Afghanistan Mine Action Standards - AMAS 08.03

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Communications

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Communication

1. Introduction

Effective communication systems are essential for the efficient and safe management of mine action operations. Without them, command and control of operations is difficult, routine coordination and liaison does not occur as it should, and most importantly, the critical coordination and support essential to an emergency plan is affected.

The Directorate of Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) is the authority responsible for safety and efficiency in mine action in Afghanistan. This responsibility includes establishing the minimum requirements for communications in support of mine action in Afghanistan and ensuring compliance with these requirements.

2. Scope

This chapter covers the minimum requirements for communications in support of mine action within Afghanistan. While this chapter specifically refers to demining organisations and demining operations, the provisions of the chapter also apply to organisations carrying out other mine action operations, including Abandoned Explosive Ordnance (AXO) disposal and stockpile destruction operations. Additionally, while the chapter specifically refers to communications within the Mine Action Programme Afghanistan (MAPA), the requirements apply to all mine action organisations operating in Afghanistan; irrespective of whether they are under the direct control of the DMAC.

3. Radio Communication Networks

In Afghanistan there are three levels of radio communication networks established:

   a) <u>National network.</u> This network covers from the DMAC in Kabul down to the Area Mine Action Centres (ROs). The DMAC is the Net Control Station (NCS) for the national network.

   b) <u>Regional networks</u>. This network covers from the ROs in each region to the HQ or principal offices of the demining organisations operating in the region. The ROs are the NCS for the regional networks.

   c) <u>Local networks.</u> These are the networks established by the DMAC in Kabul, by each ROs in their locations and by the demining organisations themselves for local communications. For the demining organisations, local networks are used for communications to and within the demining teams operating in the field. Demining organisations are the NCS for their own radio networks.

In addition to these established networks there are also supplementary High Frequency (HF) communication links, primarily vehicle mounted, between all stations operating in Afghanistan. These supplementary links extend down to demining worksite level.

4. Communication Systems

The communication systems used in Afghanistan include:

   a) <u>HF radios.</u> These should be used as the primary communication systems on the national and regional networks. HF radios should also be used on the supplementary communication links.

b) <u>VHF radios.</u> These should be used as secondary communication systems on the regional networks, through the use of repeaters, and as the primary communication systems for all local networks.

c) <u>Satellite telephones.</u> These should be used as secondary communication systems by those stations that only have HF communications.

d) <u>Mobile telephones.</u> Mobile telephones should be used as the secondary communication system for local networks where mobile telephone coverage is available.

e) <u>Email.</u> Email shall be authorised communication systems for use in the MAPA and are used for sending messages between the various mine action organisations operating in Afghanistan.

5.   Allocation and Control of Frequencies/Channels

Radio frequencies/channels are arranged through the Afghanistan Ministry of Telecommunications by UNDP on behalf of all UN sponsored missions. Liaison with UNDP on behalf of the MAPA is carried out by the DMAC. Any communication matters raised by ROs or demining organisations shall be forwarded to the DMAC in the first instance.

All requests for radio communication frequencies/channels, or changes to existing frequencies/channels shall be made in writing, with appropriate justification, to the DMAC.

6.   Communications Plan

The DMAC produces a communications plan every quarter. The plan includes contact names, call signs, radio channels, email addresses and telephone numbers for all mine action communication addressees operating in Afghanistan. It also includes the contact details for emergency services supporting the Afghanistan mine action programme and details of other services such as police and military.

This communication plan shall be distributed by operations to all ROs, demining organisations and principal staff at the DMAC. Organisations and individuals on the communication plan distribution list shall ensure that this plan is distributed to all their sub units and key personnel.

ROs and mine action organisations that have changes to any of the details on the communications plan, or those are not included on the distribution list, shall forward the details in writing to the operations department of the DMAC.

7.   Call Signs

All VHF radio stations operating in the MAPA shall be allocated call signs by their NCS. Any visitors requiring joining a VHF radio network shall in the first instance contact the NCS of that network and obtain a temporary call sign.

8.   Radio Telephone Procedures

All radio users operating in the Afghanistan mine action programme shall use basic Radio Telephone Procedures (RTP). Details of the minimum requirements for RTP are included in Annex A to this chapter.

9.   Responsibilities of Net Control Stations

All NCS shall have the following responsibilities:

a) Establishing a communications area or office in their work location.

b) Ensuring the NCS is manned at all times whilst other stations are on the net.

c) Allocating call signs to net stations.

d) Maintaining radio net discipline including the use of RTP and call signs.

e) Ensuring that net stations comply with communication procedures.

f) Monitoring radio checks.

g) Coordinating emergency support requirements in the event of an accident.

10. Training

All radio users working in the Afghanistan mine action programme shall receive training in the use and maintenance of the communication systems they are required to use. This training shall include:

a) The basic principles of how the communication systems work.

b) Operation and user-level maintenance of the communication systems to be used.

c) Radio Telephone Procedures (RTP). See Annex A

d) Operational and specific-to-operation communication requirements.

e) Accident reporting procedures.

Demining organisations shall be responsible for ensuring that this training is conducted for their staff and for maintaining records of this training.

Accident reporting procedures shall be practiced when demining worksites carry out demining accident response plan practices as required in chapter 07.03 of Medical Support and Casualty Evacuation'. When these practices are carried out, demining organisations shall ensure that staff not involved in the practice, including relevant ROs, know that it is a practice being conducted rather than a real emergency.

11. Operational Communication Requirements

All demining organisations conducting demining operations shall have primary and secondary communication systems established and functioning on their demining worksites before any work commences.

Demining worksite internal communication networks shall include the demining worksite supervisor, all medics, all supervisory personnel physically supervising the work, ambulance/safety vehicle drivers and, where applicable, individual mechanical operators.

The following general communication requirements shall be followed by all demining organisations undertaking demining operations in Afghanistan:

a) Communications shall be checked before leaving the base at the start of the day.

b) Communications shall be checked each day before demining operations commence.

c) If communications cannot be established, no demining operations shall commence until communications are established.

d) Communications with a supporting HQ shall be established and functioning at all times when demining operations are being carried out.

e) If communications are lost, demining operations shall cease until communications are re-established.

f) Radio checks shall be carried out every hour.

g) On completion of all demining operations for the day, teams shall advise their supporting HQ that work is finished and that they are returning to base.

h) All demining teams shall advise their supporting HQ when they have reached base and are about to close down.

12. Specific to Operations Communication Requirements

12.1 Manual Clearance, BAC and MDD

a) Deminers and BAC searchers shall not have handheld radios or mobile telephones with them while in the clearance area.

b) On all BAC, MDD and manual clearance sites where the hazard is thought to include electrically initiated ERW, vehicles with radios mounted shall remain at least 30m outside the boundary of any un-cleared hazardous area. If vehicles have to move inside this distance, radios shall be switched off before doing so.

c) Supervisory staff required to carry communication equipment shall turn their communication equipment off if they have to approach within 15m of electrically initiated ERW or any unidentified ERW.

d) Personnel carrying out MDD operations shall not have handheld radios or mobile telephones in the clearance area.

12.2 Mechanical Operations

a) At all times when a mechanical asset is working in a hazardous area, the operator shall have radio communications with the demining worksite supervisor.

Annex A - Radio Telephone Procedures

Minimum Requirements

The following shall be the minimum requirements for RTP to be used in the MAPA:

a) Before commencing a voice transmission, operators shall listen in to the channel to ensure it is not in use.

b) Voice transmissions shall be kept brief and concise.

c) Radio call signs shall be used at all times.

d) When operators have finished talking they shall say "over".

e) When an entire radio conversation is finished the station that initiated the conversation shall say "out".

f) The word "roger" shall be used to signify understanding or agreement.

Phonetic Alphabet

If operators need to spell out words then the standard phonetic alphabet shall be used. It is shown in the table below.

A	ALPHA	N	NOVEMBER
B	BRAVO	O	OSCAR
C	CHARLIE	P	PAPA
D	DELTA	Q	QUEBEC
E	ECHO	R	ROMEO
F	FOXTROT	S	SIERRA
G	GOLF	T	TANGO
H	HOTEL	U	UNIFORM
I	INDIA	V	VICTOR
J	JULIET	W	WHISKEY
K	KILO	X	X-RAY
L	LIMA	Y	YANKEE
M	MIKE	Z	ZULU

Note: Important Voice procedure internationally recognized phrases are:

a) **OVER**:   I have finished talking and I am listening for your reply. Short for "Over to you."
b) **OUT**:   I have finished talking to you and do not expect a reply.
c) **ROGER:**   Information received.
d) **COPY**:   I understand what you just said (after receiving information).
e) **WILCO**:   Will comply (after receiving new directions).