

## FG Begins Excavation of Civil War Explosives (Nigeria)

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**Echoes of the Nigerian-Biafran Civil war came alive in Abakaliki, yesterday with the disclosure by the Federal Government that it had identified at least 58 locations for excavation of explosive remnants of civil war in Ebonyi State. It also said that it had identified several other locations across the five states of the South-east geo-political zone.**

(20.04.2009)

Speaking during a courtesy call on Governor Martin Elechi of Ebonyi State, at the Government House, Abakaliki, yesterday, Chairman of the Committee on Clearance of Land Mines and Unexploded Ordnance (Humanitarian Demining) of Federal Ministry of Defence, Mr. Henry Ogundiya, noted that government had already commenced sensitisation tour of the de-mining exercise in the state and beyond.

Ogundiya said the team was in Ebonyi State based on the approval by President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua for the pre-enumeration of land mines' victims and the clearance of land mines and unexploded ordnances also known as explosive remnants of war arising from the last civil war.

He noted that explosive remnants of war described the wide range of explosive amunitions (unexploded or abandoned) which remain in an area after an armed conflict has ended. These according him, include artillery shells grenades, landmines, mortar shells, rockets and missiles as well as other forms of ordinance. He further noted that government decided to embark on the project after 39 years of civil war in the country because some explosives buried since then are still effective and dangerous to be living with citizens, stressing that some explosives can live for decades and could explode any time.

He, however, noted that some European countries like Poland are still clearing and removing ordinances used in the Second World War over 50 years after the war, adding that in the case of Nigeria, it is better late than never. "Nigeria being a signatory to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their destruction, it is mandatory for Nigeria to ensure the destruction of all anti-personnel mines in mined areas under her control," he stated.

Elechi who was represented by his deputy, Prof Chigozie Ogbu, stated that it is good for the exercise to take place in those areas that were seen as major targets during the war and urged them to always be careful in clearing and demining of the explosive so that it will not affect the citizens.

Elechi also pledged his support for the team, adding that the state will provide liaison officers in all the identified communities where the exercise will take as well as other logistics.

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[<<< zurück zu: News](#)

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