



## Potentially Explosive Ordnance in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita and O'Neill Regional Park

The purpose of this brochure is to notify residents and recreational visitors of the potential hazards of possible explosive ordnance in the City of Rancho Santa Margarita, including the O'Neill Regional Park (all located in Orange County, California). The city and park are adjacent to and in some areas may overlap portions of the former Trabuco Bombing Range, which operated from 1944 through 1956.

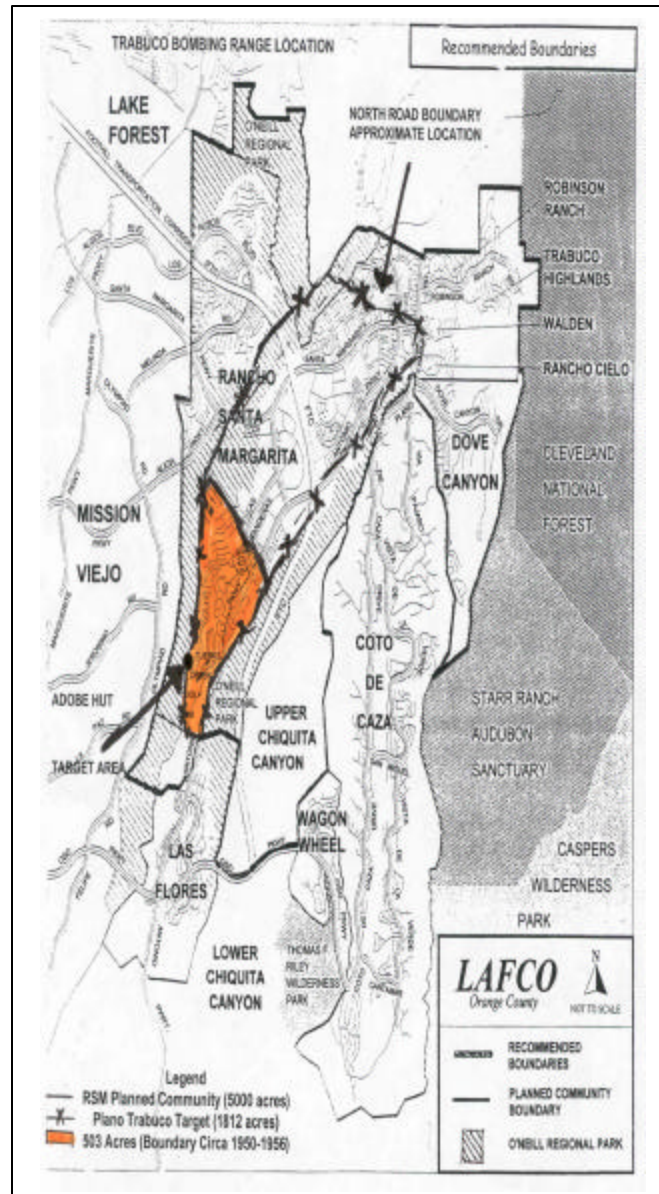
In this brochure, "ordnance" refers specifically to the practice bombs and practice rockets dropped on the bombing range during its use by the military.

### Former Military Use

In February 1944, the Department of Defense acquired 1800 acres of land within the present day 5,000 acre Rancho Santa Margarita Planned Community. From 1944 through 1956, the Navy used the site as an aircraft bombing and gunnery practice range in connection with El Toro Marine Corps Air Station. The pilots dropped small practice bombs that contained an explosive charge designed to create a puff of smoke upon impact. In addition, they fired practice rockets that did not contain an explosive charge. In 1956 the property reverted to grazing and farmland.

### Past Removal Activities

The US Army Corps of Engineers conducted inspections and oversaw ordnance removal from this site. The practice bombs and practice rockets were found shallowly buried or at ground surface. The most intense concentration of ordnance was located within a 500-ft



radius of the adobe hut near the San Francisco Solano marker, which is located within the boundaries of O'Neill Regional Park.

Records indicate the Army Corps of Engineers removed all surface fragments and discarded debris from the areas planned for residential and commercial development in the city of Rancho Santa Margarita. It is unknown whether the park and wilderness areas were cleared.

During residential developments, the soil was turned over and material 2 to 3 feet below the surface were passed through a 4" screen. The area was swept using a metal detector capable of detecting down to 2 feet. Letters were sent to residents informing them of the former military use, including a description of ordnance and hot lines to call in case of further discovery.

### Public Safety Campaign

Although inspections and ordnances removal has occurred, it is important that children and adults who reside and recreate in this area be aware of the possibility of finding ordnance, especially items that may resurface after heavy rains and erosion. These items, though only practice devices and not live ordnance, may still contain small explosive charges that could burn or cause fatal injuries if picked up or otherwise disturbed.

The Department of Toxic Substances Control, the County of Orange, City of Rancho Santa Margarita, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers are collaborating to further ensure the safety of the public through educational materials such as this brochure. In addition, California disclosure laws have been established to ensure current and new homeowners are made aware of ordnance in the surrounding areas.

## What to Do if you Find a Suspicious Item

If you find an item that looks like the ordnance shown in the photos, or any other suspicious item, *DO NOT* touch or attempt to move it. Any disturbance may cause it to explode, resulting in injury or death. If found, call "911." If you must leave the location where the ordnance was found, place a marker near the area with something readily available to help you and the authorities find the item upon your return.

More detailed information about this formerly used defense site can be found at the information repository located at the Orange County Public Library, 30902 La Promesa, Rancho Santa Margarita, CA 92688, (949) 459-6094.

**NEVER** attempt to remove any piece of ordnance as a souvenir. Although it may appear harmless, it still may be very much alive. In fact, with age and exposure, explosive ordnance can become unstable and more likely to explode if disturbed.

### For more information:

If you have questions about the information in this brochure, contact any of the following:

Army Corp of Engineers  
Philip Benoit  
(213) 452-3983

Department of Toxic Substances Control  
Leticia Hernandez  
Public Participation Specialist  
(714) 484-5488



*Examples of ordnance found at other formerly used defense sites.*

