



When a peat bog becomes a safety risk

In anticipation of its environmental restoration, a peat bog in the Bernese Jura has been recently examined for any remains of firing activity carried out there in the past. Before the environmental restoration project can take place, the area needs to be cleared, and experts are analysing and assessing the extent of the work involved.

A peat bog in the Bernese Jura – the “Marais de la Chaux” near Tramelan to be precise – has suddenly become the focus of safety checks. How so? This area of peat bog had previously been used as an artillery firing range and between 1963 and 1972 as an auxiliary firing range for aviation units. It is now to be comprehensively environmentally restored over the next two years by private companies contracted by the Canton of Bern. In view of the impending work, S+T was mandated by the Spatial Planning and Environment branch of the DDPS General Secretariat to conduct an initial assessment of the risk posed by ammunition remains. Magnetometers and metal detectors are being used to examine specific areas for test-drilling for blinds. This work is being carried out jointly with KAMIR, the centre of excellence for explosive ordnance disposal. Already, fragments and rounds have been discovered, including the first blind, which had to be destroyed on site. The next phase is to conduct a thorough risk analysis in order to obtain clarity about the methods, scope, directives and protective measures to be adopted for the construction work.

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Fig. 1: Detecting sub-surface blinds



Fig. 2: Contactless destruction of blind
(30 mm high-explosive aircraft cannon round)