

Large Scale Range Clearance Not a Military EOD Responsibility

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The responsibilities of range clearance have been argued for years within the military. Although EOD is certainly qualified to conduct range clearance operations and has at numerous ranges over the decades, EOD has generally maintained the stance that large scale range clearances are not one of their primary responsibilities. A series of memos from April and May 1943 found by a UXOInfo.com reader at the National Archives shows just exactly how far back this position has been voiced by EOD.

The series of memos from 1943 which can be downloaded using the link below, starts with a request from the Office of the Ordnance Officer at Fort Shaftner to the 232nd Ordnance Company (Bomb Disposal). The memo request that EOD conduct a range clearance on the artillery and bombing ranges and "place all recovered projectiles and fragments into drums". Col. Custis from the Bomb Disposal unit promptly fired back a response stating "the policing of ranges is specifically not; repeat not; a function of the Bombs Disposal Unit". Col Curtis' response further stated that range clearance is a function of the local range authorities and Unit Ordnance Officer.

In a final memo back from the Office of the Ordnance Officer, they concur with the response and acknowledges the highly technical nature of bomb disposal and their documented responsibilities which do not include range clearance activities as primary area of responsibility.

EOD is indeed a highly skilled profession which involves a constant evolution of study, training, and research. EOD's primary mission is to provide technical expertise to support combat operations. Throughout the years, EOD has not been staffed or funded to take on any large scale range clearance responsibilities. In general, this hold true today especially with the on-going conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan where EOD is extremely busy responding to and countering IED threats.

National Archives documents donated by Rick Stauber (Army EOD Retired).