

Post WWII Clearance Operations (Pre-FUDS Program History)

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Research at the National Archives II in College Park, MD provides an interesting insight as to the efforts of the U.S. Army at the end of WWII in the clean-up efforts on former training ranges. In a series of letters generated in April of 1945, the US Army Chief of Engineers established three specialized Bomb and Shell Disposal Squads to be trained in the detection, location and disposal of military munitions on various training installations that were used during the War. Initial training would be conducted at the Engineer School at Fort Belvoir, VA with follow-on training at the Ordnance School at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, MD.

Three squads were formed, consisting of one officer and six enlisted. Records indicate that the detachments were organized as the 9800th Technical Support Units Detachments 6th, 7th, and the 14th. Historical records of the 14th recovered from the National Archives provide an accurate historical listing of the actions took place from 1946 to 1948. Documents include individual reports of clearance operations conducted, inventories of munitions recovered, and destroyed maps and photographs of work conducted.

Among the inventory lists of recovered/destroyed munitions include the following for Camp Claiborne, Louisiana in 1946:

- 57, 105, and 155mm projectiles
- 60 and 81mm mortars
- 100 pound practice bombs
- Smoke pots & Grenades
- TNT and Nitrostarch Blocks
- German Mine Fuzes
- Cans and sticks of Black Power
- Dutch Mushroom AT Mines

A detailed written record of the methodology that was utilized during the range operations indicates that the methods and procedures that were used in 1946 involved the use of German POW's as sweepers. Today the USACE FUDS Program relies on the use of civilian UXO contractors.

The maps and photographs are included in with the Camp Claiborne report, along with the rest of the documents, providing an in-depth insight into the U.S. Governments efforts to carry out the clean-up.

Clearance work was conducted from 1947 to 1948. Approximately 34,085.42 acres were surfaced cleared. Records indicate that between 1946 and 1948, the 9800th Technical Support Unit Detachment 14th conducted twenty range clearance operations of various dimensions at the following locations:

- Bombing Ranges 2 and 3 Walker, Kansas
- Bombing Range 1 Pratt, Kansas
- Drakes Bay Skip and Dive Bombing Range Marin County, California
- Camp Claiborne, Louisiana
- Bombing Range Bruning AAF Bruning, Nebraska
- Camp Wolters, Texas
- Camp Adair, Oregon
- Bombing Ranges Dalhart AAF, Dalhart, Texas
- Bombing Range #1 Pueblo, Colorado
- Bombing Range #2 Pueblo, Colorado
- Camp Hale, Colorado
- Combat Target Range Port Angeles, Washington
- Ephrata Low Altitude Bombing Range Ephrata, Washington
- Yakima Anti-Aircraft Gunnery Range Yakima, Washington
- Spillane Property Vidal, California
- Cadiz Lake Bombing Range, San Bernardino, California
- Bombing Ranges N-1, N-2, N-3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, Y, 1-Z and 2-Z Victorville Bombing Range Complex, San Bernardino Country, California
- Camp Lockett Campo, California
- Williams Field Bombing Range Pinal County, Arizona
- Ft. Huachuca, Arizona

Records indicate that the 14th also conducted an UXO Survey of the Task Force Furnace Training area outside of Yuma, Arizona but, there is no documentation that any range clearance operations were conducted. The last recorded clearance was conducted at Ft. Huachuca, Arizona 26 May 1949.

A series of rare color photographs have been found in the records of some of the search and disposal operations that occurred - sampling of these images include:



UXO operations being conducted in the desert of Southern California by U.S. Army Engineer Civilian Contractors in 1947



Bomb, G.P., 100-pound H.E.



The location of a Bomb, G.P., 100-lb.

The photographs above were taken at the Victorville Demolition Target "Y" Southwest of the town of Victorville, California



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Mounted Sweep Team at Ft. Huachuca



2 ea. M43 81mm HE Mortars Ft. Huachuca



3 ea. M7A2 2.36-inch HEAT Rockets

As you can see, the DoD and the U.S. Army have been active a lot longer than most people realize removing dangerous and hazardous munitions from around our communities. If you would like to take a more in depth look at these operations, contact UXOInfo.com for more information on the Record Groups searched.