

Parts of Vero Beach Closed for UXO Disposal

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Vero Beach, Florida Federal officials plan to close parts of some beaches and neighborhoods in the south part of Indian River County to clean up dozens of munitions unearthed along the coast of Vero Beach. The USACE will order evacuations of nearby homes for about six hours each day during the operations.

Contractors for the Army Corps found five, 500-pound bombs, four warheads, and two rockets more than 100 yards offshore while they were removing military-associated debris from the coastal waters. The contractors will lift the items from the sea bed and transport them one mile offshore to a designated disposal area for underwater detonation.

During WWII, the military used the former Fort Pierce U.S. Naval Amphibious Training Base, an area of about 19,000 acres between Vero Beach and Jensen Beach, for aquatic training and to develop and test procedures for breaching beach fortifications. The munitions are remnants from that time frame.

Last year, Navy EOD disposed of a few UXO in the same area. To remove the bombs from the sea bed, divers used compressed air to delicately blow away the compacted sand enveloping them. Inflatable air bags are then used to lift the ordnance to the surface. The bombs are towed to the detonation site, submerged again and ignited with 20 pounds of C-4 explosive. According to Corps officials, erosion and construction are leading to the frequent discovery of the old munitions.