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Victim-activated IED Casualties

A rise in victim-activated IED casualties

In 2009, the year for which complete data was last available, Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor recorded a sharp increase in casualties from improvised explosive devices (IEDs).¹ An antipersonnel IED that is victim-activated—one that explodes on contact by a person—is considered an antipersonnel mine and prohibited under the Mine Ban Treaty.² An IED that is command-detonated, where the user decides when to activate the explosion, is not prohibited by the treaty.³ Most of the IEDs used in recent years in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq have been command-detonated devices targeting vehicles, often called roadside bombs.⁴

While the annual global total of casualties from mines, IEDs, and all forms of explosive remnants of war (ERW) declined from 2007 to 2009, from 5,426 in 2007 to 3,956 in 2009, victim-activated antipersonnel IED casualties increased in both absolute terms and as a percentage over the same period. Victim-activated antipersonnel IEDs caused 549 casualties in 2009 (or 18% of the total where the device type was known), compared with just 80, or less than 3%, in 2008 and 372, or 10%, in 2007.⁵

A large part of the increase in 2009 can be explained by the rise in recorded IED casualties in **Afghanistan**, with 293 victim-activated antipersonnel IED casualties, which accounted for over half of the annual total of IED casualties. Victim-activated antipersonnel IEDs caused about 20% of all casualties in Afghanistan in 2009. Detailed data on IED casualties in Afghanistan was available for the first time for the year 2009.

Other countries with victim-activated antipersonnel IED casualties recorded in the global total for 2009 included: Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, India, Iraq, Nepal, Pakistan, and Peru. Victim-activated antipersonnel IED casualties also occurred

¹ IED: An explosive device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass or distract. It may incorporate military explosive items, but is often devised from non-military components.

² The use, production, transfer, and stockpiling of victim-activated antipersonnel IEDs are prohibited under the Mine Ban Treaty. According to the Mine Ban Treaty definition, an antipersonnel mine is a munition “designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person...” In contrast, antivehicle mines, also referred to as “anti-tank mines,” have a larger explosive charge than antipersonnel mines and are designed to be detonated by the presence, proximity or contact of a vehicle as opposed to that of a person. These mines are not prohibited under the Mine Ban Treaty unless the fusing allows them to be activated by a person.

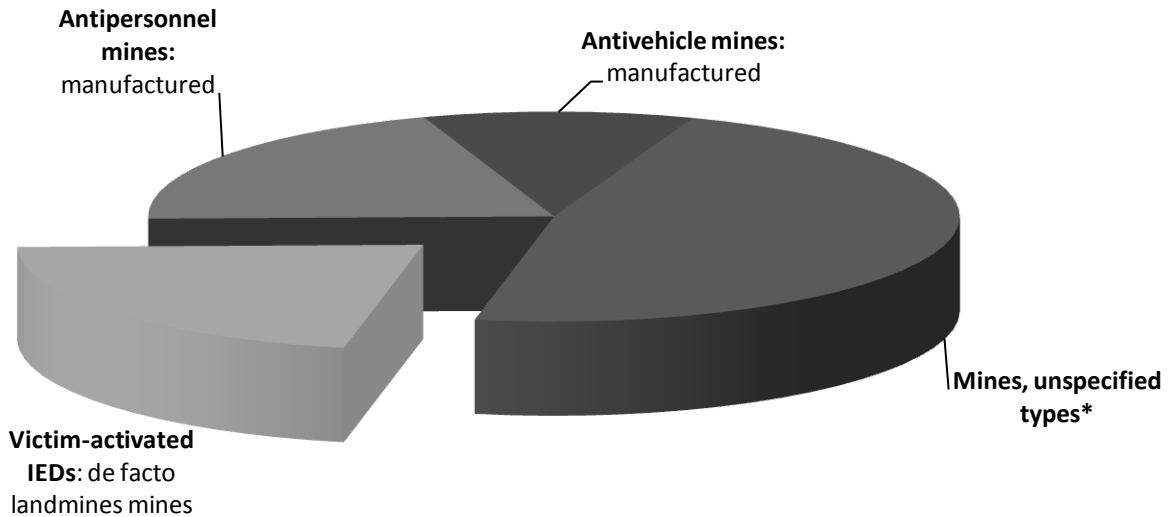
³ Available information indicates that the fusing of most victim-activated IEDs allows them to be activated by a person as well as vehicles. It was not possible to distinguish between the types of victim-activated IEDs in casualty data as there is no clear means of determining the sensitivity of fuses.

⁴ Casualties from command-detonated EIDs were not included in Monitor reporting of Mine/ERW casualties. Mine and ERW casualties recorded by the Monitor are only those people who have been killed or injured by an explosive device that is activated by the victim and unintentionally, not including casualties by strikes, or any other kind of direct attack during intentional use

⁵ Despite a widely reported rise in casualties among foreign military from victim-activated devices in 2008, unclear use of terminology in media reports for Afghanistan, Iraq and other key countries made it especially difficult to identify IED casualties during this year. As such, it is believed that the very low IED casualty total reported in 2008 was an anomaly.

in Colombia, Myanmar/Burma and Turkey but were not differentiated from casualties due to other victim-activated explosive items. In some cases, the casualties were caused by new use of IEDs, and in other cases, by use in previous years.

Landmine casualties by type causing incidents in 2009



*Mines, unspecified types: unclear if mine or IED, if antipersonnel or antivehicle; does not include command-detonated IEDs and mines.

Casualties in 2009

Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor identified 3,956 casualties occurring in 2009 that were caused by victim-activated explosive items. In many states and areas, numerous casualties go unrecorded and thus, the true casualty figure is likely significantly higher. Explosive items which caused casualties were: mines, including victim-activated improvised explosive devices (IEDs); cluster munition remnants; other explosive remnants of war (ERW) and unknown devices.⁶

For the 3,956 casualties identified in 2009, the type of explosive item was known for 3,692 and of these at least 549 were caused by victim-activated antipersonnel IEDs. However, the actual figure is likely much higher. Mines, when defined to include antipersonnel mines, victim-activated IEDs, antivehicle mines, and mines of unspecified types, caused the most casualties in 2009, in total 2,548. ERW, including cluster munition remnants, caused 1,144 casualties.

⁶ At least 1,041 people were killed, 2,855 were injured, and the status of 60 casualties was unknown. Figures include individuals killed or injured in incidents involving devices detonated by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person or a vehicle, such as all antipersonnel mines, antivehicle mines, abandoned explosive ordnance (AXO), UXO, and victim-activated IEDs. Not included in the totals are: estimates of casualties where exact numbers were not given; incidents caused or reasonably suspected to have been caused by remote-detonated mines or IEDs that were not victim-activated; and people killed or injured while manufacturing or emplacing devices.

Landmine casualty statistics: 2009

Mine types	Casualties in 2009
Mines: unspecified types (including both manufactured mines and IEDs)	1,212
Victim-activated IEDs: de facto antipersonnel mines	549
Antipersonnel mines: manufactured	513
Antivehicle mines: manufactured	274

The 1,212 casualties caused by unspecified types of mines in 2009 included all 674 casualties for **Colombia**. These casualties were registered by national authorities as having been caused by antipersonnel mines, although it is widely accepted that they are mostly caused by improvised mines made by non-state armed groups (NSAGs) and other victim-activated IEDs constructed to act as mines. It is likely that victim-activated IEDs accounted for many of the 75 casualties of unspecified mine types in **Myanmar/Burma** in 2009. It is also possible that some of the 73 casualties of unspecified mines in **Turkey** in 2009 included victim-activated IED casualties.

Reporting of IED incidents and use of the term “mines”

The increased use of IEDs is linked to the halt in trade and production, and the destruction of stocks, brought about by the Mine Ban Treaty. Compared to decade ago, very few non-state armed groups today have access to factory-made antipersonnel landmines. Some NSAGs have access to the mine stocks of previous regimes, but most armed groups today produce their own improvised mines. The mines produced by NSAGs are sometimes equivalent to factory made mines. These are not referred to as “improvised explosive devices” as they are craft-made antipersonnel mines made by mass production methods like other manufactured mines.

In many countries where explosive violence is prevalent, media reporting or the available data does not clearly identify the type of explosive item causing casualties. The term “landmine” is often used both for victim-activated and command-detonated IEDs. Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor reviews all relevant reporting, and casualties caused or reasonably suspected to have been caused by IEDs that were not victim-activated are not included in the annual total.

Following are some country examples of the challenges in distinguishing casualties caused by IEDs:

Even though media reports frequently attributed explosive attacks to “landmines” in **Afghanistan**, a US Department of State report in 2009 noted that “with the exception of reported sporadic use by the Taliban, parties to the conflicts in Afghanistan are reportedly not using anti-personnel mines in the standard military sense.” There has been a notable increase in the number of reports of use of victim-activated IEDs in Afghanistan corresponding with the sharply increased level of insurgent activity in recent years.

In **Colombia**, most explosive items have been recorded as antipersonnel mines by the national mine action authority. Many of these explosive items are thought to be improvised explosive devices that are designed to act as antipersonnel mines, though a small number may be ERW.

India (a state not party to the Mine Ban Treaty) lacks a casualty data collection mechanism and all reported figures are gathered through media reports and interviews. While the media does sometimes report on “IED” or “mine” casualties, it is not clear that device items are reported on consistently. Media reports also generally do not distinguish victim-activated from command-detonated explosive items. In Kashmir, mine incidents are mostly caused by antipersonnel mines but, in other areas of India with NSAG activity, devices referred to as “mines” are usually command-detonated IEDs.

The vast majority of casualties from victim-activated explosive items in **Peru** since 2007 have been caused by IEDs. These casualties are referred to as having been caused by “landmines” by the Peruvian media. The victim-activated IEDs, also referred to as “explosive traps,” have reportedly been used by remnants of a non-state armed group to protect illegal coca fields.

In **the Philippines**, insurgent groups continued to use command-detonated IEDs in 2009 and 2010. IEDs are frequently referred to as “landmines” by authorities and by the Philippine media. In particular, authorities frequently refer to command-detonated improvised Claymore-type directional fragmentation weapons as “antipersonnel mines.”

Turkey’s Mine Ban Treaty Article 7 reports do not seem to differentiate between casualties caused by antipersonnel mines and command-detonated improvised explosive devices. NGO reporting of casualties is from media sources but the media does not consistently identify the device type, often incorrectly identifying both command-detonated and victim-activated IEDs as landmines.