blocking the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the country.

Land mines affect Angola on a daily basis. Refugees are often unable to return to their homes and farm their land. In those cases where people attempt to rebuild around the mines many lose their lives in the process. In addition, animals are kept away from centuries old watering holes leaving them confused and likely to die in the harsh elements of the bush. Landmines are also causing difficulties for the Angolan government as it attempts to incorporate democracy and rebuild the shattered country with as little social discontent as possible. In short, there is total disruption to human life and the environment.

In short, the Angolan landmine situation severely disrupts almost all aspects of the countries environment because landmines are a pollutant to humans, animals and fauna alike. For the time being the laying of landmines has stopped in Angola, but it continues at an alarming rate in other parts of the world and there seems to be no foreseeable solution to the problem. After the integration of both sides into a unified military and government landmines pose the largest threat to a long lasting peace, and the future of Angola both environmentally and literally. If the situation is not remedied with help from the international community Angolans will be confined to certain portions of the country which will not allow for industry and agriculture to flourish and will strain the land where landmines are not present to the point of desertification and severe species loss.

Source: <http://www.american.edu/TED/ice/iceall.htm>

CRISIS

Last week, a group of school children were on a school excursion which happened to also be covered by a local TV program. The children unknowingly entered a mine field, and as the first mine exploded, the children scattered and detonated additional mines. Out of 54 children only 5 escaped unscathed. 10 died and the lives of 22 more are in danger. The pictures of the massacre were aired on all channels, and caused a public outcry. The sight of the little mangled bodies and the contrast between the carefree excursion and the appalling scene was more than could be born. Everywhere, governments came under heavy pressure to do something!

Also under the same heavy public pressure, the Secretary General of the UN convenes the Disarmament Commission and demands an immediate and viable solution to the problem.