

## De-mining agency: Afghanistan to be mine-free within 5 years (Afghanistan)

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**KABUL, Jan. 12 (Xinhua) -- Afghanistan would be cleared of mines within the next five years, Haider Riza, head of a de-mining agency Mine Action Center for Afghanistan said Monday.**

(12.01.2009)

"Under the Ottawa Treaty, also known as the Mine Ban Treaty, Afghanistan became a signatory in 2003 and have committed to clearing all mines by 2013," Riza said at a press conference here.

To achieve the goal, he added, the de-mining agency needs 500 million U.S. dollars over the next five years.

While commenting over the achievement of his agency, Riza added that over 2.5 million explosive remnants had been destroyed in 2008.

"In the last year alone 49 square kilometers minefield has been cleared and over 81,000 anti-personnel mines, 100 anti-tank mines and 2.5 million explosive remnants have been destroyed," he stressed.

The chief of de-mining agency further said that mine-related casualties have dropped from 150 persons per month three years ago to currently 45 to 50 persons per month.

Millions of mines have been planted by the then Soviet Union troops and Afghan warring factions over the past three decades of war and civil strife.

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