



United Nations Mine Action Team
Gaza Office

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EOD: Explosive ordnance disposal

ERW: explosive remnant of war

UXO: Unexploded ordnance

UNMAT-GO: United Nations Mine Action Team – Gaza Office

WP: White phosphorus

All pictures by UNMAS & MAG staff.

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United Nations Mine Action Team - Gaza Office

THE
UNITED
NATIONS
MINE ACTION

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OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Amid a restrictive and challenging security and operational environment, the UNMAT-GO has continued providing life-saving interventions, which is enabling a safer environment for the civilian population and the wider humanitarian community in Gaza. Due to this progress the majority of the residual UXO and ERW hazard is confined to restricted areas such as the buffer zone along the border line with Israel. UNMAT-GO has therefore decided to reduce the number of EOD Teams from five to three to better reflect the changing scope of operations and ability to deploy in the remaining suspected areas.



UNMAS would like to thank the European Union/Instruments for stability, for their additional generous contribution of Eur. 850,000 that will support the activities implementation until the end of 2010.

* On request from UN agencies and NGOs UNMAT EOD teams have by now assessed the **UXO contamination threat in 2,069 damaged/destroyed building** and suspected areas, prior to their safe rehabilitation and reconstruction. Conservative estimates indicate that a total of 78,795 persons in Gaza have directly benefited from this activity.

* The Mine Action Team has also provided **229 UXO tailor-made safety briefing sessions for over 5,109 individuals and staff members**. This has included high risk groups such as staff contracted to conduct rubble removal and farmers working in contaminated areas along the buffer zone with Israel. These individuals have come from over 60 organizations, including UN agencies, civil society organizations, local and international NGOs.

* **EOD Rapid Response** was given to **215 requests** for help from the local population, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and the local authorities. These call outs were in response to the discovery of suspect items, perceived UXO/ERW threat or a planned response to work in previously assessed high risk areas. To date, EOD teams have **located and made safe 356 items of UXO/ERW** and 2,100 rounds of small arms ammunition.

* Between 10 March and 12 May 2010, the EOD Teams **destroyed 92 x 155 mm white phosphorus (WP) items** (shells and canisters) as well as three high explosive items by controlled demolitions at the Central Demolition Site, in close coordination with all relevant authorities in both Gaza Strip and Israel. In order to dispose of the WP in a safe and environmentally friendly manner special demolition techniques and procedures were developed by the EOD Team. These specialized techniques also took into account practical issues such as the limited availability of explosives for each demolition serial. This innovative demolition technique has drawn international recognition among the humanitarian mine action community as it can be applied in other programmes worldwide.

THE UNMAT-GO

The UNMAT-GO is currently composed of an UNMAS management and coordination team and three EOD Teams from the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), two medics provided by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and a paramedic provided by Global Medic.



IMPACT OF UNMAT-GO OPERATIONS

Throughout 2009 and 2010 there were **no UXO/ERW related deaths or injuries during rubble removal** operations by UNDP, UNRWA and CHF, despite 174 items of UXO/ERW been found in the ruins of properties and sites. This level of safety is attributed to the fact that all personnel involved in rubble removal programmes had received training in UXO/ERW awareness and the presence of the Rapid Response EOD teams who were on call to rendered safe and remove items of UXO/ERW. This support allowed the rubble removal process to continue safely, which in turn allowed for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of private and public facilities.

There has also been **a sharp decrease in the number of UXO related civilian casualties among the general public**. Since the deployment of the UNMAT-GO, UXO/ERW casualties have reduced from 39 victims in 2009 to 11 in 2010 [see p.6].

As reported in the May Newsletter, a survey conducted in 2010 showed that UNMAT's UXO risk assessments and EOD support in Gaza had a **significant positive impact on the population perception of safety and security**. The survey clearly showed that the psychological impact of having UNMAT technicians confirming an area as safe is extremely significant for the community and the end users of the land, particularly when the area is to be used by children. This work not only

gives the local communities confidence to return to areas, it also empowers them enabling income generating activities such as the processing and sale of rubble, reclamation of reinforcement steel bars, furniture and electrical appliances found in the rubble.

Public facilities such as roads and schools have been rehabilitated or rebuilt. The reconstruction/development of the infrastructure has in turn allowed better access to health, education, clean water, basic services and additionally stimulated the local economy.

These safe activities were made possible due to UNMAT proactive interventions, and safety awareness efforts.

UNMAT-GO would like to thank its 2010 donors for their support

The United Kingdom
Department for
International
Development (DfID);



The Australian Agency for
International
Development (AusAid)



Australian Government
AusAID

The European Union



BURNING WHITE PHOSPHORUS IN SITU

When workers of a cement factory in Jabaliya were moving machinery, they noticed a UXO entry hole in the ground. At their request, UNMAT-GO immediately sent two EOD technicians to search the area.

After investigating the site a partially functioned 155mm WP shell left from Operation Cast Lead was found. This discovery had

two implications: firstly the presence of the WP UXO posed a serious threat and secondly the state of the shell made it impossible for it to be safely extracted and moved to the Central Demolition Site for destruction, were UNMAT has destroyed 92 WP UXO through controlled demolitions. After due consideration the EOD technicians destroyed the item in situ after evacuating the area and taking the required precautions

including the wearing of special safety equipment and respirators to prevent inhalation of the hazardous WP smoke. Shortly thereafter, the workers were able to resume activities without fear of death or injury from UXO/ERW.

[by Mark Russell/UNMAS & Lance Buttress/MAG]



Data provided by Mark Russell/UNMAS
and Roly Evans/MAG.



ONGOING SUPPORT TO UNDP RUBBLE REMOVAL PROJECT

The UNDP Rubble removal project is almost complete, with the exception of the large Ministries' Complex in Gaza City. This site was assessed by UNMAT in 2009 as having a high risk of UXO contamination. EOD support will therefore continue until all rubble is removed by workers contracted by UNDP, with completion expected in December 2010. EOD Support to the high risk Al Saraya prison compound in Gaza city was discontinued at the end of June 2010 as following UNMAT investigation it was assessed that no threat of UXO/ERW remained.

Al Saraya compound

On 13 June an EOD team started investigation of a building where evidence, namely an entry hole in the roof, suggested that a large Air Dropped Weapon (ADW) had penetrated the building and failed to detonate. Although there was evidence of limited blast damage on the ground floor the extent of the destruction was not consistent with an ADW that had fully functioned. This raised concerns that a residual threat remained. It appeared that the ADW had entered the ground, causing an initial crater below the entry hole and had travelled horizontally before partially exploding, causing a hollow cavern or camouflet. Given the possibility that part of the ADW was still present, the EOD team evacuated the area and starting excavation using a JBC excavator. Manoeuvring the excavator arm in the confined building entrance proved a challenge. However, the excavation revealed bomb casing and guidance system fragments of an Mk 84 bomb. The EOD Team was able to confirm that although the bomb had partially functioned, there was no residual threat. Reconstruction work resumed after the bomb casing was removed and confirmed as free from explosives.

In another building in the same compound the EOD team identified another entry hole that penetrate three floors. However, further exploration was not possible until UNDP contractors demolished the building to enable access for a deeper subsurface investigation. On 15 June works were put on hold as the EOD team conducted the sub surface investigation to ascertain the presence of an ADW UXO. Several pieces of ADW scrap metal remnants were located after manual and mechanical excavation, and electronic search of an excavation pit measured approximately 10m x 15m x 3m. The investigation revealed that the ADW had high ordered after penetrating the building and the majority of ADW fragments had previously been removed and the crater back filled. Rubble removal work subsequently resumed.

Medical support was provided by the UNMAT medics at all times.



Excavation of the suspected item



Bomb casing recovered with no
remaining hazard



Electronic search

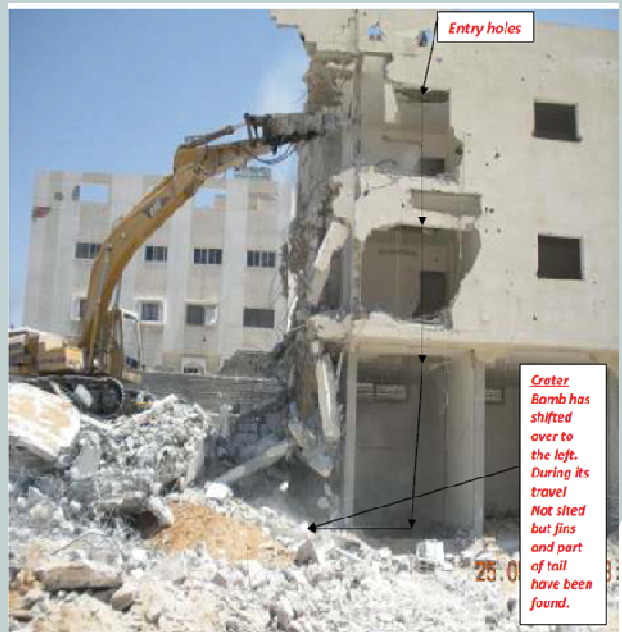


The Base Plate of the MK84

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FOLLOW-UP STORY—MR YOUSEF

When returning to Gaza in the mid 90s after more than 20 years of teaching in the United Arab Emirates, Mr Yousef and his wife built their house in east of Jabalia, which was previously known as 'The Castle' in the area. During Operation 'Cast Lead', the house was destroyed by the IDF, after being occupied by the IDF and used as a military position. Mr Yousef then relocated his wife and nine children (aged between 5 and 23) to a small apartment in Jabalyia.

UNMAT visited Mr Yousef for the first time in early November 2009 to carry out an assessment of his destroyed property prior to the removal of the rubble by UNDP contractors. After assessing the site as having a 'High risk' of UXO contamination, **UNMAT EOD Teams found 32 items of UXO - including one 155 mm WP artillery shell - in the rubble of Mr Yousef's house between 31 October and 18 November 2009.** The EOD Teams rendered all anti-tank mines safe and excavated and removed the WP shell. Given the threat posed by transporting the leaking WP UXO, it was decided to

burn off the item in a safe isolated area near the site.

Once free of UXO, UNDP contractors were able to safely clear the land of rubble. In January 2010, with money borrowed from neighbours and friends, Mr. Yousef then started building a small two bedroom house and chicken sheds on the site of the destroyed nine bedroom house.

"I work hard all the time because I need to forget"

Since completing the construction of three large chicken sheds, Mr Yousef now raises 4,000 chicks, 1,500 of which he had received through support from UNDP. The "new" house is now finished, with Mr Yousef planning for his family to move in immediately after the school exams last June. However,



[Left] Mr Yousef's house, "the Castle" before "Cast Lead" (as per the architect's plans.) & [Left below] Mr Yousef's house after "Operation Cast Lead", January 2009.

[Below] (i) one of the 31 anti-tank mines found in the house; (ii) burning the white phosphorus UXO in-situ; (iii) safe rubble removal of Mr Yousef's house by UNDP contractors, trained at different levels in UXO recognition by UNMAT-GO.



during an UNMAT visit in September 2010, Mr Yousef was still living there alone. He told the team that, although his family comes to the house every day after school, they still spend the nights in the tiny apartment in Jabalyia as they are still too scared to sleep at the house.



[Left] Mr Yousef in front of the building site of his "new house" and chicken sheds, January 2010.



[Left] One of Mr Yousef's chicken shed and back garden, April 2010; the new house's living room, September 2010.

Based on data provided by Ghada M. Issa & Alexandra Arango/MAG, Mark Russell/UNMAS & UNRWA



UXO BRIEFINGS AND RISK EDUCATION FOR POPULATIONS AT-RISK

A group of boy scouts, a rural community of farmers, 75 CHF contractors [side bar] and a bereaved family living in the Buffer Zone [below] were among the at-risk population groups sessions were organized to ensure that the safety message was relevant to the circumstances, threats and risky behaviours of the specific groups.



Gaza Boy scouts at the MAG office after their briefing, July 2010. The Gaza boy scouts had undertaken Mine Risk Education in 2005 following the evacuation of the settlements.



One of the female farmers who attended the briefing in Juhor Abu Dik, July 2010.



Level 1 and Level 2 Rubble Removal UXO safety briefings for 75 contractors hired by CHF for the Palestinian Reintegration and Enhancement Program (PREP), funded by USAID, which involves repairing homes that were destroyed during the war. October 2010.

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FOCUS ON UXO RISK EDUCATION AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE FOR NASER FAMILY'S

Naser's house is located in the 'Buffer Zone', some 350 meters from the borderline with Israel, in the North-East of Bureij Camp [photo 1]. Naser (37) lives there with his five children Alaa, Bahaa, Saied, Maisa and Jaber [photo 2], aged between 3 and 9, with his parents and his sister. The family's farmland is adjacent to the house. This area frequently faces incursions by the IDF, which occasionally leads to exchanges of fire between the IDF and militants.

In the evening of 13 July, the IDF targeted the area with projectiles, one of which exploded near Naser's house killing his wife Nimeh (33). She was killed when she came out of the house to rescue her children who were outside during the barrage. Naser's father, sister and sister-in-law were also injured. Ever since the death of their mother the children have been unable to sleep in the house and now sleep in a tent donated by the ICRC. Following a shelter damage assessment conducted by UNRWA engineer and social workers, UNMAT received as request for assistance as ERW items had been found in and around the house. UNMAT were

also requested to provide UXO risk education given the hazardous location where the family continues to live.

Subsequently, UNMAT tasked MAG's Community Liaison Team to provide UXO/ERW safety training to Naser and his children. Naser understandably considered UXO/ERW safety training for his children was essential due to the daily risk they face. MAG's Community Liaison team emphasized during the training that anytime they saw anything suspicious they should let their father know. Despite the resent trauma experienced "The children really, really enjoyed the session, I am very thankful that you have helped us" said Naser.

A few days later, on 29 September, UNMAT's Operations Officer and Security Officer [UNMAS] and Medical Coordinator [MSB] went to visit Naser's house in the Buffer Zone [photo 3]. They were shown the suspected items and were able to verify that no hazard remained and identify ERW metal scrap, including flechettes, case fragments and a nose fuze. [photo 4] The items of ERW scrap were removed from the

property by UNMAT.

"I don't want to leave my home, this is everything I've ever owned, and I built it myself" said Naser, flanked by Jaber, his youngest son who never leaves his side. UNMAT and Naser are confident that the children are now at least better able to recognize the dangerous risk posed by UXO/ERW and better able to reduce the risk.





VICTIMS AND VICTIM ASSISTANCE

Since operation
Cast Lead 9

civilians have been killed and 41 injured in 27 separate incidents involving UXO and ERW, as of September 2010. Thirty nine incidents took place in 2009 and 11 so far in 2010, with 19 victims under the age of 16, 18 of which were boys. The vast majority of victims were male, with only four female victims.

[Accident data is difficult to verify due to hospital patient confidentiality and also restrictions on access to accident sites in

order to conduct independent investigations.]

Extrapolation from available details of the accidents and incidents show that the large **majority of accidents take place while farming and when tampering** with suspicious object, as well as when collecting scrap.

To ensure support for accident survivors UNMAT's Community Liaison Team [MAG] refers victims to the Palestinian Center for Conflict Resolution

(PCDCR). PCDCR offers a home visit service where counselors talk to the individual, their families and neighbors to help them cope with the trauma of the situation. A similar system has been established with Handicap International to support victims with physical needs.

Below are the stories of some of the civilians injured in 2010, most of them children.

Data provided by Alexandra Arango & Ghada M. Issa /MAG.

*** ADNAN, MOHAMMED & SUFIAN, 37, 15 & 10 YEARS OLD - 5 JULY 2010**

On 5 July, Adnan was farming and plowing his land in El Sekka area in Beit Hanoun [in the Buffer Zone] with two of his sons aged 10 and 15, when one of them hit a suspicious which exploded causing shrapnel wounds. According to the Administrative Director of the hospital, farmers often find UXO in the eastern side of Beit Hanoun. "Thanks to UNMAT's UXO safety awareness briefings for populations at risk, they now recognize them and report to the local authorities".

*** ZAKARIYA, 18 YEARS OLD - 4 JUNE 2010**

At sunrise on 4 June, Zakariya, 18, was riding his family's horse on the beach a few meters from the main road in Al Sudanya Area. All of a sudden an explosion killed the horse and injured Zakariya, who was immediately taken to Al Shifa hospital suffering from spasms and bruises on both thighs. The horse constituted the family's main source of income generation, as it was used to provide local transport services. In addition to Zakariya's physical injuries his family are concerned for his psychological well being, as he has been in a state of shock ever since the accident. During a visit by the UNMAT Community Liaison Team, with the families permission Zakariya's case was referred to PCDCR. On the same day a PCDCR psychologist visited Zakariya at his home and conducted an initial consultation and has since provided regular follow up and support to Zakariya, his family and friends.

Since the deployment of the UNMAT-GO UXO/ERW casualties have reduced from 39 victims in 2009 to 11 in 2010, as a result of the removal of UXO/ERWs and the increased knowledge of safe behavior of the civilian population.

*** MOHAMMED, 15 YEARS OLD - 6 JUNE**

Mohammad, 15, was seriously wounded on the morning of 6 June when a UXO exploded while he was digging to gather construction aggregates, in the former settlement of Atzmona, west of Rafah, with his father and other family members. The explosion led to the amputation of both of Mohammad legs and his right hand at the Gaza European Hospital in Khan Yunis. Eyewitness stated that the explosion left a crater in the ground. Gaza's main rehabilitation center, the Artificial Limb and Polio Center (ALPC) and the International Trust Fund for Mine Victims are both providing support to Mohammad.

*** SAAD & MOHAMED, 12 & 14 YEARS OLD - 15 & 21 JULY 2010**

In two separate incidents that occurred during one week of July 2010, two children were injured by UXO. On both occasions the children were tampering with UXO when they exploded in their hands, causing serious injuries that resulted in the amputation of three fingers in the case of Saad and one finger in the case of Mohamed.

SUPPORT TO UN EVENTS

In the course of the summer, partner agencies requested UNMAT-GO's support in preparation of the public events that they were organizing in Gaza. Through risk assessments and reconnaissance

processes, UNMAT-GO EOD experts ensured that the locations were the events were to take place were free of UXO, and provided on-site EOD support during the events themselves.



Risk assessments of 282,600m² at Yasser Arafat Airport and Beit Lahia Beach prior to the attempts organized by UNRWA to break the Guinness Book of Records of basket ball bouncing (22 July) and Kite Flying (29 July).



A Qassam 2 home made rocket was found on the Beit Lahia Beach by one of the EOD experts during the risk assessment; it had functioned and was declared EO scrap.



Risk assessment and Mitigation measures ahead and during the joint press conference by WFP and UNSCO on 19 August in North Beit Hanoun area, for the release of the WFP-OCHA report "Between the Fence and a Hard place".

Photos and story by Lars Holmgren & Jennifer Bernard/MSB

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UNMAT's MEDICS TEAM

Two of the organizations that compose the UNMAT, namely Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and Global Medic (GM) are responsible for providing vital medical support to UNMAT operations in the form of trained paramedics and registered nurses [see Newsletter #3/January 2010, p.4]. These medical staff accompany the EOD teams to risk assessments, emergency EOD tasks and EOD support to rubble removal throughout Gaza on a daily basis. They provide immediate onsite response with two fully equipped ambulances. The medical team also provides daily health support and checkups for the UNMAT team.

Due to the limited local hospital resources and protracted medical evacuation processes the need for dedicate medical support remains high for the UNMAT in Gaza. This support is especially important as it not a possibility for the national medics to travel outside Gaza. Hence, international medics and well equipped ambulances are required to

facilitate the safe onward transfer of emergency casualties to Israel.

Since April 2010, UNRWA has generously lent two Ambulances to UNMAT [picture 1]. Thanks to the medic's expertise and donor support, UNMAT has equipped both ambulances to a high level. This includes automated external defibrillator, pulse oximeter machines, electric chargeable suction units, spine boards for full body immobilization, oxygen, IV fluids, and bandage supplies [picture 2]. The medics also carry fully equipped trauma bags with life-saving emergency equipment, drugs and IV sets.

In recent months, the four UNMAT armored vehicle drivers have qualified as ambulance drivers and received basic life support training. It is also planned for the drivers to attend advanced life support training, which will certify the staff as EMT/

Ambulance Drivers.

This year the medic team has also provided first aid training to the entire UNMAT staff and some UNRWA national staff in Gaza. Improvements in medical support levels for the mine action team have been achieved through close collaborative with other organizations including UNRWA, PCRS and the Gaza Ministry of Health. Through continuous training and field support the MSB and GM personnel maintain the highest level of medical support to UNMAT Gaza.



THE WAY FORWARD

The need

Despite progress to date, the presence of UXOs continues to pose a threat to the lives of the people living and working in Gaza. Population groups at high risk from UXO hazards have been identified as, children, rubble removal workers, scrap collectors, construction workers, returnees, farmers and NGO outreach workers. Young boys are especially at risk as they often tamper with UXO they find while playing outside or collecting scrap.

After 18 months of intervention, the UNMAT considers that the major part of this remaining UXO threat now lies in the 'Buffer Zone' and other agricultural areas that are particularly difficult to reach due to security and access problems.

The ongoing threat is reflected in the **2011 Protection Cluster Response Plan**, which identifies the need to "continue reducing the number of women, men and children victims of UXO and ERW related accidents and incidents".

As in other conflict/post-conflict environments, it is also reasonable to expect that residual UXO/ERW threat will remain in Gaza for years to come and additional contamination will continue due to ongoing military operations.

Despite coordination and deployment challenges associated with operations in Gaza, the UN RC/HC formally requested UNMAS to maintain a Mine Action advisory capacity in 2011.

The Response

To respond to the identified need and after consultation with all stakeholders involved,

including UN agencies, NGOs and the Local Authorities, UNMAS has decided to maintain a capacity in Gaza in 2011—albeit at a reduced level. **UNMAS will provide a Residual Technical Response Capacity through the presence of a UXO/ERW Technical Advisor** who will inform the UN, INGO & NGOs and civilian population at risk on the scale and threat of UXO contamination throughout the Gaza Strip and provide limited technical support.

Medical support will be provided by PCRS whenever required.

UNMAS is therefore seeking continued funding amounting to USD 493,820.

The CAP project sheet and detailed Project proposal and budget are available upon request.

UNMAT-GO

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Useful Mine Action Websites

www.mineaction.org

www.gichd.org

www.mineactionstandards.org

www.maginternational.org

www.globalmedic.org

www.msbymyndigheten.se

UNMAT EOD EXPERTS IN THE GAZA WORLD CUP

On 3 May, Ken Dunn and Lance Buttress, two UNMAT EOD experts [MAG], participated in the Britain vs. Ireland game of the Gaza World Cup. Despite the fact that Lance scored a goal for Britain [and got a yellow card a little later], Ireland won 2-1.



"We lost 2-1 but I loved every minute of it. [...] Back in the UK it would be inconceivable to miss out on a game because of security issues. Here in Gaza to see a normal event taking place which we take for granted was heartening." - Ken Dunn

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