

The hard-packed dirt is not helpful. A little left behind the probe is needed to break the soil. Push too hard, though, and there's a danger of setting off a blast. The point is not to blow anything up but to mark the hot stuff for explosives teams.

Inching forward hour-by-hour, the manual detection teams clear criss-crossing lanes through the field, leaving large patches in between.

NEXT STEP: CANINES

Now come the dogs, pacing each uncleared patch, nose to the ground. They belong to RONCO Consulting Corp., a Virginia-based contractor working with the Minnesota battalion. The military also owns dogs the troops will use after the teams are trained.

The dogs are trained to smell explosives, plastics and metals, said Joel Murray, RONCO's program manager, and to signal a find by sitting in a certain way and looking at a handler. Trust between dog and handler must be unshakable, Murray said, and it takes months of training to develop.

"You have to trust the dog because you have to walk through the areas the dog has proofed," Murray said.

Even so, the soldiers use a two-dog test before they trust a patch of land. And they're careful to work under conditions that are ideal for the dogs—never when the wind is behind the dogs or when the dogs are tired.

When a dog makes a hit, the manual detection team follows through to size up and carefully uncover the find.

Mine-clearing has become one of Afghanistan's largest industries since the United Nations began coordinating the effort in 1990. The work has been paced by fits and starts because Afghanistan has been so politically volatile.

During the 1990s, the Taliban and other warring factions raided de-mining project offices, seizing equipment and assaulting staff members. Operations were sharply curtailed in 2001 as it became clear the United States would attack Taliban and Al-Qaida forces in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

Since then, insurgents have plagued mine-removal teams. Last year, the United Nations suspended operations in eight provinces because of threats against workers. Assaults who ambushed their vehicle, shot and killed four U.N. de-miners in Farar Province in February, the Associated Press reported.

MANY CASUALTIES

Despite the attacks, there is little doubt that most Afghans are deeply thankful for the effort. Almost every family has suffered the casualties seen at an orthopedic clinic in Kabul run by the International Committee for the Red Cross. Nine in 10 of the workers and most of the patients are mine victims, said the director, Najmuddin, who like many Afghans goes by a single name.

He lost both of his legs 22 years ago while hauling sand from a riverbed near Kabul. His truck hit a land mine, knocking him unconscious for five days. When he woke, his life seemed to be over at age 18. After five empty years at home, he found the Red Cross clinic and a new life.

"I got prosthetics and they pushed me to walk," he said.

Deeply grateful, Najmuddin volunteered to work for the clinic for free. Instead, the clinic hired him and educated him as a physical therapist. In the 16 years since then, Najmuddin has seen a heartbreaking parade of mine victims: "I have seen many who lost one leg to a mine, then hit another and lost the second leg. I have seen one man who survived a third encounter. His wheelchair hit a mine, and he lost a hand and an eye."

For land mine victims, this clinic offers physical rehabilitation—new feet, legs and

hands, along with lessons in using them. It also provides social rehabilitation, from processing the emotional horror of the blast to learning work skills.

Like Najmuddin, everyone has a story. Paranz Spandiyar, a 12-year-old wisp of a girl with haunting eyes, believed the pasture where she was herding goats had been cleared of mines. It wasn't. She lost her left leg below the knee in April.

Abjalal Hormat was a soldier when he lost a leg 12 years ago.

Fahim, 15, was walking near an abandoned Soviet checkpoint last year when a blast took one leg and severely burned the other, damaging his nerves. He dropped out of school after fifth grade.

Nasir, also 15, took one step off a well-worn walking path in his village in Parwan Province and lost one leg above the knee.

These are the lucky ones, Najmuddin said. They survived.

Any rewards the Minnesota troops gain from mine-clearing come from a sense of duty and humanitarianism. They get hazard pay for being in Afghanistan, a war zone, but nothing extra for hunting mines. Many of them will leave Afghanistan with skills they don't expect to use in the mine-free Midwest.

Specialist Douglas McLellan from Carlton, Minn., joked that the proof of his expertise will be going home in one piece: "Ten fingers and 10 toes, that's my resumé." Seriously, McLellan said, the mines are "all the proof I need that the work we're doing here is important."

HONORING VICTORY GARDENS THEATER

HON. RAHM EMANUEL

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate Victory Gardens Theater of Chicago for their twenty-eight memorable seasons of excellence and artistic achievement on the occasion of the world premiere of *The Family Gold* by Annie Reiner.

Since 1974 Victory Gardens Theater has flourished in its mission to support some of Chicago's most talented playwrights. In only a few years time, the theater became a major staple of the Illinois performing arts community, producing such successes as Stacy Myatt's *The Velvet Rose*.

In 1977, Dennis Zacek was recruited as the theater's new Artistic Director. Nationally renowned for his 150 productions, Zacek quickly moved the theater in many new innovative and creative directions, meriting the prestigious 1997 Sidney R. Yates Arts Advocacy Award.

Over the years, the Victory Gardens Theater has allied with several established production companies, most notably the Body Politic Theatre, as well as emerging groups including MPAACT, Roadworks Productions and Remy-Bumpo. These collaborations have brought to Chicago the finest and most imaginative on-stage productions available. Featured playwrights have included Steve Carter, whose drama *Pecong* went on to productions in London, Newark, Minneapolis and San Francisco, and James Sherman, whose *Beau Jest* went on to become the longest-running show in the history of the Lambs Theatre in New York and has subsequently been translated into four different languages and performed in eight countries.

In 2001, the Victory Gardens Theater was globally honored with the Tony Award for its continuous level of artistic achievement in the development of playwrights and their work.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the high level of creative writing and acting consistently produced by the Victory Gardens Theater. I join with the people of Chicago in congratulating Victory Gardens Theater on their numerous achievements both on and off the stage, and wish them continued success with *The Family Gold* and all of their future productions.

HONORING MARGRIT BIEVER MONDAVI

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, September 9, 2004

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker I rise today to honor my good friend Margrit Biever Mondavi, a woman whose name is synonymous with good food, fine wine and great art the world over.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Napa Valley know that wine and food, like music and art, are sensory experiences meant to be savored. When these elements are combined, the result can be a masterpiece. We owe much of our appreciation to Ms. Mondavi's pioneering efforts in uniting these elements and in sharing her vision with us.

She joined the Robert Mondavi Winery in 1967 and created a showplace for artists, musicians, great chefs and winemakers. She also paired cooking classes with fine wine in the Great Chefs of France and the Great Chefs of America series at the winery. This internationally respected culinary series is now simply known as Great Chefs at Robert Mondavi Winery.

In 2003 she and her daughter Annie Roberts, the Executive Chef at Robert Mondavi Winery, earned the "Best in the World" distinction at the Gourmand World Cookbook awards for their collection of recipes and stories, "Annie & Margrit: Recipes and Stories from the Robert Mondavi Kitchen."

With her husband Robert Mondavi, whom she married in 1980, Margrit realized another dream with the opening in 2001 of COPIA, the American Center for Wine, Food and the Arts in downtown Napa. This was followed the same year with a gift to the University of California at Davis to seed the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science and the Robert and Margrit Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts.

Ms. Mondavi was also instrumental in rebuilding the original 18th Century Opera House in Napa and helped raise funds to restore this community treasure.

As a working artist herself, Margrit Biever Mondavi has created a line of home accessories for the Mondavi Winery. She is also an accomplished linguist and often translates her husband's speeches when they travel the world together promoting wine, food and the arts.

Mr. Speaker, Margrit Biever Mondavi is one of a kind, a pioneer and a visionary who has taught us all to love life a little bit more and to embrace the richness of our culture. Napa County is honoring our First Lady of wine, food and the arts for her many accomplishments and it is appropriate that we also recognize her here today.