

VINEYARD GAZETTE

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Possible Friday Explosions As Navy Clears Noman's

Residents along the south shore of the Island may hear loud explosions in the coming months due to an operation conducted by the U.S. Navy to clear and remove unexploded ordnance on Noman's Land left over from training exercises during World War II.

David Barney, base realignment and closure coordinator for the U.S. Navy, said this week the objective is to identify and clear military ordnance that may have been exposed since the last clearing operation in 2003.

Preliminary field work began last Tuesday and clearance work is expected to last until October, he said.

Mr. Barney said a comprehensive search of Noman's will be conducted and all items found will be made safe by detonating them. Explosions may be audible during demolition operations; detonations will always occur on Fridays.

The U.S. Navy drew darts from some Islanders last month when it conducted a controlled burn on Noman's to clear vegetation in anticipation of the ordnance removal program. Although the operation was necessary, both to uncover munitions and to keep shrubs from taking over grasslands which provide habitat for rare and endangered birds, Islanders complained that the Navy did not do enough to alert the public of the burn operation.

To avoid similar confusion during the detonation of ordnance, the U.S. Navy put out a press release this week and also notified Island towns in writing.