

1. Minefields were laid in many parts of the world during World War II. Many of these minefields have been swept, others have had routes swept through them. These routes are mostly marked by buoys and have been used safely by shipping for many years. Due to the lapse in time, navigation through these minefields whether they have been swept or not is now considered no more dangerous from mines than from any other of the usual hazards to navigation. But in the unswept areas a real danger still exists with regard to anchoring, fishing or any form of submarine or seabed activity. Furthermore, uncharted wrecks and shoals may lie in these areas, some of which are not covered by modern surveys.

Former mine danger areas are mentioned in appropriate volumes of *Admiralty Sailing Directions*, with full details in an appendix. Even in swept waters and routes there is a remote risk that mines may still remain, having failed to respond to orthodox sweeping methods. Mariners are therefore advised only to anchor in port approaches and established anchorages. In an emergency it is better to anchor in a swept route rather than in unswept waters.

2. Although unlikely, there remains a remote possibility of drifting mines being sighted in NZ waters. All drifting mines should be reported immediately to the naval authorities via the coast radio station. The time of sighting and position of the mine is important in the reporting information so that an appropriate warning to other shipping can be broadcast. A drifting mine is best left for the naval experts to deal with. Rifle fire could pierce the casing and sink the mine without causing it to explode. It could then, if it is near the coast, get washed up on a beach or end up in a trawl in a lethal state.

3. Mines, torpedoes, depth charges, bombs and other explosive missiles are sometimes picked up in trawls, often in waters comparatively distant from New Zealand. Explosive weapons are dangerous even if they have been in the water for many years, and the following guidance is given with them:

- (a) A suspected explosive weapon should not be landed on deck if it has been observed while the trawl is still outboard. The trawl should be lowered and where possible towed clear of regular fishing grounds before cutting away the net as necessary.

The position and depth of water where the mine was cut away should be passed to the naval authorities via the coast radio station or direct to Headquarters Joint Forces New Zealand 0800 HQJFNZ (0800 475-369) or +64 4 529 6333.

- (b) In the event of the weapon not being detected until the contents of the trawl have been discharged on deck, the master of the fishing vessel must decide whether to rid his ship of the weapon by passing it over the side or to make for the nearest port informing the HQJFNZ and NZ Police via the coast radio station without delay. His decision will depend on the circumstances, but should be guided by the following points:

- (i) Great care should be taken to avoid bumping the weapon;
- (ii) If retained onboard it should be stowed on deck, away from heat and vibration, firmly chocked and lashed to prevent movement;
- (iii) It should be kept covered up and damped down (This is important because any explosive which may have become exposed to the atmosphere is liable to become very sensitive to shock if allowed to dry out.);
- (iv) The weapon should be kept onboard for as short a time as possible;
- (v) If within two or three hours' steaming of the coastline the safest measure will generally be to run towards the nearest port and lie a safe distance offshore to await the arrival of a bomb disposal unit. Under no circumstances should the vessel bring the mine or weapon into harbour.

- (c) **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should attempts be made to clean the weapon for identification purposes, open it or tamper with it in any way;

- (d) A ship with an explosive weapon onboard, or in her gear, should warn other ships in the vicinity giving her position and, if applicable, intended position of jettison.

4. Re-moored mines which have drifted in from deeper water trailing a length of cable, are likely to become dangerous should the cable foul some obstruction on the bottom. In this case the mine may not appear on the surface at all states of the tide. Such mines should be reported in the same way as drifting mines.

5. **UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES** should an attempt be made to recover a mine and bring it to port, and rewards formerly paid to mariners for such recovery have been discontinued.

For further information refer to *The Mariner's Handbook*, (NP100), *Admiralty Charts and Publications*.