



Australian Government

Department of Defence

# Quail Island Air Weapons Range Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Hazard Reduction Project

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## BOMBS GONE IN NORTHERN TERRITORY CLEARANCE

Hazardous unexploded ordnance and other items, including rocket war heads, found during the first stages of the Quail Island Air Weapons Range Reduction Project, will be disposed of by the Department of Defence at the end of October.

The Royal Australian Air Force, United States and Singapore Air Forces used the air weapons range, which includes Quail, Bare Sand and Djadjalbit islands, situated 40 kilometres south-east of Darwin, from 1945 until 1979 for air to ground bombing, rocketry and gunnery practices. The range was also used by RAAF and allied Air Forces during World War II.

The air weapons range is now surplus to defence requirements and is being cleaned up in a hazard reduction project conducted by Defence contractor G-tek Australia Pty Limited. Once the clean-up is completed the islands will be handed back to the Northern Territory Government and the Traditional Owners.

To date, the surface and shallow search has identified a number of items for disposal at depths up to 0.7 metres. Defence will destroy the ordnance by way of explosive demolition.

“These discoveries are the result of the first of two stages in the sub-surface clearance of the islands,” Major Geoff Robinson, Project Manager of the reduction project, said in Canberra today.

“The next search will be conducted during the next dry season. The search will go down to the water table or to three metres and there is a high probability that more hazardous items will be found and cleared.”

Given the hazard to the public of the disposal activity, Defence will enforce a 5.5 kilometre exclusion zone around the islands in the last week of October. As well as shipping being excluded from the area, air traffic will also be unable to transit through the zone. Formal notices to mariners and to airmen are being issued.



“We understand that the islands are very popular with tourists, especially with people wanting to see the turtles on Bare Sand Island. While we have been able to accommodate tourist activity during the reduction project, the unexploded items recovered are all hazardous and we cannot allow persons within the danger area while demolitions are being undertaken,” Major Robinson said.

“The discovery and disposal of these bombs and warheads shows that the reduction project is achieving its purpose,” said Mr Mike Healy, Assistant Secretary Property Services of the Department of Defence. “The reduction project will ensure the islands are safe for generations to come.”