

Information Data Sheet

Category Bombing Ranges

Description Bombing ranges primarily use practice and live bombs, although other munitions such as shells and rocket projectiles are also commonly used.

Bombing ranges have been established since WWI, when aerial strategic bombing was first used. Many practice bombing targets were located at airfields, allowing resident squadrons to practice close to their base.

During WWII, a significant number of new bombing ranges were established. This included live ranges (often along the coast), practice ranges and air-to-ground ranges which also involved the firing of projectiles from aircraft.

Despite being designated for practice bombs, many ranges also used live bombs, particularly during wartime.



Retrieving practice bombs from a range in an estuary during WWII

Hazard Bombing ranges provide a potential UXO hazard from live and practice bombs, in addition to other projectiles that may have failed to detonate during training. In the marine environment, in particular, the removal of unexploded bombs is less likely to have taken place.

Practice bombs contain a small explosive charge and produce a coloured powder plume for daylight operations and a light flash for night operations.

Typically, the greatest concentration of ordnance at an artillery range will be around any target/impact area, which are often recorded on range templates or evident from aerial photographs.

The inherent inaccuracy of practice bombing means that bombs can be found in areas surrounding designated bombing ranges. Inexperienced RAF bombing squadrons and cavalier American bomb-aimers often missed the target by some distance.

Today, there is a much more rigid protocol for clearing bombing ranges of UXO and, with improved equipment and techniques, clearance is far more thorough than on wartime ranges.