



Render Safe

*UXO disposal
in PNG*



More than 150 personnel from the Australian Defence Force, New Zealand Defence Force and Papua New Guinea Defence Force conducted Operation Render Safe beginning mid October in an effort to remove just some of a plethora of unexploded WWII ordnance lying around Papua New Guinea.

The mission ran from 18 October to 4 November around Rabaul and involved the identification, assessment and rendering safe of dangerous unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Hogging much of the media limelight for no apparent reason via Canberra-issued press releases, Parliamentary Secretary for Defence Senator David Feeney repeatedly described Operation Render Safe as 'ADF's enduring peace-time mission to find, identify and render safe WWII munitions in the South Pacific' – despite this year's mission being only the second operation of its type in the 66 years since war's end.

Nonetheless, on this occasion, the men and women in uniform who actually did the heavy lifting in the field, removed more than 2000 individual items with a combined explosive quantity in excess of 5 tonnes from populous areas around Rabaul and Kokopo, and two sites close to the Kokoda Track, near Myola and Owers Corner.

Operation Render Safe also included the discovery of several previously uncharted WWII wrecks in Simpson Harbour – one a submarine thought to be Japanese.

Ships' companies of HMA Ships Gascoyne and Diamantina, as well as HMNZ Ships Resolution and Wellington took part in the operation.

Commander of the Combined Joint Task Force 663 Commander Scott Craig said the cooperation between the three participating nations provided a great service to the people of Rabaul as well as affording Defence personnel from the three nations an opportunity to work side by side.

Senator Feeney said the operation was vital to providing a safe environment in Rabaul, which relied heavily on international tourism.

"Unexploded ordnance such as torpedoes, grenades, bombs and projectiles are regularly discovered in very public locations such as domestic yards, the local police station and along the shoreline," Senator Feeney said.

"These remnants of war are an enduring and unpredictable threat to the safety of locals and tourists and we are pleased to play an active role in making the area safer for all."

The ADF has previously conducted UXO disposal in Kiribati and the Marshall Islands as one-off missions and, under Operation Render Safe 2009, in the Solomon Islands.

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