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Sean Burke

U.S. Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program (HD R&D)

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Humanitarian Demining Requirements Workshop

Meeting the Needs of the International Demining Community

by Sean P. Burke [U.S. Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program]

The 2010 Humanitarian Demining Requirements Workshop will gather mine-action participants from governmental and nongovernmental agencies and various international organizations to share information and ideas pertaining to new technology development, and to discuss the latest results from global demining activities. Selected participants from approximately 12 countries will attend this year's gathering 21–23 June 2010. Each demining organization is expected to share a presentation detailing its specific activities with the workshop participants.

Technology requirements are then formulated from these presentations and the ensuing discussions taking place throughout the workshop. These requirements drive new technology developments, addressing the diverse needs in mine action. Each year, the workshop is hosted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict and coordinated by the U.S. Department of Defense's Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program.

The HD R&D Program develops, demonstrates and evaluates prototype demining technologies for use by indigenous deminers during host-nation demining operations. The HD R&D Program, which began in 1995, focuses on technology development to improve the efficiency and safety of removing post-conflict landmines and unexploded ordnance, which are a significant danger to civilians. By

The HD Program development process:

1. Identifies requirements for new technologies to be used in mine action
2. Structures program and develops plan to meet these requirements
3. Develops new equipment for use in worldwide demining operations
4. Tests equipment at government test sites in the continental United States and outside the continental United States
5. Improves, upgrades, revises and modifies equipment as identified during testing
6. Performs and supports in-country operational field evaluations with host nations

adapting commercial, off-the-shelf equipment, the program integrates mature technologies and leverages the U.S. Army's Countermine equipment and programs. Once the equipment adaptations are tested and proven at the HD R&D facilities, operational field evaluations are conducted in actual minefields in a host nation.

New technologies are often developed based on requirements identified at the workshop. Sometimes unique equipment must be identified and/or developed to meet a specific need from a single demining organization. For example, in 2008, Ecuadorian representatives presented a specific need for demining operations in creek beds heavily laden with



Workshop attendees from a previous workshop examine the technologies the demonstration day showcased, including the Large-loop Unexploded Ordnance Remediation (LUXOR).

PHOTO COURTESY OF T. BOURNES

medium-sized rocks. HD R&D engineers researched the requirement, contacted various possible equipment suppliers and procured a piece of equipment to potentially fulfill the requirement. After the machine was successfully tested, it was determined that it could be beneficial in support of demining activities in Ecuador. As a result, the equipment will be deployed to Ecuador in 2010.

This year's workshop includes two days of technology presentations by all attending organizations. It also includes a full day of new technology demonstrations at a local U.S. government test site. These annual workshop demonstrations are vital, as they allow participants to ask questions and provide real-time feedback to the engineers. The participants also have the opportunity to determine if these technologies would be useful in their current

demining operations. If so, they can request that a specific piece of equipment be provided to their organization for an operational field evaluation. Overall, the week's activities promote an open exchange of ideas and information on both old and new technologies.

In the months following the workshop, the HD R&D team collects, organizes and processes the information obtained from the various demining organizations. Once new requirements are formulated from this information, the Program Manager develops a new technology development plan for the upcoming fiscal year.

The Humanitarian Demining Requirements Workshop is an important event in the development of new HD technologies and requirements from around the world, as well as the dissemination of HD information, ideas and solutions. ↴



Sean P. Burke is the Program Manager for the U.S. Humanitarian Demining Research and Development Program at the U.S. Army's Night Vision and Electronic Sensors Directorate at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. With more than 18 years of experience in countermine R&D, Burke oversees a dynamic R&D program that is currently evaluating 38 technologies in 10 countries.

Sean P. Burke
Program Manager
U.S. Humanitarian Demining
Research & Development Program
RDECOM NVESD
ATTN: AMSRD-CER-NV-CM-HD
10221 Burbeck Road
Fort Belvoir, VA 22060 / USA
Tel: +1 703 704 1047
E-mail: sean.burke@nvl.army.mil
Web site: www.humanitarian-demining.org