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Meeting PM/WRA's New Director Col. (Ret.) Stanley L. Brown

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Meet PM/WRA's New Director Col. (Ret.) Stanley L. Brown

Continuing the funding for conventional weapons destruction programs remains a primary objective for Stan Brown, the new director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA). This interview introduces the director, provides a snapshot of his past experience and shares his hopes for the future of humanitarian demining.

By Alexandra Berkowitz [CISR]

In July 2013, Stanley (Stan) L. Brown was appointed director of the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) replacing outgoing director, James (Jim) Lawrence. Having served in the U.S. Air Force and in the State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism (now Bureau of Counterterrorism), Brown intends to use his new position to raise awareness and curb the illegitimate proliferation of conventional weapons in the global community. His assumed responsibilities include creating programs that help build the requisite local and regional conditions for stability, prosperity and peace. *The Journal of ERW and Mine Action* had the opportunity to interview Brown on how his past experiences will influence his new role and vision for PM/WRA.

JOURNAL: How has your past experience, for instance your extensive experience with the United States Air Force, military experience in the field and position as Chief of Special Operations with the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, prepared you for your new role as director of PM/WRA?

BROWN: My initial assignment at the Department of State [DOS] was from 2000–2003 in the Office of Counterterrorism [and] was defined by a number of terrorist events. I served on the Foreign Emergency Support Team and was part of the crisis response on the interagency team to assist in the recovery of the USS Cole after the terrorist attack. I also coordinated the diplomatic concurrence to numerous special operations deployments and exercises in the lead up to conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. My initial experience in the Office of Counterterrorism helped me learn how the DOS worked. I learned a whole new vocabulary with many acronyms. I recognized how culturally different State was from the Department of Defense [DoD] and found a group of professionals that were focused on accomplishing the mission through diplomacy.



Col. (Ret.) Stanley L. Brown.
Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of State.

JOURNAL: You have worked as a liaison between DOS and DoD for a number of years. How has the interagency climate changed over the years? How does this cooperation facilitate the work of both?

BROWN: When I retired from the Air Force and was appointed director for PM/WRA, I had eight years at DOS. I worked three years in the Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, two years as the Deputy of United States Special Operations Command's Special Operations Support Team as a liaison to the Political-Military (PM) Affairs Bureau and as the director of International Security Operations in the PM Bureau. Since my initial assignment in 2000, I have seen both departments grow closer together.

The shared experience of DOS and DoD personnel deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq has increased our mutual understanding of the missions of the two departments. While the culture of the organizations may differ, we have much more in common than there are differences. Additionally, different perspectives can help us understand each other while we are often working in overlapping operational spaces around the world.

JOURNAL: What initially attracted you to work at PM/WRA?

BROWN: I liked the work that the State Department accomplishes around the world, but for most of my career in the Air Force, including my previous assignments at DOS, I was focused on operational issues. PM/WRA has a very important humanitarian and national security mission where we are able to see the immediate impact of our conventional weapons-destruction programs. Whether it is humanitarian mine action that encompasses demining, survivor assistance and mine risk education, or curbing the proliferation of at-risk small arms and light weapons (SA/LW) including man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS), PM/WRA's mission helps civilian communities rebuild after conflict. Additionally, PM/WRA's staff has a great reputation, and it is evident that the mission has a positive impact on the overall team.

JOURNAL: Based on your experiences, are there any issues that PM/WRA addresses that seem particularly urgent to you? Have you faced challenges from the illicit proliferation of conventional weapons or seen their repercussions firsthand?

BROWN: Humanitarian mine action is still extremely important because of the impact that it has on civilian populations. However, increasingly the illicit proliferation of SA/LW, including MANPADS, is having a significant impact in regional conflicts. As a pilot in the Air Force flying large cargo aircraft in conflict areas, we consistently employed tactics to reduce the threat posed by SA/LW including MANPADS. I trained for and saw this threat firsthand as I flew combat missions in Afghanistan.

JOURNAL: What do you believe will be your biggest challenge as the new director of PM/WRA?

BROWN: While PM/WRA funding has remained relatively stable over time, there has been a decrease in funding for conventional weapons-destruction programs overall. We must continue to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars and ensure that the programs we support will have the largest impact on society and support our national security priorities. Close coordination with our U.S. interagency partners, such as DoD and USAID, our implementing partners, donor

countries, affected states, and international and regional organizations such as the U.N. and Organization of American States is an essential part of this approach. This enables us to facilitate the most effective and efficient delivery of assistance with a flexible approach that is responsive to rapidly changing situations.

JOURNAL: What do you believe are some of the most significant challenges PM/WRA currently faces? In what regions of the world do these challenges occur?

BROWN: One of the biggest challenges that PM/WRA is facing is the proliferation of SA/LW in Africa following the conflict in Libya where much of the weapons have fallen out of government control. Our focus is to join with partners in the region to help stem the flow of these weapons and keep them out of the hands of those who would harm civilians or threaten our national security.

JOURNAL: How important is empowering local populations to handle their own mine action, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and SA/LW issues? How does PM/WRA do this?

BROWN: It is extremely important for local populations to take responsibility for their own mine action, ERW and SA/LW issues. PM/WRA facilitates this participation by encouraging countries to develop the expertise to manage these issues and share the cost of humanitarian mine action activities. Additionally, PM/WRA, through implementing partners, encourages programs that are self-sustaining or can be leveraged to help in other areas. For instance, PM/WRA used Bosnian mine-detection dog-training teams to train dogs and handlers in Northern Iraq.

JOURNAL: What parts of your work as director are you especially looking forward to? What have you enjoyed the most so far?

BROWN: President Obama made a strategic decision at the beginning of this Administration to focus on the Asia-Pacific region by rebalancing our engagement and resources toward this vital region, and I am looking forward to leading our efforts to assist in the cleanup of ERW and unexploded ordnance that dates back to World War II and Vietnam. [Moreover,] I have enjoyed working with a great team of enthusiastic professionals, including our implementing partners, who are committed to conventional weapons-destruction programs around the world.

JOURNAL: Would you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you chose to pursue a leadership role at DOS?

BROWN: I am originally from Lillington, North Carolina [N.C.]. Over my career, I have had four assignments to the Washington, D.C., area and have immensely enjoyed each one ... traffic is another discussion. Washington, D.C., has

something for everyone. When I was in high school, living near Pope Air Force Base, N.C., and Fort Bragg, N.C., I was interested in serving in the military. I joined Army Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in high school and joined the Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps in college. It was in college that I committed to joining the Air Force and going to pilot training.

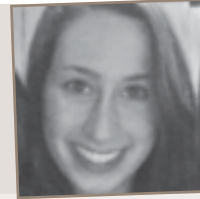
My first assignment to the State Department was a total surprise with about 90 days' notice to report. After my initial tour at DOS, any subsequent discussions about career assignments in the D.C. area resulted in my return to State in different capacities. I would not change a thing. The professionals that I have met and my experience at the State Department have been great, and I feel privileged that, following my service in the Air Force, I have been able to continue my service to the country with an-

other great team in PM/WRA with an exciting and important mission.

JOURNAL: What do you hope to accomplish through your new role as director of PM/WRA?

BROWN: I want to continue to raise awareness for conventional weapons-destruction efforts including humanitarian mine action. I want to continue efforts to keep conventional weapons-destruction programs funded, because they have proven to be a modest investment that is saving lives and fostering stability.

The program helps countries recover from conflict and create safe, secure environments to rebuild infrastructure, return displaced citizens to their homes and livelihoods, assist survivors to integrate into society, and establish conditions conducive to stability, nonviolence and democracy. I am honored to work with such a program. ©



Alexandra Berkowitz joined CISR in June 2013 as an editorial assistant. She is a junior at James Madison University majoring in international affairs with minors in Spanish and creative writing. She plans to continue her education by attending graduate school to study international peace and conflict resolution.

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News Brief

U.S. and Vietnam Sign Memorandum of Understanding

On 16 December 2013, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam David Shear signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on explosive remnants of war (ERW) cooperation.¹ Bui Hong Linh, the deputy minister of the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), signed the MOU for Vietnam. The memorandum is important, said Linh, as it broadly outlines areas for cooperation between the two countries to confront ERW in Vietnam.²

Following the signing of this MOU, the government of Vietnam announced the establishment of the Vietnam National Mine Action Centre on 14 March 2014 during the Development Partnership Conference on Mine Action. In attendance at the conference, Deputy Assistant Secretary Samuel Perez noted that the MOU on ERW cooperation illustrates the U.S. commitment to helping Vietnam address war legacy issues.

According to the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*, 104,973 mine/ERW casualties (38,940 killed/66,033 injured) occurred

in Vietnam through 2012. Reported casualties in 2012 (18 killed/53 injured/two unknown) showed a significant increase over previous years, but the reason for the increase is unknown.³

Vietnam's UXO contamination stems from three decades of conflict, beginning with the communist uprising against French Colonial power in the 1940s and ending with the 1975 fall of Saigon. Despite years of clearance efforts, some areas in Vietnam remain highly contaminated by UXO and landmines, especially the central region and the Vietnam-Laos border.⁴

A Vietnamese Ministry of Defense 2009 survey states that UXO contaminates approximately 35 percent of the country's central region.⁵ In a 2002 survey, MOLISA reported that UXO contaminates 6.6 million hectares (16.3 million acres) of Vietnamese land, not including maritime areas. MOLISA also noted that only 20 percent of UXO were found and defused.¹ ©

~ Chloe Cunningham, CISR staff
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