



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).

FUNDING

The United Nations Mine Action Team-Gaza Office UNMAT-GO) would like to thank the **United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid) for their generous contributions to the programme**, following our emergency appeal in December 2009. Those additional funds have ensured that UNMAT-GO continues enabling the implementation of safe and efficient recovery operations for communities to regain their livelihoods and freedom of movement from 1 January to approximately 31 July 2010. In addition, a new proposal has now been submitted to potential donors for the remainder of 2010, based on the assumption that UNMAT-GO will complete all known activities within Gaza by the end of December 2010 and then withdraw, passing all residual responsibility to the de facto authorities.

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

The UNMAT-GO has in the first months of 2010 continued to establish itself as **an essential partner and vital component of the Early Recovery and Reconstruction Plans for Gaza**. As of 1 March 2010, **UNMAT Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Teams have assessed 1,632 sites** totaling 882,571 square meters, at the request of a growing number of UN agencies and local and international NGOs in preparation of their rubble removal and rehabilitation projects. Of the 1,632 sites, 1,505 were residential properties housing approximately 57,457 civilian beneficiaries. The assessments resulted in 36% of the sites categorized as having a 'High' and 'Medium' risk of containing UXO, therefore requiring further EOD support to remove possible ordnance buried under the rubble when humanitarian or contracted workers rehabilitate the site. **EOD support by UNMAT** has uncovered so far 343 items of UXO, of which 171 were found during rubble removal activities. Out of the total, 71 items were M15 anti-tank mines used as demolition charges in the demolition of buildings and 58 items were white phosphorus. In parallel, the safety of UN, NGO and civilian personnel has been enhanced through the provision of **decentralized risk**

education Training-of-Trainers approach. Project managers and site supervisors and foremen have been trained to an advanced level to allow them to train those working under their responsibility. As of 1 March, a total of 4,155 persons participated in English and Arabic language risk awareness sessions - among which 3,844 personnel from UN agencies, local and international NGOs, and Palestinian civilian staff contracted to conduct rubble removal operations. An additional 927 civilians from at-risk groups, such as farmers working in or near the buffer zone, have also received awareness training.

The Team is also finalizing with the relevant authorities the preparations for the **demolition of UXOs** at an isolated demolition site by UNMAT EOD experts. The destruction of white phosphorus artillery rounds will be given a priority, given the particular threat they pose to the population and the environment.

Achievements to date

- ❖ **UXO Risk Assessments:**
1,632 buildings assessed to date out of 2,071 requests: 191 'High' risk, 399 'Medium' risk and 1,042 'Low' risk.
- ❖ **UXO Located by EOD Teams:**
- 343 items of UXO/ ERW Including 58 white phosphorus items and 71 anti-tank mines;
- 2,100 small arms ammunition.
- ❖ **UXO Safety Awareness Training:**
175 training sessions for 4,155 persons (3,476 males and 679 females):
- 86 General UXO Safety briefings;
- 7 UXO Training of Trainers;
- 74 Level 1 Rubble Removal; and
- 8 Level 2 Rubble Removal.



Close-up of a map of northern Gaza used at the UNMAT-GO Office for planning and analysis purposes.



STORIES FROM EASTERN GAZA



The eastern area of Gaza - composed of Jabal Al-Rayes (Al-Rayes mountain), Al-Jaro street and the Eastern road; totaling approximately 4 km² - is located about two kilometers away from Gaza's eastern border with Israel. This elevated area, home to about 100 houses, 20 factories and a large orchard, was heavily targeted during 'Operation Cast Lead'. In the first days of the war the area was hit by hundreds of tank shells and white phosphorous rounds, before becoming the battlefield of the ground incursion and a position of choice for the tanks, as it provides a heightened advantage and viewpoint of the whole eastern sector of Gaza. As a result, most of the houses and factories were partially or fully destroyed.

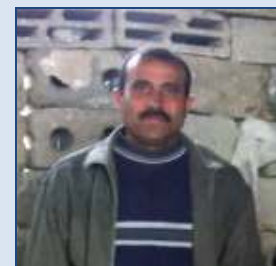
Shortly after the end of the war, UNMAT EOD specialists conducted 19 EOD tasks at the request of several NGOs working in the area, which were reporting the existence of unexploded ordnance and entry holes. Moreover, between July and September 2009, UNMAT conducted risk assessments in the rubble of over 80 destroyed properties at the request of UNDP in the framework of their rubble removal programme. EOD teams also assessed destroyed factories and investigated many entry holes. UNMAT teams consequently conducted EOD support to rubble removal on all sites assessed as having a high risk of being contaminated by UXOs. In parallel, 10 UXO safety and awareness training sessions were conducted for UNDP rubble removal workers assigned to the area prior to the start of the rubble removal process; another four such trainings were conducted for ICRC staff working in the area.



In over seven months of work, UNMAT teams safely removed in this area alone 102 items of unexploded ordnance, including anti-tank mines, white phosphorus rounds and 155mm tank shells - i.e. almost a quarter of the total amount of UXOs found by UNMAT since January 2009. UNMAT's efforts have enabled the hundreds of residents and land owners of the area to safely reuse the sites of their destroyed houses for reconstruction, land building or land access for crop growing. Moreover, UNMAT's operations have created a safe environment for other humanitarian agencies and NGOs which are assisting the reconstruction process for the people of Gaza.



The same site in Nov. '09 and in Jan. '10, two months after the rubble was removed. As reported in the November SitRep, 22 anti-tank mines were found on that site by UNMAT EOD teams during rubble removal by UNDP.



Mr Fayz A. has been the guard of 34 dunams of agricultural fields for the past 25 years. Until 'Operation Cast Lead', he was living in a small house in the middle of the fields with his family of 12. When his house was fully destroyed by two bombs and then razed by Israeli bulldozers, his family fled to Jabalyia camp; they now live in a small house in Toufah, with an UNRWA rental subsidy. UNMAT assessed the perimeter as safe from any UXO risk, allowing Mr Fayz to build a small shed, replant the fields and dream of the house that he hopes to rebuild one day.



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

- The United Kingdom Department for International Development (DfID);
Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid)
The Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP-PAPP).

Wheat fields planted in areas cleared during an ICRC implemented land leveling and rehabilitation project, following a risk assessment and EOD clearance by UNMAT-GO.

A report compiled by Hani Faqawi/MAG. Photos by UNMAS & MAG

The UNMAT-Gaza Office

The UNMAT-GO is currently composed of an UNMAS management and coordination team and five 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.

