

victims tend to be children and women working their daily chores. Soldiers are maimed and mine clearance people do have accidents.

Where Are the Mines?

No one knows. Despite what you read here or elsewhere, no one knows how many mines there are at any one time. Mines are being laid as you read this in any place where defensive positions are being created. Eighteen African countries have between 18 and 30 million mines each (did you ever see anyone count them, though?).

Angola has the most land mines, between 9 and 20 million uncleared mines, and even the "lightly mined" countryside of Mozambique (with about 2 million) has turned many small roads into deathtraps and caused large game to vanish. Somalia has 1 million mines; Sudan has between 1 and 2 million (and growing); and Zimbabwe and Ethiopia have major uncleared minefields (about half a million mines each).

<http://www.africapolicy.org/docs01/lm0102.htm>

<http://www.angola.npaid.org>

Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Croatia are the most mined countries in the world, with an average of between 92 and 142 land mines per square mile. This can be misleading, because the mines in Egypt are sitting in the remote northern deserts and the mines in Angola are in small towns and fields. All of East Asia has 15 to 23 million land mines. The Middle East has 17 to 24 million land mines, mainly in Iraq, Iran, Kuwait, and the Israeli border. Saddam Hussein went a little overboard during his brief occupation of Kuwait and turned the entire country into a minefield, most of which has been cleaned up at great expense. Europe is home to 7 million mines, mostly along the former Soviet border. During World War I, 7 countries fired nearly 1.5 billion shells. Ninety-five percent of them were conventional explosives; the rest were chemical shells. It is estimated that 30 percent of the chemical shells landed without ever exploding and have been sitting around since 1918. Most of the shells were used in Belgium. The Ukraine is home to over a million mines. Russia has both new minefields and World War II fields that were never cleared. Bosnia-Herzegovina has many uncleared fields, and new mines were being laid at a rate of 60,000 a week. At last count, there were 152 mines per square mile in this torn-up land.

Up to a million uncleared mines are left in South America. There are mines in Colombia, Chile, and most areas of Nicaragua, Guatemala, and even Cuba. Some areas of the Falklands are permanently off-limits

because the British could not spare the men to clear the minefields. There is a lot of splattered mutton every week in the Falklands.

Most countries in southern Africa have large mined areas, as do the entire Horn of Africa, all areas of Middle East conflict, and most border areas from the Cold War. Although there are no mines in North America, we did send a few overseas. If you thought the United States didn't do this type of thing, think again. Remember that Uncle Sam used to empty out bomb loads over Laos, leaving millions of cluster bombs for little Laotians to discover. More than 300,000 tons of bombs were dropped on northern Laos during the Vietnam War. No one has any idea how much unexploded ordnance still lies in the jungles of northern Vietnam. The overly cautious should understand that, along with cigarette butts, ammo containers, and mixed-race children, land mines are just the litter of war.

How Do You Get Rid of Land Mines?

There are movements by the UN, military, and civilian groups (about 300 groups in total) to ban the manufacture and use of land mines. The Mine Ban Treaty tries to make countries accountable, but both warring and non-warring nations love the nasty leg poppers too much. The chances are good of convincing first-world countries of a ban, but the facts are that the most heavily mined countries are a result of dirty wars, not major conflicts. The majority of land mines have been planted in the last 20 years. Currently, 36 nations export land mines and most countries use them. These countries produce about 10 to 20 million units a year. About 2 million new land mines are laid each year depending on what conflicts are raging. The United States still budgets millions for land mine warfare every year.

SOME FOLKS GROW POTATOES

Yes, you can adopt your very own minefield. The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) and its Adopt-a-Minefield™ program have raised more than \$2.9 million, including contributions from the U.S. Department of State's Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs, since March 1999 to clear minefields in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Croatia, and Mozambique. For information, visit <http://www.landmines.org>, e-mail: info@landmines.org, or call (212) 907-1300, or fax: (212) 682-9185.