

## Management of Residual ERW (MORE): Main Media Messages

In addition to supporting the Convention banning antipersonnel mines, the **Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)** addresses the issue of management of residual contamination through advice provided to States on how to deal with the bombs left over from past conflicts.

The European experience offers good examples of how countries have been dealing with the problem. Many of the affected countries now operate on the premise that ERW contamination cannot be totally eliminated, but that the risks should be identified to manage the hazards posed to the population. Belgium, dealing with ERW for the past 100 years, disposes of 150 to 200 tons of ammunition annually with few accidents.

The GICHD aims to influence current approaches to the management of residual contamination and change mindsets. Through lessons learnt in Europe, countries such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam recovering from a more recent conflict and contamination of ERW could review their strategy towards increased focus on manageable tasks in the long term over systematic survey and clearance practices which are more expensive and less sustainable.



Balham Underground Station in South West London after a raid on the evening of 14 October 1941, when 68 people died after pipes burst causing water and silt to fill the station. Image IWM HU 13938B, reproduced with the permission of the Imperial War Museum.

## Historical Perspective

The historical evolution of best practices since WWII can also assist countries in policy design beyond the fulfillment of commitments under the international *Convention for Cluster Munitions (CCM)* and the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* (Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention or APMBC). Understanding when to start and stop the implementation of proactive clearance serves as an excellent foundation for residual clearance policies.

## National Ownership

Central to managing residual ERW is strong national ownership of risk and response, and well-performing authorities with solid understanding of liability, operational efficiency and risk management. ERW tasks are best suited to be the shared function and responsibility of civil defense and military that maintain the budgets and mobile-response capacity.

## Risk Management

The long-term, sustainable response to ERW is risk management. With ever less ERW to address, the high cost of proactive clearance yields decreasing marginal returns and debatable increases in public safety. ERW contamination cannot be totally eliminated, but the hazards associated with remaining ERW can be mitigated through risk education, responsive local threat assessments and explosive ordnance disposal (EOD). The ultimate responsibility for this task lies with the State, which can benefit from outside support and in-turn develop policies for function sharing between police, military and civil response. Deeply buried bombs cannot be easily surveyed over large areas nor can communities readily identify them; often they become a challenge only after being discovered during construction and development activities. Therefore, most long-term contamination that does not pose immediate humanitarian danger could be addressed by adopting a risk-management

approach and where appropriate introducing more sustainable commercial response models.

## Other Main Ideas:

The MORE ageing study is focusing on the decreasing threat posed by old munitions. Belgium has recovered 150 to 200 tons of 100 year old ammunition per year with only few accidents.

National EOD is business as usual, as seen with Germany, Japan, UK, Belgium and France.

Local efforts at mine clearance and ERW elimination have already accomplished a lot.

The global effort at mine eradication has already allowed for much collaboration, including some transition from proactive to responsive mechanisms.

Some countries have found that completing APMBC Article 5 requirements is not the end of the problem. More ERW remain in the soil.

Some countries subject to heavy bombardment do not have a baseline survey, but still have well-developed response mechanisms.

Countries in transition to national ownership should be encouraged that responsive risk-management approaches can be sustainably operated.

Depth differentiation can help drive prioritization and risk management. Some countries require the commercial developer to ensure the terrain is cleared to the required depth.

Mine Risk Education remains a critical effort to reduce casualties.

## Noteworthy Links:

<http://www.jmu.edu/cisr/journal/18.1/feature/paunila.shtml>

<http://bombsight.org/#15/51.5050/-0.0900>