

**Geneva International Centre for  
Humanitarian Demining  
Centre International de  
Démunage Humanitaire - Genève**



# **Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Definitions**

---

The **Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD)** supports the efforts of the international community in reducing the impact of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO). The Centre is active in research, provides operational assistance and supports the implementation of the Mine Ban Treaty.

---

*For further information please contact:*

**Paddy Blagden**

or

**Adrian Wilkinson**

GICHD

7bis Avenue de la Paix

CH-1211 Geneva 1

Switzerland

Tel: +41 (22) 906 1687

Fax: +41 (22) 906 1690

<http://www.gichd.ch/>

[a.wilkinson@gichd.ch](mailto:a.wilkinson@gichd.ch)

**Geneva, 29 November 2001**

---

© GICHD

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining. The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining regarding the legal status of any country, territory or area, or of its authorities or armed groups, or concerning the deliberations of its frontiers or boundaries.

---

---

# Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Definitions

## 1 Introduction

The term "Explosive Remnants of War" (ERW) has been widely used in the CCW Review Conference preparatory discussions. While the term has not been specifically defined, it is understood by the ICRC to correspond to the term "unexploded ordnance" (UXO) which has been defined in several contexts. As discussions move towards the consideration of a mandate for further work on this subject, clarification of terms becomes increasingly important.

It is difficult to gain agreement on a definition of ERW until the explosive threat in post-conflict environments has been examined. Once this threat has been determined, only then can agreement be reached on which elements of this wide-ranging threat are to be included under the concept of ERW. An accompanying paper expands on this in more detail; the present paper looks specifically at the unexploded ordnance (UXO) aspects of ERW.

Previous work in the development of the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)<sup>1</sup> for humanitarian demining activities and "Practical Technical Measures"<sup>2</sup> during micro-disarmament operations have led to internationally accepted definitions. These definitions should be used during ERW discussions to ensure consistency and clarity. Definitions used, or developed, during this paper are at Annex A for ease of reference.

## 2 Aim

The aim of this paper is to recommend definitional terms in the ERW area for adoption by the international community.

## 3 Definitions

### 3.1 Discussion

It is important that there is agreement on terms and definitions prior to the commencement of any further significant diplomatic negotiations on ERW. Confusion, or lack of agreement, on definitions means that it is difficult to further the negotiation process.

Already in the international community there is agreement on the definitions used within humanitarian mine action. These are contained within the International Mine Standard (IMAS) 04.10 Glossary of Terms<sup>3</sup>. These have been endorsed by the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group for Mine Action<sup>4</sup> and are now commonly used within the mine action community. As it is that community that has to deal with the explosive remnants of war at the operational level, it would seem appropriate to adopt their definitions as far as practicably possible at this stage of the process. (See 3.3 - Future Definitions).

---

<sup>1</sup> IMAS 04.10 Glossary. (<http://www.mineactionstandards.org/>).

<sup>2</sup> "Safe and Efficient Small Arms Collection and Destruction Programmes", *John Hughes Wilson and Adrian Wilkinson*, UNDP, July 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Available on the IMAS website at <http://www.mineactionstandards.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> 26 September 2001.

### 3.2 Consistency and clarity

The IMAS definitions were adopted using a “top down” approach. Existing definitions were identified from the following organisations (top first) and then adapted as necessary to more accurately reflect the usage within mine action:

- a) International Standardization Organisation (ISO);
- b) United Nations;
- c) NATO or other regional organizations; and
- d) National standards (USA and Europe).

Where there was not already an appropriate, existing definition, then the project User Focus Group<sup>5</sup> formulated and recommended an appropriate one.

For example, the IMAS definition of **unexploded ordnance** is:

*explosive ordnance that has been primed, fused, armed or otherwise prepared for use or used. It could have been fired, dropped, launched or projected yet remains unexploded either through malfunction or design, or for any other cause.*

Whilst the NATO Standardization Agreement (STANAG) refers to **unexploded explosive ordnance** and defines it as;

*explosive ordnance which has been primed, fused or otherwise prepared for action, and which has been fired, dropped, launched, projected or placed in such a manner as to constitute a hazard to operations, installations, personnel or material and remains unexploded either by malfunction or design or for any other cause.*<sup>6</sup>

This definition is inappropriate for mine action use as it specifically refers to “*constitute a hazard to operations, installations, personnel or material.*” In humanitarian mine action the impact goes wider than this as, for example, the presence of UXO may prevent a community from having access to its only water source. Whilst not a direct hazard to personnel, in this example it presents a gradual hazard if alternative water sources can not be found. Therefore the definition was amended accordingly.

This definition does not refer to laid minefields or stockpiled ammunition and explosives. The mines in minefields have, by definition, not failed as they are still waiting to be initiated. Likewise, stockpiles are excluded from this definition as they have not been *placed* in the explosive storehouse for offensive or defensive military reasons.

### 3.3 Future definitions

The adoption of future definitions by the ERW conference is not a barrier to the adoption of IMAS 04.10 as the definitional guide. There is an ongoing review and revision process for IMAS and additional definitions could be included with a very short lead-time.

---

<sup>5</sup> The UFG consisted of a group of internationally recognised technical experts in mine action and EOD.

<sup>6</sup> NATO STANAG, Glossary of Terms and Definitions, AAP-6(V) modified version 02 (updated 07.08.2000).

---

## 4 Conclusions

There is an important need to ensure that the international community adopts a common set of definitional terms for ERW in order to prevent confusion and misunderstanding during the CCW revision process.

There are a number of definitions already in use in the United Nations and regional organisations, but a common glossary has not been prepared or agreed.

## 5 Recommendations

The international community should consider the adoption of the definitional terms at Annex A. These definitional terms will be added to, or further refined, as work in this area develops.

Annexes:

A. Definitions

# Annex A

## Definitions and Terminology

### A.1

#### Amended Protocol II (APII)

Amended Protocol II (APII) to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW).

Note: It prohibits the use of all undetectable **anti-personnel mines** and regulates the use of wider categories of **mines, booby-traps** and other devices. For the purposes of the IMAS, Article 5 lays down requirements for the **marking** and **monitoring** of **mined areas**. Article 9 provides for the recording and use of information on **minefields** and **mined areas**. The Technical Annex provides guidelines on, inter alia, the recording of information and international signs for **minefields** and **mined areas**.

### A.2

#### ammunition

See **munition**

### A.3

#### anti-disturbance device

*to be developed*

### A.4

#### anti-handling device

a device intended to protect a **munition** and which is part of, linked to, attached or placed under the **munition** and which activates when an attempt is made to tamper with or otherwise intentionally disturb the **munition**. [Derived from the Mine Ban Treaty]

### A.5

#### anti-movement device

*to be developed*

### A.6

#### anti-personnel mines (APM)

a **mine** designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure or kill one or more persons.

Note: **Mines** designed to be detonated by the presence, proximity or contact of a vehicle as opposed to a person, that are equipped with anti-handling devices, are not considered **anti-personnel mines** as a result of being so equipped. [MBT]

### A.7

#### bomblet

see **submunition**

### A.8

#### booby trap

an **explosive** or non-explosive device, or other material, deliberately placed to cause casualties when an apparently harmless object is disturbed or a normally safe act is performed. [AAP-6]

### A.9

#### cluster bomb unit (CBU)

an expendable aircraft store composed of a dispenser and **sub-munitions**. [AAP-6]

a bomb containing and dispensing **sub-munitions** which may be **mines** (anti-personnel or anti-tank), penetration (runway cratering) bomblets, fragmentation bomblets etc.

**A.10****demining**

## humanitarian demining

activities which lead to the removal of **mine and UXO hazards**, including **technical survey**, mapping, **clearance**, **marking**, post-clearance documentation, **community mine action liaison** and the **handover** of **cleared land**. Demining may be carried out by different types of organizations, such as NGOs, commercial companies, national mine action teams or military units. Demining may be emergency-based or developmental.

Note: in IMAS standards and guides, mine and UXO clearance is considered to be just one part of the demining process.

Note: in IMAS standards and guides, demining is considered to be one component of mine action.

Note: in IMAS standards and guides, the terms demining and humanitarian demining are interchangeable.

**A.11****explosives**

a substance or mixture of substances which, under external influences, is capable of rapidly releasing energy in the form of gases and heat. [AAP-6]

**A.12****explosive ordnance**

all munitions containing **explosives**, nuclear fission or fusion materials and biological and chemical agents. This includes bombs and warheads; guided and ballistic missiles; artillery, mortar, rocket and small arms **ammunition**; all **mines**, torpedoes and depth charges; pyrotechnics; clusters and dispensers; cartridge and propellant actuated devices; electro-explosive devices; clandestine and improvised explosive devices; and all similar or related items or components explosive in nature. [AAP-6]

**A.13****explosive ordnance disposal (EOD)**

the **detection**, identification, evaluation, **render safe**, recovery and **disposal** of **UXO**. EOD may be undertaken:

- a) as a routine part of mine **clearance** operations, upon discovery of the UXO.
- b) to dispose of **UXO** discovered outside **mined areas**, (this may be a single **UXO**, or a larger number inside a specific area).
- c) to dispose of **explosive ordnance** which has become **hazardous** by damage or attempted destruction.

**A.14****humanitarian demining**

see demining. (In IMAS standards and guides, the terms demining and humanitarian demining are interchangeable.)

**A.15****International Mine Action Standards (IMAS)**

documents developed by the UN on behalf of the international community, which aim to improve safety and efficiency in **mine action** by providing guidance, by establishing principles and, in some cases, by defining international requirements and specifications.

Note: They provide a frame of reference which encourages, and in some cases requires, the sponsors and managers of mine action programmes and projects to achieve and demonstrate agreed levels of effectiveness and **safety**.

Note: They provide a common language, and recommend the formats and rules for handling data which enable the free exchange of important information; this information exchange benefits other programmes and projects, and assists the mobilisation, prioritisation and management of resources.

**A.16****lachrymatory ammunition**

lachrymatory **ammunition** contains chemical compounds that are designed to incapacitate by causing short-term tears or inflammation of the eyes.

**A.17****mine**

**munition** designed to be placed under, on or near the ground or other surface area and to be exploded by the presence, proximity or contact of a person or a vehicle. [Mine Ban Treaty]

**A.18****munition**

a complete device charged with **explosives**, propellants, pyrotechnics, initiating composition, or nuclear, biological or chemical material for use in military operations, including **demolitions**. [AAP-6].

Note: In common usage, “munitions” (plural) can be military weapons, ammunition and equipment.

**A.19****render safe procedure (RSP)**

the application of special **EOD** methods and tools to provide for the interruption of functions or separation of essential components to prevent an unacceptable **detonation**.

**A.20****risk**

combination of the probability of occurrence of **harm** and the severity of that **harm** [ISO Guide 51:1999(E)]

**A.21****self-destruction**

action generated by means of a device integral to the munition, which results in the complete destruction of the munition after a predetermined period of time.

**A.22****self-neutralisation**

action generated by means of a device integral to a **munition**, which renders the munition inoperative, but not necessarily safe to handle. In landmines, this process may be reversible. [AAP-6]

**A.23****submunition**

any **munition** that, to perform its task, separates from a parent **munition**. [AAP-6]

Note: For example **mines** or **munitions** that form part of a **cluster bomb**, artillery shell or missile payload.

**A.24****unexploded ordnance (UXO)**

explosive ordnance that has been primed, fuzed, armed or otherwise prepared for use or used. It may have been fired, dropped, launched or projected yet remains unexploded either through malfunction or design or for any other reason.

**A.25****United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)**

the focal point within the UN system for all mine-related activities.

Note: UNMAS is the office within the UN Secretariat responsible to the international community for the development and maintenance of International Mine Action Standards (IMAS).