

IN THE DANGER ZONE: Phil volunteers to help rid Iraq of landmine menace

Clearing deadly legacy of war

by **Simon Coyle**

VOULUNTEER Phil Tapsell will be venturing into a deadly war zone as part of his work to help rid the world of landmines.

The 52-year-old, from Norden, is travelling to northern Iraq with landmine clearance charity Mines Advisory Group (MAG) International. Phil, who lives off Caldershaw Road, will spend five days around Mosul working with the men and women

who put their lives on the line each day to find and deactivate hidden explosives.

Phil originally got involved with MAG two years ago when he set up a business network in a bid to help raise the organisation's profile within the UK business community.

He said: "The operations director invited me along to have a closer look at some of



CLEARING A PATH ... Phil Tapsell (inset) will be helping de-miners make minefields safe in Iraq
Picture courtesy of the Mines Advisory Group

their operations in Iraq. While there I am going to be up close and personal with the people who do the work on the ground. They are just really good people."

Phil is visiting the MAG team currently clearing mines and munitions left over from the Iran/Iraq war from 30 years ago and the more recent Gulf Wars.

As well as mine clearance they also run educational pro-

grammes to educate the local population on the dangers of landmines.

MAG also trains and employs staff from the local populations with more than 90 per cent of their 2,300-plus staff natives of the countries in which they work.

Phil, a former Royal Navy engineer, added: "They do great work but are not very well known considering they are the global leader in that

area and are based in Manchester. They get most of their revenue from the United Nations and other governments from around the world.

"The thing that really attracted me to the group is that what they do is a pre-requisite to other organisations.

"Aid or other international agencies cannot be driven into a country until MAG has done its work."
Phil recently completed a

210 mile charity bike ride to raise money for MAG last year, and is planning a Manchester to Paris ride next year.

MAG has worked in 35 countries since 1989 and has operations in Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Cambodia, Chad, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of Congo, Iraq, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Vietnam.