

# Two Million **Landmines** contaminate southern Sudan



It could be less but according to Landmine Monitor the figure could also be as high as this. The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, FSD, and the UN World Food Program, WFP, have been working on demining actions in Sudan for the past couple of years.

The main objective is to clear main road corridors to allow the WFP to dispatch emergency food aid to Southern Sudan by road from neighboring countries rather than by air which is much more expensive.

#### Peace, Part of Program

In 2003 FSD bought a Scanjack 3500 for mine clearance in Iraq. The prevailing situation in Iraq made it, however, impossible to carry out any demining operations. Instead the vehicle was eventually transported to Sudan where the WFP subsidizes the machine. In April 2005 the Scanjack arrived in Mombasa's port but it was not until mid July that it reached Idolo, New Kenya in Sudan. Mr. Mal Ralston is Program Manager, FSD and UN/WFP Road Clearance Project-South Sudan.

"FSD has a standby agreement with the UN Emergency Action. The peace process in Sudan began in March of this year and has enabled aid in the form of e.g. WFP to rebuild roads so that food can be distributed more easily and inexpensively than before".

FSD is the main operator and the organization is using a variety of demining equipment including the Scanjack, supplied by the UN.

#### Good performance

"The Scanjack is of great help in this heavy and dangerous work. It is also easy to operate but, what is really important is that it's operator safe. We had an under track detonation just a few weeks ago that blew up one of the wheels but nobody was injured due to the secure cabin construction".

Mr. Ralston goes on to explain that the challenge now is getting spare parts from Sweden and into Sudan due to the bad means of local transportation. Due to the difficult clearing conditions it is a time consuming job to get rid of all the mines but, in spite of that, they had cleared 56 000 m<sup>2</sup> of a mine field after five days. So the operators, consisting of international staff from New Zealand and

Mozambique, are quite impressed by the performance and safety of the Scanjack.

#### Manual demining

The mine clearance equipment will continue through villages and as the team goes along the civilians are informed about their actions. Many inhabitants are also continually stopping the machine out of curiosity. But the Scanjack alone cannot do the job. There are also manual deminers and smaller machines, operated by remote control.

Mal Ralston does not know the extent of the total area that need to be cleared but there are continually survey teams in front of the equipment. This year 450 to 500 kilometers of roads will be cleared and in 2006 the figure is around 900 kilometers.

Even though the mine clearance teams follow previous, existing roads the work is time consuming since the roads are impassable today.

"We are now working on three roads in Southern Sudan leading to Juba which we hope to reach by December this year. At the end of 2005 there will hopefully be total traffic access to the city", says Mr. Ralston.



• The Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, FSD, defends the position of the integration of humanitarian demining into sustainable development and has been implementing it since it was established in 1997. Source: [www.fsd.ch](http://www.fsd.ch)