

and Kosovo. There are demining programs in 41 countries and assessments have been made in 24 more nations. From Nepal to Senegal, Colombia to the Congo, new land mines are being planted waiting the day that you decide to visit.

You might find it a little depressing with all the political posturing of the first world that NATO dumped about 15,000 mines in Kosovo. The Russians are spreading love and joy via tiny air-dropped land mines along the Chechen/Georgia border and plenty of other alternatives to the Land Mine Ban Treaty are busy ignoring what is promised. In case you feel smug, Uncle Sam dropped over 20,000 bombs in Afghanistan, and not all of them exploded. Up to 20 percent in some strikes are still waiting to be found.

Last year there were land mines used by 11 governments and rebel groups in 20 conflicts worldwide. Land mines can cost as little as \$3 but destroy a person for life, causing untold financial and emotional damage with very little effort. There are supposed to be 80 million land mines still buried in the ground and 24,000 new victims every year.

The truth is nobody actually knows exactly how many mines there are since the people who placed them never bothered to remember their exact location. Yes, sometimes there are detailed maps, but rarely. Consequently, the people who find them remember it for the rest of their lives—if they survive the blast.

Even though land mines maim and kill between 20,000 and 24,000 men, women, and children every year, many governments claim they are not a threat to travelers. Even agencies like Greenpeace and the CDC contend the death toll is more like 9,600. Mine clearance groups estimate that the number is 15,000, with about 80 percent being children and a third of those being young children. (Some antimine groups estimate 37,000 are killed every year.) The truth is there are few warning signs in the boonies and even fewer keeping count of the deaths and maimings. Being injured by a land mine is one of the most traumatic experiences, both mentally and physically, a human can live through.

Eighty-five percent of current mine-related casualties are in Afghanistan, Angola, and Cambodia—all sites of past and present little wars where land mines are the perfect weapon. With so many mines, it only takes one false step to be killed or maimed for life. More and more adventure travelers head into the remote regions of Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and other remote regions, they will experience firsthand the effects of land mines and UXO. The numbers of land mines seem to grow exponentially. Depending on whom you believe, it could take up to 1,100 years and \$33 billion to remove the world's land mines. A million people have supposedly been injured by land mines since 1975. Once again, nobody really knows, and in

like Chechnya, Angola, and Afghanistan, mines continue to be planted while groups work to remove them at the same time.

More Than You Ever Want to Know about Mines

The next time someone tells you that it is those crazy Russians and liberation groups that sprinkle the world with mines, you might want to check the receipts of the countries that are buying land mines. According to *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Iran, Israel, Cambodia, Thailand, Chile, El Salvador, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia top the list. Tsk, tsk, you say. Well, those folks have good reasons to buy those land mines: Iran had a nasty border war with Iraq, Israel gets grief from all of its neighbors, Cambodia had the Khmer Rouge to contend with, Thailand has drug runners, Chile has Paraguay, El Salvador had jungle insurgents, and Malaysia still has vivid memories of a nasty war with Indonesia back in the early '60s. All this is history to journalists but not to the land mines still sitting patiently in the ground.

So just who are those evil amoral people who make these things and where are those nasty places those mines deserve to be put in? The answers may surprise you.

Sites on land mines

<http://www.icbl.org>

<http://www.landminesurvivors.org>

<http://www.clearlandmines.com>

<http://www.banmines.org>

<http://www.landmines.org>

The most industrious and creative producers of land mines are not the Cold War vassal states but the high-tech Western countries who

WHO MAKES 'EM

The Mine Monitor estimates that there are more than 250 million antipersonnel mines in the arsenals of 105 nations, with the biggest estimated to be China (110 million), Russia (60–70 million), Belarus (10–15 million), United States (11 million), Ukraine (10 million), Pakistan (6 million), and India (4–5 million). Of the 16 nations who are still producers, eight are in Asia (Burma, China, India, North Korea, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore, and Vietnam), three are in Europe (Russia, Turkey, FR Yugoslavia), three are in the Middle East (Egypt, Iran, Iraq), and two are in the Americas (Cuba, the United States). There are no producers in Africa. There are over 340 types of antipersonnel mines (AP) that have been produced by over 100 companies in 52 countries around the world.