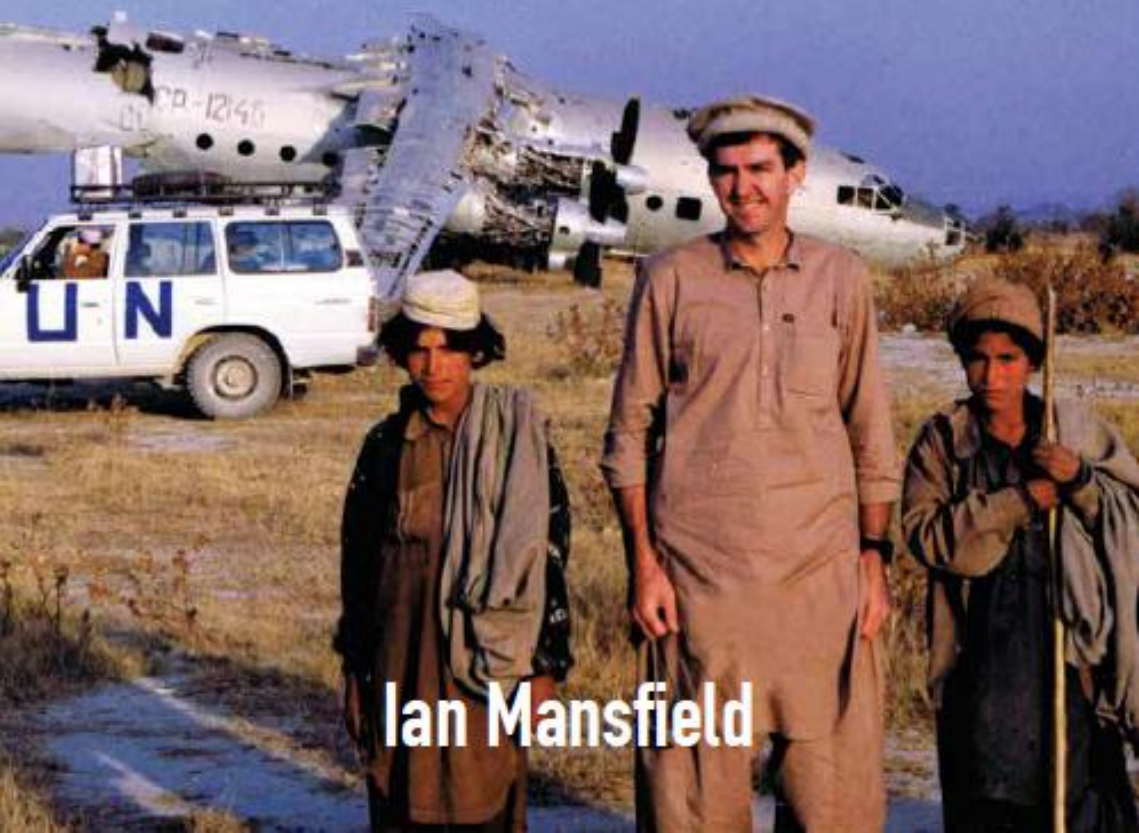


STEPPING INTO A MINEFIELD



A life dedicated to landmine clearance around the world



Ian Mansfield

FOREWORD

BY JODY WILLIAMS
NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE 1997

In 1997 I was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in my capacity as the coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). This award was shared with the ICBL in recognition of our efforts to bring about a total ban on all anti-personnel landmines.

The official announcement from the Nobel Committee stated that: 'There are at present over one hundred million anti-personnel mines scattered over large areas on several continents. Such mines maim and kill indiscriminately and are a major threat to the civilian population and to the social and economic development of the many affected countries. The ICBL and Jody Williams started a process which in the space of a few years changed a ban on anti-personnel mines from a vision to a reality'.

The campaign was unique in every way. It grew out of the frustration of the slow pace and lack of action in the conventional weapons arms control talks held under the auspices of the United Nations. Hundreds of civil society organizations around the world started a movement calling for a ban on these inhumane and indiscriminate weapons, that were killing or wounding hundreds of people a month in countries like Afghanistan, Angola and Cambodia. The governments of several small and medium countries also took up the issue and lent their political support to the 'activist' campaign being led by the ICBL. Despite opposition from some major world powers and the militaries of almost every country, the so-called 'Ottawa Treaty' totally banning anti-personnel mines came into force in March 1999.

However, the political activism and lobbying was not the only part to this success story. While members of the Ottawa Treaty had to pledge to stop making and selling landmines, those war torn and mine affected countries that were littered with landmines had to commit 'to clear all

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known mined areas within 10 years'. To make the Ottawa Treaty work these countries would require more help, and this is where people like Ian Mansfield came in.

I first came into contact with Ian in 1993 when he was managing the landmine clearance program in Afghanistan for the United Nations. This was in the very early days of the campaign and we decided that we needed more evidence to support a call for a ban. I co-authored a book called 'After the Guns Fall Silent – the Enduring Legacy of Landmines' which was a series of case studies from 12 mine affected countries. I remember being impressed by the innovation, enthusiasm and achievements of the Afghan Mine Clearance program, and the leadership displayed by Ian.

The skills and equipment needed to clear mines lay with the military, but in Afghanistan the techniques and procedures were successfully being adapted to become civilian in nature, or 'humanitarian demining' as it became known. The landmine sector was becoming an unusual mix of left-wing anti-war activists through to right-wing military technical specialists (many of whom still believed landmines were a useful weapon). When I finally got to meet Ian personally a few years later, my normal anti-military scepticism was quickly allayed by his enlightened approach, positive attitude and support for the ban.

Ian went on to establish a highly successful cluster bomb clearance program in Laos and later managed another mine clearance program in Bosnia. Throughout his work Ian was able to show that the clearance of landmines was not 'mission impossible' nor would it take thousands of years, but rather with proper training, equipment and management, most countries could achieve the task in a reasonable time frame. His 10 years of strong field experience made him an ideal candidate to lead the mine action team in the headquarters of the United Nations Development Program in New York in 1998. One of his first activities in that position was to attend a small ceremony at the United Nations headquarters on 1 March 1999, when the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan rang the peace bell to mark the entry into force of the Ottawa Treaty. I would regularly meet Ian at the various international meetings set up to oversee the implementation of

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the Treaty, and he was always a powerful advocate and voice for those people and organizations who were working in the field to clear mines.

This book by Ian Mansfield adds another dimension to the story of the successful anti-landmine campaign. This highly personal account tells of the motivation and bravery of thousands of deminers working around the world today, of the tragedy and heartache seeing landmine victims, and of the humour and friendships forged working among people of many cultures. It is also the personal journey of an ex-army officer who saw the need first-hand to ban an indiscriminate and inhumane weapon.

Vermont, USA, June 2015

Ian Mansfield is a consultant specializing in humanitarian assistance and post conflict activities, particularly in the field of landmine action. He worked overseas for 20 years but since mid-2011 he has been based in Mooloolaba, Queensland.

For nine years Ian was the Deputy Director of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD) based in Geneva, Switzerland. Prior to that he worked for the United Nations for 10 years - at the United Nations (UN) headquarters in New York from 1998 to 2002, and on UN field assignments in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Laos from 1991 to 1998. In recognition of his humanitarian work Ian was made a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in the Queens' Birthday list of June 2010.

Before joining the United Nations, Ian served as an engineer officer in the Australian Army for 22 years. During his military career, Ian held a variety of command, training and headquarters jobs. His final posting was as Commanding Officer of the Australian Army Training Team in Pakistan where he held national command responsibilities, and doubled in a United Nations appointment. For this work he was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross (CSC) in the 1993 Australia Day Honours list. Ian served in most states of Australia, as well as Papua New Guinea, the USA, Canada and Pakistan.

Ian holds a Masters in Business Administration and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College, Duntroon, and the Army Command and Staff College.

Ian was born in Ararat, Victoria and he attended school in Ararat and Geelong. He and his wife Margaret have been married for almost 40 years and have two adult children and four grandchildren. Ian and Margaret are honorary ambassadors for the charity Ronald MacDonald House. Ian enjoys walking his dog, motorcycle riding and reading.

Ian's book 'Stepping into a Minefield; A life dedicated to landmine clearance around the world' will be released in October 2015 by Big Sky Publishing and is his personal account of the dangers and tragedies involved in landmine clearance , but also reveals the great humanity, dedication and humor of the thousands of brave men and women clearing landmines today. He shows that there can be light where darkness lies.