



**State the current shortcoming and/or need for improvement of existing IMAS/TNMA that this new topic will seek to address? (max 200 words)**

There are several failings that I would like to see addressed:

1) The current IMAS uses the term “clearance machines” without taking note of the definition of “clearance” in *IMAS 09.10 Clearance requirements* where clearance is explained as:

Land shall be accepted as 'cleared' when the demining organisation has ensured the removal and/or destruction of all mine and ERW hazards, including unexploded sub-munitions, from the specified area to the specified depth.

Because no existing machine on its own can do this, the use of the term “Clearance machine” is inappropriate and potentially misleading. Machines can detonate some devices and some (especially detectors and sifters) may locate all devices, but in that case the Clearance follows detection and is manual. It has been suggested that this difference is “semantic” and it is – but only in so far as all language based communication is semantic.

I have personal experience of machine sellers claiming that their machine can "clear" ground to IMAS standards and referring to the wording of IMAS 09.50 as justification. I also know of at least one national government (Libya) being temporarily convinced by this sales pitch and buying machines that failed to perform as described. In that case, the sales-pitch was made by an ex-member of the RB (and member of the mechanical advisory group), which I think is bad news for the IMAS process and the RB itself.

2) The current IMAS 09.50 relies on an arbitrary separation of demining machines into three types. These are “Mine Protected Vehicles, ground preparation machines and mine clearance machines”. This division does not work because, even if “mine clearance machines” are renamed “mine destroying machines”, the three types are often the same machine. A MineWolf is, for example, an MPV, a ground preparation machine and a mine destroying machine. This separation also omits some common machines that are in use - such as sifters which, ironically, can be used in systems that result in “clearance”.

3) The wording of the IMAS is inconsistent with other IMAS (was not written in the same style). This is an IMAS that would benefit from a complete review by Board members.

**Explain the negative impact on field operations that this shortcoming will or has caused and/ or the improvement that is expected? (max 200 words)**

IMAS 09.50 as currently worded encourages the use of ground-engaging machines in a “clearance” role that they cannot perform. Land processed by ground-engaging machines has been released as “cleared” in many theatres when the land has not been processed in a way that guarantees the removal of all mines and ERW to the agreed depth. There are several recorded accidents in which deminers have been injured on land processed by a machine that was supposed to have “cleared” all hazards, so deminer safety may also be improved by the suggested revisions.

Clarifying the text can accelerate field work by encouraging the use of ground-engaging machines in confidence building such that clearance can be judged unnecessary after some mechanical processes. It should encourage the responsible use of machines and the speedy release of land on which there is no evidence of hazards, while discouraging false claims of clearance that must impact on deminer safety and the legal vulnerability of those making unjustified claims about a machine’s performance.

**Explain the negative impact on the mine affected community that this shortcoming will or has caused and/ or the improvement that is expected? (max 200 words)**

IMAS 09.50 as currently worded can be used (has been used) to justify misleading claims about the ability of machines to clear ground of all mines and ERW to IMAS standards either in a single pass (recently in Sudan) or in multiple passes (Jordan). This has caused unnecessary confusion and put the end-users of the land at risk, while devaluing the credibility of the entire IMAS.

Civilian accidents on land released as “cleared” after mechanical processing are on record.

**Are there any existing publications already dealing with this topic?**

IMAS 09.50 deals with this topic and is referred to as the “authority” by many. I suggest that it is essential that the IMAS be revised to remove errors and ambiguity and produce a document that is a valid point of reference for the community of IMAS users.

**State why this issue is best addressed through IMAS/TNMA and may not be adequately covered by support and/or endorsement of an existing or under draft publication? (max 200 words)**

Because an IMAS on Mechanical demining already exists, it makes sense to improve that IMAS. The changes will not impact on those currently using machines in a responsible manner. It will impact on those who accept the sales pitches of many demining machine vendors and use machines irresponsibly.

## ANNEX A

**Summary and recommendations resulting of above proposal:** *(To be prepared by the Secretary or the Chair of the IMAS Review Board)*

**Date received:** 01 September 2011

**Action:** The proposal to amendment of IMAS 09.50 has been supported by members of the IMAS Review Board. The IMAS has been revised and published.