



United Nations Mine Action Team  
Gaza Office



Objectives of the UNMAT mission in the Gaza Strip

- ❖ **Providing freedom from fear:** minimizing the threat of death or injury caused by UXO to those living and working in Gaza; and,
- ❖ **Enhancing freedom from want:** supporting rubble removal, reconstruction and rehabilitation of housing, infrastructure, agricultural land and livelihoods in line with the Palestinian National Authority Early Recovery & Reconstruction Plan 2009-2010 (2 March 2009) and UN Security Council Resolution 1860 (2009).

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

As such the role of the United Nations Mine Action Team (UNMAT) in the Gaza Strip is widely acknowledged with, as of 30 November 2009, the **discovery of 331 items of Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) – including 69 in November only** - of which 167 were found amongst the rubble since rubble removal projects commenced on the ground on 7 July 2009. Out of the total, 68 items are M15 anti-tank mines – including 35 found this month – and 51 items are white phosphorus.

The threat posed by anti-tank mines, UXO and ERW as a result of 'Operation Cast Lead' (27 December 2008 - 18 January 2009) has remained high. Data recorded since the end of the Operation indicate that **some 33 people have been injured and 10 killed as a result of 19 UXO-related accidents, half of them being children.** The last accident occurred on 25 November involving two adults and their 18-year old son. While anti-tank mines were used to demolish buildings, the primary threat is from UXO and ERW, which remains hidden in the rubble of destroyed homes, buildings and industrial sites, as well as along roads and in agricultural areas.

Given both the unknown threats in the sites and the assessed risks, 28 **UXO safety awareness briefing sessions** have been conducted in November in English and Arabic for 661 humanitarian aid workers and personnel contracted by the Almastagbal society, the ICRC and CHF.

In November only, out of 262 requests received by UNDP, UNRWA, ACF and ICRC in preparation of their rubble removal and rehabilitation of roads projects, 186 **properties and sites have been assessed by MAG Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams** throughout the Gaza Strip. To date, over **36 percent of the properties** that have been assessed by the teams **show a medium to high risk of containing UXO/ERW.** As a result, when humanitarian or contracted workers are tasked to remove the rubble or rehabilitate the roads on those specific sites, EOD support is required to ensure the workers' safety, remove ordnance buried under the rubble/earth and make it safe. The same applies when EOD teams are deployed following an **EOD rapid response**

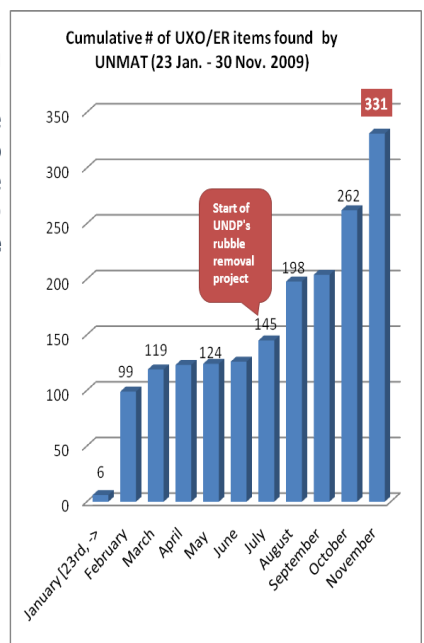
request by the local population, local authorities and humanitarian agencies.

Moreover, a GIS and mapping capacity has been developed to support UNMAT-GO's daily EOD tasks and provide updated Mine Action mapping and information to all UN and NGO agencies, donors and interested stakeholders ([see the latest UNMAT's risk assessment map](#)). The GIS Assistant is seconded to OCHA.

The **import of the equipment** required to destroy the UXOs, which has been approved by the IDF in September, is ongoing successfully. Important progress has also been achieved this month during discussions with the relevant authorities on the creation of the two Central Demolitions Sites in isolated areas of the Gaza Strip where UXOs can be safely destroyed. This will improve the long-term safety prospects for communities in Gaza.

Achievements to date, impacting 28,718 people

- ❖ **UXO Risk Assessments:** 1,599 buildings assessed to date (i.e., 807,944 m<sup>2</sup>) out of 1,994 requests: 191 'High' risk, 393 'Medium' risk and 1,015 'Low' risk.
- ❖ **UXO Located by EOD Teams:**
  - 331 items of UXO/ ERW Including 51 white phosphorus items and 68 anti-tank mines;
  - 2,100 small arms ammunition.
- ❖ **UXO Safety Awareness Training:** 148 training sessions for 3,589 persons (3,020 males and 569 females):
  - 59 General UXO Safety briefings;
  - 5 UXO Training of Trainers;
  - 74 Level 1 Rubble Removal;
  - 8 Level 2 Rubble Removal; and
  - 2 Level 3 Rubble Removal.





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UNMAT would like to thank its donors for their support to mine action in Gaza in 2009

- ❖ The UN Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF)
- ❖ The European Commission;
- ❖ The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID);
- ❖ The Government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands;
- ❖ The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA);
- ❖ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) through the HERF;
- ❖ Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP-PAPP).

## FUNDING AND WAY FORWARD

In spite of the progress that has been achieved to date, many challenges remain. The UNMAT-GO EOD response must continue to play a central role in 2010 to ensuring that hundreds of additional risk assessments are undertaken on damaged buildings, impacted agricultural land, commercial and industrial sites and impact holes; awareness briefings are provided for additional rubble removal workers, staff and civilian groups most at-risk; and EOD support is also provided to eliminate UXO/ERW hazards. With the generous support of contributions from our donors, UNMAT-GO has been able to provide life-saving assistance to communities in Gaza in 2009. In light of the critical financial situation, **UNDP awarded MAG funding to cover project activities from October to December 2009**, enabling EOD teams to continue operating.

However, given the present level of threat which remains and unforeseen delays in the Government of Japan's approval of UNDP reprogramming of funds – of which UNMAT-GO is a key player – **UNMAT-GO are in urgent need of sustained funding to ensure continuity of operations through 2010 to continue to deliver critical life-saving support to the people of Gaza**. Approximately **USD 4.6 million** is needed to maintain operations in Gaza and hopefully terminate the programme by the end of 2010.

**CAP 2010** – As reported in October, UNMAS submitted a CAP project sheet within the CAP 2010 for the oPt. The proposal amounts to USD 3.3 million and aims at reinforcing mine action management and coordination throughout 2010 in the oPt as well as conducting an in-depth threat and needs assessment in the West Bank in collaboration with the Palestinian and Israeli authorities. This assessment will ascertain the types and duration of interventions, level of training and resources required within the West Bank to reduce or remove the UXO/Mine hazard. Records indicate a minimum of 15 confirmed minefields, improperly fenced or marked, posing a severe threat to the population (composed mainly of Bedouin communities).

## STORIES FROM GAZA

A total of 22 M15 Anti-tank mines were found by MAG EOD Teams on a previously assessed 'High-risk' property in Jabalyia, when rubble was being removed by UNDP-contracted workers in mid-November 2009. The EOD teams excavated the mines and neutralized them.



On a nearby site, a 155 mm white phosphorus artillery shell was found by the EOD team that was accompanying UNDP rubble removal teams on 15 November. The team safely excavated the bomb and, given the threat posed by the leaking canister, safely burnt it on an isolated area, hence making it safe.



Pictures by G. Miller/MAG

### The UNMAT-GO

Under the UN coordination and management, the five Mines Advisory Group (MAG) EOD Teams in Gaza are supported by an EOD operations officer and a medical coordinator/paramedic provided by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) personnel, as well as a paramedic in Gaza provided by GlobalMedics.

