

# World War II-Era Mines Cleared During BALTOPS 2019



A British 1,000-pound, World War II-era mine detonates in the Baltic Sea after being discovered by the BALTOPS 2019 Mine Warfare Task Group and being rigged for detonation by a team of Norwegian explosive ordnancemen. U.S. Navy/Chief Mass Communication Specialist Shannon E. Renfroe

TODENDORF, Germany – German, Norwegian, Danish and U.S. Navy Sailors from the Baltic Operations (BALTOPS) exercise Mine Warfare Task Group came together to clear three World War II-era air-laid mines in the Baltic Sea on June 14, the Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center said in a release.

During complex mine warfare training to increase combined force integration and maritime capability among 11 nations, the task group identified three historical mines on the sea floor. The team detonated the mines after receiving approval from German authorities to increase safety and reduce risk to mariners operating in German territorial waters.

“This is an excellent example of the valuable training we gain from exercises like BALTOPS,” said U.S. Navy Rear Adm. Scott Robertson, commander of the BALTOPS 2019 Mine Warfare Task Group and commander of Naval Surface and Mine Warfighting Development Center.



An unexploded Mark I-VI mine lays at the bottom of the Baltic Sea. The mine was detected and classified by the Royal Norwegian Navy minesweeper HMNoS Otra (M351) and reacquired

and identified by Royal Danish Navy divers as part of BALTOPS 2019 Mine Warfare Task Group. U.S. Navy via Royal Danish Navy “Working together with our professional partners from Denmark and Norway to clear these undetonated, historical mines provides hands-on training and increases safety to mariners in the region by clearing hazardous material from the Baltic Sea. There is a good chance we will find more of these mines as the exercise continues, and it’s reassuring to know our international task group has the training and expertise necessary to safely dispose of them,” Robertson emphasized.

A team of mine warfare professionals aboard the Norwegian Alta-class MS HMNoS Otra (M351) detected and classified two mines, which were reacquired and identified by a team of Danish divers. Members of a Norwegian dive team discovered the third mine in another Mine Warfare Task Group’s training area off the coast of the Bundeswehr Military Training Area in Todendorf, Germany.

“German authorities willingly support the reduction of threat to navigation and shipping,” said Bundeswehr Personnel Exchange Program Officer Fregattenkapitaen Stefan Oeggel, who is assigned to the U.S. Navy’s Mine Countermeasures Division 31 and serves as a liaison for the Mine Warfare Task Group and Germany.

“Even after 75 years, explosives like these are dangerous, and we are happy to have the mines cleared as part of the exercise.”

Each of the cleared mines were World War II-era British air-laid, bottom mines (A Mk I–VI), each roughly 1,000 pounds.

“This has been a tremendous opportunity to continue to work with partner and allied forces that we frequently engage with throughout the region,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Jeff Demarco, commanding officer of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8 based in Rota, Spain, which serves as the Undersea Mine Countermeasures Commander within the BALTOPS Mine Warfare Task Group.

“Working with the Norwegian, Danish and Belgium clearance diving and AUV teams during training exercises is critical to our ability to maintain sea control in a complex theater.”

Nations participating in the BALTOPS 2019 Mine Warfare Task Group include Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, France and the United States.

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BALTOPS is an opportunity to promote partnerships, presence, and professionalism through an unambiguous display of strength in the Baltic region.