GROUP OF GOVERNMENTAL EXPERTS OF THE STATES PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON PROHIBITIONS OR RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF CERTAIN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS WHICH MAY BE DEEMED TO BE EXCESSIVELY INJURIOUS OR TO HAVE INDISCRIMINATE EFFECTS

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Mines other than anti-personnel mines (MOTAPM)

Working Group on Mines Other than Anti-Personnel Mines

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION IN THE DETECTION AND DEACTIVATION OF IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

Prepared by the Russian Federation

1. How are improvised explosive devices used in contemporary conditions? Russia considers that the information supplied by various organizations concerning the blowing up of vehicles carrying civilians and humanitarian cargoes by anti-vehicle mines is not fully substantiated.

2. Many statements made in the group of governmental experts indicated that all explosions involving vehicles were caused by anti-vehicle mines, but none of the speakers backed up their assertions with evidence that the incidents had been caused by anti-vehicle mines rather than some other kind of explosive device.

3. Even explosives specialists find it rather difficult to identify the type of explosive device involved in an explosion that has already taken place. Such analyses can be carried out only by top-class specialists who possess modern equipment. But even in such circumstances the findings may be only tentative.

4. In this connection, humanitarian concerns over the use of anti-vehicle mines that are based solely on the fact that an explosion took place lack sufficient substantiation.

5. In the Russian view, there is a growing trend for non-State armed units and terrorist groups to make extensive use of improvised explosive devices. Analysis of the number and nature of cases where military equipment has been blown up during counter-terrorist operations in the Chechen Republic indicates with a high degree of certainty that practically all explosions involving vehicles since the end of military activities have involved improvised explosive devices.

6. The problem of the detection and neutralization of improvised explosive devices is of great current relevance.

Specific features of the construction and use of improvised explosive devices

7. By improvised explosive devices are meant home-made devices used essentially to strike individuals and equipment. They are made either from standard munitions or from easily available components in various combinations.

8. Improvised explosive devices generally have an operational element and a fuse (detonator).

9. The operational element of an improvised explosive device may be an industrially produced munition or a home-made charge prepared from a variety of explosive substances.

10. Fuses for improvised explosive devices are made by adapting generally available items and components.

11. Improvised explosive devices can be extremely varied in external appearance and in means of operation.

12. Russian deminers encounter improvised explosive devices of widely differing design. Often they are laid in such a way that they cannot be handled or rendered harmless. The emplacement of blast mines is not recorded, and this makes subsequent clearance of these explosive items considerably more difficult.

13. Hence improvised explosive devices differ from ordinary mines in that they are more hazardous in detection and neutralization.

14. As improvised explosive devices are made of everyday components, they are also more dangerous for civilians. This violates one of the provisions of article 7 of amended Protocol II, which bans the use of booby-traps and other devices which are associated with apparently harmless objects.

15. Explosive devices in the form of bags, canisters or suitcases can explode when an attempt is made to lift, open or move them. The explosion can also occur without direct contact with the object, as a result of the operation of a delayed-action mechanical or electromechanical device. A signal actuating an improvised explosive device can be communicated by wire or by radio.

16. During military operations, illegal armed groups use improvised explosive devices as either command-detonated or automatic blast mines to attack vehicles or troops. In such cases improvised explosive devices function like mines.

17. A home-made firing mechanism is used as a target sensor in place of the regular fuse in anti-tank mines. Where a vehicle is blown up using such a blast mine it is very difficult to identify the type of explosive device. In most cases such an attack on a vehicle is unjustifiably classified as an “explosion caused by an anti-vehicle mine”.

18. The use of anti-personnel mines as firing mechanisms for anti-tank mines has become more frequent. Such devices should also be classified as improvised explosive devices.

19. Anti-personnel mines can be used as target sensors for blast mines, while artillery shells or gravity bombs equipped with anti-handling devices can be used as the operational element.

Radio-controlled improvised explosive devices

20. In recent years, electronic means of ensuring remote detonation of improvised explosive devices have been used increasingly in minefields in areas of armed conflict.

21. Electronic means of exploding charges which have been captured during armed conflicts are either home-made from generally available electronic components or produced on a small scale, or else made by adapting industrially produced electronic equipment.

22. The command post for detonating improvised explosive devices can be located up to one kilometre away, making it much more difficult to find and destroy.

23. Jamming transmitters are used to combat such devices, preventing the triggering signal from reaching the operational component of the improvised explosive device.

24. Experience built up in Russia has been used to develop means of performing tasks involved in detecting and neutralizing improvised explosive devices. These are continuously updated as new types of device, as well as new means of detection and neutralization, appear.

25. Improvised explosive devices placed by illegal armed units and terrorist groups present a special risk. Such devices are less humane than mines, in particular anti-vehicle mines. They are indiscriminate, and they are all equally dangerous for human beings and vehicles. Their impact is similar to that of anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines. Improved methods of production and the lack of a record of where the devices have been placed considerably hamper demining efforts after an armed conflict is over. This increases the material and financial resources required for mine clearance and, most regrettably, the number of deminers who are injured or killed while carrying out such operations.

26. The substantial growth in the use of improvised explosive devices in various parts of the world threatens not only civilians but also military personnel.

27. The Russian Federation suggests that our efforts should be focused on the search for ways and means of combating improvised explosive devices and organizing a cooperative approach to this problem.

28. Russia is ready to cooperate in the field of detection and neutralization of improvised explosive devices as an effective step in addressing the mine problem.
