

STATEMENT BY
MR. GUY POLLARD,
HEAD OF THE UK DELEGATION
OTTAWA CONVENTION MEETING OF THE STANDING
COMMITTEES, 22 JUNE 2010
ARTICLE V OBLIGATIONS

Mr Co-Chair,

I am pleased to present States Parties to the Ottawa Convention with an up-date on the UK's de-mining work on the Falkland Islands.

We are delighted to announce that the 4-site pilot project started on 4 December 2009, completed on 4 June. A total of 1,246 mines were located and destroyed, of which 568 were anti-vehicle mines and 678 were anti-personnel mines. In addition 2 sub-munitions and 9 unexploded ordnance were destroyed.

Following two rigorous tender exercises, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office appointed BACTEC International Limited to carry out clearance work and C. King Associates to monitor progress and carry out quality control and quality assurance work. Together they ensured the areas were cleared safely and to a depth of 200mm; 70mm deeper than International Mine Action Standards.

Colleagues may remember from our speech at Cartagena last year that we chose 4 sites which were representative of the varied terrain on the Falkland Islands: Sapper Hill, Fox Bay, Goose Green and Surf Bay.

Sapper Hill SA-025 minefield was laid on 8 May 1982 by professional Argentine Marine Engineers. Clearance in 2009/10 took 77 days and all 190 P4B anti-personnel mines were recovered. The Battle Area Clearance Experts cleared 65,000 m² of land outside the main mine site and recovered and destroyed 2 unexploded sub-munitions.

Fox Bay FB-008W Suspect Hazardous Area was marked off in 1983 following the discovery of a BL 755 sub-munition coronet on the beach.

Whilst there was no record of mines having been laid, there was a concern that mines may have drifted across the bay to the beach area of the site. Over a period of 10 days De-miners conducted excavation works inside the Suspect Hazardous Area and across the adjacent headland, to ensure no mines were present. Additionally Battle Area Clearance Experts cleared 222,705m² searching for unexploded ordnance within the Suspect Hazardous Area and the headland but none were found.

Goose Green GG-011 another Suspect Hazardous Area was marked off on 31 July 1982 following an incident when a military vehicle drove over and anti-vehicle mine, presumed to be a C3B. Records show that 10 C3B anti-vehicle mines and 30 Number 4 anti-personnel mines laid at the northern edge of the promontory were lifted immediately post conflict. In 2010, over a period of 21 days de-miners excavated the areas recorded to have contained mines *and* the site of the 1982 detonation, and found no mines. In addition, Battle Area Clearance experts covered an area of 24,175m², and found no mines or unexploded ordnance.

Surf Bay SA -008 minefield was laid between 16 and 23 April 1982 by professional Argentine Marine Engineers. In 2010 an armoured excavator was used to clear 3 to 4 meter high sand dunes to reach the 1982 beach profile level. De-miners took 146 days to clear 488 SB 33 mines and 568 SB 81 mines. Battle Area Clearance experts searched 34,00m² of land and cleared 5 M67 grenades and 4 small arms rounds (7.62mm).

During Clearance operations on all sites, the De-mining Programme Office carried out regular inspections and audits to ensure BACTEC's compliance with the contract and the National Mine Action Standards. Post clearance, the De-mining Programme Office conducted further physical inspections of 600m² of randomly selected land on each site. The De-mining Programme Office was satisfied with the conduct of clearance at the end of the programme.

Mr Co-Chair,

The task was exceptionally challenging. The minimum metal mines proved hard to find with metal detectors and as a result most of the

clearance work had to be done by hand. The Falkland Islands suffered its poorest summer in 30 years which contributed to slow progress. The terrain and climate were not allies during the programme. Thick vegetation strewn with rocks and boulders in some areas; sand blown over the years to build 3-4 meter high dunes in others. The constant high winds that batter the Islands all year round and of course the rain that contributed to many days work lost and resulted in water-logged ground making the work more challenging and uncomfortable. One unintentional detonation occurred throughout the project and this was at Surf Bay. Fortunately it did not result in any casualties. A thorough investigation of the incident concluded that there were no unsafe practices by the de-miner and that the mine, thought to be an SB33, was probably angled to face the de-miner and situated against a rock. It is a tribute to the strength of character and professionalism of the Zimbabwean De-miners and Lebanese Battle Area Clearance experts that this project was carried out so proficiently and comprehensively.

The environmental impact of de-mining remains a concern to the Falkland Islanders and the UK Government. Restoration work was carried out as part of the de-mining project, but only time can aid full recovery.

I should like to thank the Falkland Islanders for the warmth of welcome given to the Zimbabwean De-Miners and Lebanese Battle Area Clearance experts. They provided enormous support to the teams working in such challenging conditions.

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Argentina for her co-operation in supplying mine maps for the sites. They were accurate and therefore were of great assistance.

Mr Co-Chair,

The FCO will now analyse the data gathered from this project and make recommendations for future work based on this analysis to the new Government. We intend to report the findings of our analysis and agreed next steps to States Parties at the Meeting of States Parties in November 2010.

Thank you Mr Co-Chair.

