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# **DSCA and James Madison University Team Up Against Landmines**

**By**

**Joe Lokey  
Mine Action Information Center**

One of the newest functions performed by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) is to support global mine action. DSCA's Humanitarian Assistance and Demining Team is heavily focused on one of the most troubling and high profile humanitarian issues of the day—landmines and their effect on developing countries. A key partner in this effort is a group of professors, staff and students at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, who are working on a variety of information—support tools and products to aid in this effort to support deploying U.S. military forces. Check out our web site at: <http://www.hdic.jmu.edu/>.

The James Madison University (JMU) Mine Action Information Center (MAIC) project began in 1996 with an exploratory grant from DoD to determine the practical benefits that non-research academic institutions have to offer the U.S. humanitarian demining program. The success of the program and acceptance of the MAIC by the international community has made it a valuable resource for the U.S. in achieving policy and program goals laid out in the President's Demining 2010 Initiative for Humanitarian Demining. Program management for the initiative resides with the humanitarian assistance and demining office of DSCA pursuant to the Secretary of Defense's Defense Reform Initiative placing program management responsibilities and non-policy functions outside the OSD policy cluster.

## **Question: Why was the Mine Action Information Center created?**

The MAIC was created and structured to provide global humanitarian information services support to U.S. military demining and mine awareness teams and management staff and also to reach out as a resource to non-governmental organization's and others working to address the landmine problem. The original concept was to explore the use of the unique academic talents and capabilities of a university to augment conventional information sources and interpretations that were being used in humanitarian demining missions. As the concept proved to be not only viable but somewhat restrained in its original scope, the expansion into other areas of product production, mission support and augmentation and global support to the entire mine action community became a logical and necessary progression.

## **Question: What is the role of the MAIC in supporting U.S. policy objectives?**

In his May 1997 report to the Secretary of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy reiterated his vision that JMU "will serve as the clearing house for humanitarian demining information management." The center continues to support former Secretary of Defense Perry's desire for "quantitative expansion" and "different approaches . . . perhaps with U.S. government and non-governmental organizations" in the demining program. The MAIC also continues to provide an academic option for supporting the President's desire for the DoD to "strengthen its program for training and assisting other nations" in humanitarian demining. The MAIC is a viable policy tool for integrating and coordinating DoD initiatives with non-governmental organizations, multinational organizations, and foreign country agencies and organizations. Our history of accomplishments in the international arena are expanding U.S. influence and helping to tell the good news and success stories about the U.S. humanitarian demining program.

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**Question: What are the main functions of the MAIC?**

The primary function of the MAIC is that of an information services organization with a direct support priority to U.S. humanitarian demining training teams at the regional CINCs. A key role of the MAIC is as a clearinghouse or “hub” function that collects, analyzes, processes, and disseminates information from a global network of sources on a variety of mine action programs like mine clearance, survey, mine awareness, victim assistance, refugee and IDP impacts, and technology initiatives. The MAIC also publishes both on-line and hard copy versions of the *Journal of Mine Action* three times a year as well as host several conferences and workshops on specific landmine-related topics. In addition to maintaining and releasing the most comprehensive worldwide calendar of mine action related activities, the Center also acts as a switchboard for international contacts and information collection, a facilitator to multinational demining initiatives and a research center to provide background information on a variety of subjects. Additional functions and services as well as the on-line *Journal* can be seen on the the center’s web site.

**Question: How many people are employed at the MAIC under this contract?**

The MAIC permanent staff consists of a director, deputy director, a program coordinator, and a program support technician who coordinate the activities of the JMU faculty and staff. Specified additional staff are hired for any supplemental contract tasks for the duration of the contract. The real secret to the successes thus far, though, have been the 80 professors and students from the university who are involved throughout the year in a variety of projects and tasks given to the Center.

**Question: What specialties and expertise does JMU offer?**

The MAIC uses a matrix team approach to working tasks assigned by DoD and is arranged along six primary teams. These teams are: (1) Geographic Information Sciences, (2) Computer Science, (3) Health Sciences, (4) Mine Awareness (Psychology), (5) Politico-Military Coordination (Political Science), and (6) Publications (Technical Writing) Team. Coordinating these activities is a management staff with extensive demining program management experience.

**Question: What kind of support does the Center receive from the faculty and students?**

Over the course of a year, as many as twenty Ph.D.s and as many as thirty to fifty students work on a variety of projects using their specialties and coordinating their work with their academic schedules. They engage other students from around the campus including JMU’s 500 international students—130 of whom come from mine-affected countries! The student body has eagerly supported and, in fact, taken the initiative on many landmine related activities such as the “Landmine Awareness Week” on campus established by a political geography class and the recent effort by a group of students to raise money to clear a minefield under the U.N. Association of America’s “Adopt-A-Minefield” program (<http://www.landmines.org>). The activities of the MAIC are an excellent opportunity to engage students in an international humanitarian problem that exposes them to the complexities of global efforts, coordination of different groups, financial and communications challenges, cultural differences, and other similar facets of the issue that inevitably create a better, well-rounded student, citizen, and person.

**Question: Does the University faculty and staff understand demining programs and issues?**

Over the last three years, the primary faculty core members who head the various teams have gotten heavily involved in all aspects of mine action and have established a global reputation in

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their areas of focus and expertise. This has come from not only hosting numerous worldwide conferences but also in the aggressive outreach as the MAIC staff and faculty has visited mine-affected countries such as Cambodia, Bosnia, Vietnam, Croatia and Mozambique. Further, the professional staff at the MAIC guiding and coordinating faculty activities is comprised of retired military personnel with a great deal of field and staff experience in humanitarian demining issues and activities.

**Question: What are DoD's main goals and objectives for the MAIC in the current contract period?**

The MAIC will be sustaining and improving the web site; enhancing the internet search engine; hosting a couple of conferences on specific mine action topics; continue to publish three more issues of the *Journal of Mine Action* both on the internet and in print; continue to produce the global mine action calendar of events; operate their "switchboard" function answering questions from around the world; assist the U.N. with the development of standards; and respond to DoD mission support and augmentation requirements as directed by DSCA.

**Question: What web site improvements are envisioned?**

In addition to expanding the non-government organizations activity list, the site will also add an employment opportunities section, develop a method for disseminating lessons-learned, develop specific pages for each of the theater CINCs, and conduct a performance assessment to determine what users of the site would like to see changed, added, or modified. Also under consideration are sections that deal with non-state actors, a stronger search capability, more direct content by both country and functional area, and a geographic information system spatial database clearinghouse to feed spatial data to demining and mine action mapping systems around the world.

**Question: Is DoD the only organization collaborating with the MAIC?**

No. The MAIC contracts with the U.S. State Department's humanitarian demining program office as well. It also has had several geographic information system support contracts with the Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining and small technical services contracts with private industry. The Center has also signed a partnership arrangement with Cranfield University in the United Kingdom for future collaboration on mine action training management initiatives.

**Question: How does the MAIC support the U.S. State Department?**

The landmine awareness education program in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam, began as a joint effort between the MAIC and a non-government organizations with prior experience in Vietnam, PeaceTrees Vietnam, and funded by Department of State. In this early phase, the MAIC worked with PeaceTrees to develop display materials to educate the local population on mine awareness issues and placed in the Danaan Perry Landmines Education Center built in Quang Tri by the PeaceTrees group. The follow phase required a direct working relation with the Women's Union of Quang Tri and Provincial People's Committee to develop course curriculum, provincial surveys, and a training program for implementation throughout the province. Additionally, the MAIC was also asked by Department of State to help support an international Mine Detecting Dog Conference with the Slovenian Trust Fund in Ljubljana, Slovenia, in September 1999. The focus of this worldwide conference was to examine the issues involved in integrating dogs into clearance operations more effectively and expanding their use to improve both the speed and safety of mine clearance. JMU also provided the conference design and scheduling, recording and rapporteurs, assisted the Slovenians with conference management and logistic support, and

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produced the proceedings of the conference activities. Finally, JMU is extremely proud and honored to have established an internship with the U.S. State Department that sends a JMU student each semester to work with their humanitarian demining program office.

**Question: Can another university fill this role? What distinguishes JMU?**

Not without a considerable loss to the DoD in terms of time and resources invested and the loss of the experiences and networks built by the MAIC staff and faculty over three years. The role of academic institutions in supporting DoD is well established in technical, research, and very specific areas like the multi-disciplinary university research initiative program. The JMU program addresses a broader range of issues and skills and integrates various academic disciplines into unique task requirements (i.e., combining health science, clinical psychology and geographic sciences into a victim assistance solution for management of rehabilitation initiatives). JMU maintains a neutral role and, through U.N. and DoD encouragement, is participating in the formulation of an international university consortium to address broad mine action issues with academic resources. With three years of experience invested, no U.S. academic institution is capable of filling the JMU role quickly or inexpensively nor would they be able to leverage that experience against current policy objectives in any reasonable length of time.

**Question: Do other organizations around the world perform the same functions?**

No. Although a variety of organizations have capabilities that serve their own objectives, the MAIC is unique in the way it pulls many of these together into a single resource. The United Nations collects landmine information, but does not provide the same services that the MAIC makes available such as detailed references of the U.S. government's extensive support to global humanitarian demining, the switchboard function, organization listings, search engines, country-specific information, selected web sources by topic, or a global landmine calendar. The Geneva International Center for Humanitarian Demining set up by the U.N. with the support of the Swiss military is designed to be the information center coordinating the requirements of U.N. Mine Action Service in New York with the U.N.-supported mine action centers around the world. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines Resource Center in Oslo has only recently been set up to collect and catalogue information and materials related to the ban and advocacy projects only. The Landmine Resource Center in Beirut, Lebanon, set up through a grant from the Agency for International Development, is focused on data collection and analysis for mine victims in Lebanon and may soon expand to other neighboring Middle East countries. JMU has good working relationships with all these organizations and shares information and work priorities to ensure that duplication of effort is kept to the minimum and that austere resources of each organization are used wisely.

**Question: How does JMU coordinate its activities with other international centers?**

Regular contact through e-mail and dissemination of internal reports and reviews are the best way to coordinate each center's plans and objectives. Attendance at global conferences has proven to be the most effective method of establishing and maintaining crucial data sources and building networks of contacts for information and support we eventually need to pass on to the mine action information consumer.

**Question: Who do I contact if I have more questions?**

Mr. Dennis Barlow, Director  
Mine Action Information Center  
James Madison University  
College of Integrated Science & Technology

Tel: (540) 568-2718  
Fax: (540) 568-8176  
E-mail: [hdic@jmu.edu](mailto:hdic@jmu.edu)  
E-mail: [barlowdc@jmu.edu](mailto:barlowdc@jmu.edu)

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University Blvd - MSC 4003  
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22807 USA

**About the Author**

Joe Lokey is currently the Deputy Director of the Mine Action Information Center at James Madison University. He was previously the Director, Office of Programs and Resources (SOJ8) for the U.S. Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC) responsible for humanitarian demining and counterdrug program resource management and support in the Pacific AOR before retiring after a 26-year military career.