



**Minutes of the Technical Working Group UXO/Mine Clearance
Held at the NRA Conference room
On 28th June 2007**

Attendance:

Dr. Maligna Saignavongs, Director NRA
Mr. Thongphone Keosayadet, Chief of OPS NRA.
Mr. Tim Horner, STA NRA.
Mr. Phil Bean, OPS/QA TA.
Mr. Mick Hayes, Managing Director PCL.
Mr. Chris Bath, UXO Project Coordinator HIB
Mr. Eddie Chalmers, Tech.OPS. Manager MAG
Mr. Bountao Chanthavongsa, Operation Assistant MAG
Mr. Phommachanh Khammanichanh, Chief of OPS UXO LAO
Mr. John Dingley, STA UXO Lao
Mr. E.Faigmane, PO/PI TA UXO Lao
Mr. Gabriele Giannini, APO WFP
Mr. Jonathon Guthrie, OPS Milsearch.
Mr. Nigel Orr, FSD
Mr. Joe Huber, FSD
Mr. Olivier Bauduin, NPA
Mr. Vilaysack Vongsayachanh, Demining Officer NRA
Mr. Phouviengsavanh, Officer National Standards NRA.
Mr. Michael Inthavong, PTA NRA
Mr. Viengprasith Thiphasouda, VA Officer NRA
Mr. Bounpheng Sisavath, MRE Officer NRA
Mr. Bouaphet Phommavong, TWG Technician NRA
Mr. Khamphet Fonglamay, MRE Technician NRA
Ms. Daovieng Darasavath, OPS Assistant NRA

Apologies:

Mr. Angkham Chanthavy, Army relation.

Agenda Item 1, Opening and Introduction:

The meeting opened at 14:00 hrs. Mr. Thongphone Keosayadet welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a brief overview on his recent study tours to Vietnam and Cambodia. His team identified some good lessons and useful ideas which might help develop operational work in our country. For example:

- Much of the work in Vietnam was conducted by the military, and we could look towards encouraging greater use of the military in Lao PDR; The impact of Agent Orange and the effects of Dioxin was very topical in Vietnam and could also be a problem in areas of Lao PDR, the NRA could assess this situation and help develop a

VA response; that the budget for most of the UXO activities came from the Government, reminding us that the NRA should look at longer term national funding strategies for UXO action in Lao PDR.

- From Cambodia- It was noted that the Director of the CMAA chaired all working group meetings and that he reported directly to the Prime Minister; that in Cambodia systems were in place that effectively linked MRE and clearance; that issues of the scrap metal trade, trading in UXO had similar safety challenges as in Lao PDR, but in Cambodia the law was strongly enforcement against those trading in scrap metal , along with a close cooperation with the national police forces.

Dr. Maligna Saignavongs, again welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that this TWG meeting is regularly held on the last Thursday of each month, so we will not necessarily send out invitations and hope that people and organizations will note the dates and will cooperate through regular attendance.

Agenda Item 2, cost of explosives transportation:

Mr. Thongphone, apologized that Major Angkham, the UXO LAO military liaison officer could not participate, because he had another important meeting. Mr Thongpone and Mr Phil Bean briefed the Technical Working Group on a discussion that they had with Major Angkham the previous day. The TWG were informed that discussions were also underway to establish an Military Liaison post at the NRA.

Some of the working group members had asked about the cost associated with explosives and their delivery and storage and about the method of payment. In response:

- The cost of explosive was consistent, (TNT at \$8 / kg, C4 at \$25 / kg, det elect \$0.8 each, det plain \$0.6 each, det cord \$0.9 /m, safety fuze \$0.6 / m).
- The cost of delivery varied considerably from \$25 to \$500 to \$760. The system clearly needed to be refined, explained and established.
- The NRA would work with the Army to publish a clear procedure for supply of explosives.
- All requests for explosives should be submitted though the NRA with as much notice as possible, (a minimum of 10 days), the request should include what was required, where and when the explosives was needed. The NRA would consider and authorize the request and pass it to the MOD. MOD would be responsible for confirming availability and associated costs. The MOD would notify the requesting organization and the NRA about availability. Costs for delivery would be based on whether a military vehicle was being used and the distances and time involved. Once agreed by the requesting organization payment would be made. In the past the Engineering Department of the MOD did not have its own bank account to received transfers or payments, this would now be established, but in the meantime the NRA would establish a procedure for payment and transfer of funds to the MOD.
- Working group members discussed the need for a transparent and clear system and requested that clarification should be given about sharing delivery cost, and about opportunities for keeping costs low if the requesting organization supplied transport.

Action: NRA operations section to work with MOD and prepare Explosive Supply procedures.

Agenda Item 3, Render safe Missile Sam 2 in Attapeu province:

Mr. Vilaisuck Vongsayachanh, reported about the render safe of a Sam 2 missile in Samxay District, the Attapeu provincial authority need to keep the missile body as a history war monument.

NRA had accompanied a representative of Ministry of Defense to check the missile and found that it's still dangerous so the Ministry of Defense appointed UXO LAO to be responsible for this issue and needed to know if UXO LAO can manage this problem or may working together with unit concerned of the Ministry of Defense to solve this issue.

Mr. John Dingley, stated that UXO Lao will be responsible for that. They are already prepared tool and equipment. But needed NRA to authorize and make a letter to the province before they go to the province in the couple of next week. They would remove the warhead and the booster motor and make the missile safe for display.

Action: NRA to write to UXO LAO and the Province requesting them to make the SAM 2 safe.

Agenda Item 4.

Mr Bounpeng, briefed the TWG on information relating to the scrap metal trade in UXO from Xieng Khouang, Kammouane and also about a recent scrap metal activity in Bolikhamxay on route 13.

A copy of the presentation is available on the NRA website www.nra.gov.la

In XKH support was needed to clear stockpiles of UXO from scrap metal yards and to prevent such stockpiles of UXO reoccurring. That despite regulations, metal detectors from Vietnam were still available in markets in KMH and that the process for scrap collection appeared to be well coordinated. The NRA had purchased a Vietnamese detector for 150,000 kip and was available at the NRA office if people wished to see it. That the stockpiles of more than 100 big bombs recently reported by HI(B) and FSD, 67kms south of Vientiane on Route 13, were being investigated. It appeared that the yard was approved and in this case a supply of old stockpiles of bombs from the former Special Zone were being processes. The explosives from the stockpiled bomb has been removed and was authorised for sale to the cement factory in Vang Vieng. Research in this activity would continue, but it illustrated the need to have a review of the 'real UXO scrap metal' situation.

The discussion included the need to have more joint activity with the police and local authorities to reduce the dangers and risks.

Action: The NRA Operations MRE department undertook to launch an investigation of the real situation relating to scrap metal, and to produce a research project plan for discussion and implementation.

Note: this activity was considered as a high priority as it could lead to improvements in MRE activities, a review of legislation, and a review of reporting and response systems throughout the country.

Item 5, liability issues.

The topic of liability issues following clearance or release of land was introduced for discussion. The NRA would look at the legal and regulatory situation. Those organizations which had not yet submitted applications for accreditation to the NRA were encouraged to do so as part of the process of providing evidence of best practice.

Action: NRA to provide clear direction on liability issues.

Item 6, Depth of Clearance.

The NRA QA/Standards officer, Mr Phouviengsavanh asked for confirmation that all clearances organizations were achieving 25cms clearance against the target half BLU 26. MAG, FSD, PCL, Milsearch and UXO LAO all confirmed that they had no problem achieving this standard.

Milsearch, Gus Guthrie, briefed the TWG on an incident when a 750LB bomb had been found in a drill hole at 4m depth, the area had been cleared to 2.5m but the land user went deeper against technical advice in this case. The TWG discussed the topic of land use beyond clearance depths and whether the NRA should also regulate depth for clearance for other munitions, land use and detector capabilities. The discussion included 'duty of care' aspects and how or could the NRA influence / ensure that development or commercial organizations took in to account the UXO threat in their planning. What should the commercial operators do if they felt their professional advice was being ignored?, should they report incidents to the NRA? , in which case what would the NRA do in response? etc. Practical situations were discussed, commercial risk and costs were mentioned but no firm conclusions were reached.

Action: NRA to consider this issue further and report back to the TWG.

Item 7, National Standards

Mr Phouviengsavanh informed the TWG that since the last meeting one comment on the Draft National Standards had been received from Mr Paul Stanford of PCL relating to a recommendation to increase the waiting times following both low order disposal of big bombs and disposal of WP from the 30 minutes stated in NS to 60 minutes.

Nigel Orr said he would look at the records of the national standards meetings which agreed the current waiting times and then pass them to the NRA QA /Standards office so that the topic could be considered further.

Mr Phouviengsavanh, reminded the TWG to submit, in writing, comments on the National Standards that emerged during the trial application of the draft standards to help with any review or amendment activity.

Action:

- 1. Nigel Orr to provide information of the decision process for setting current waiting times.**
- 2. NRA QA/Standards office to maintain a record of comments on the draft standards and manage the review process.**
- 3. All, to pass comments on the NS to the NRA in writing as they occur.**

Item 7, any other business.

Dr Maligna briefed the TWG on the UNIDISC trial being undertaken by MAG in conjunction with the US Department of Defence NVSD organization. It was concluded that the equipment was not suitable for use in Lao PDR and a letter to that effect would be prepared for the NRA Board Chairman so that the donor could be thanked and informed.

Mr Eddie Chalmers of MAG informed the TWG that the NVSD staff would be visiting again soon and that they would discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the system to help decide what future support would be appropriate. MAG also informed the TWG that they were considering a EDD project in partnership with CMAC / NPA and would keep the TWG informed on developments.

Mr Mick Hayes of PCL informed the TWG of vegetation cutting machines being used in Bolikhamxay and could supply details or contacts information if people were interested.

Next Meeting:

The intention is to revert to having a clearance TWG on the last Thursday of the month consequently the next meeting is scheduled for 14.00 hrs on the 26 June at the NRA.

Closure:

The meeting closed at 16.00 hrs

Thongphone Keosayadet
Chief of Operations
National Regulatory Authority