

Bomb Disposal platoon

A KORERO Report

BOMB-DISPOSAL PLATOONS work from three of the main centres in New Zealand — Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. They have never had to dispose of enemy bombs, since none has been dropped on this country, but they have work to do which is just as dangerous. They dispose of naval mines which are washed up on the coast or are sighted close inshore.

Just in case you should be inclined to underestimate the risks in this work, consider this little story. Members of a bomb-disposal section were lying on the top of a 200-ft.-high cliff watching a mine drifting inshore. Part of the mooring cable was still attached to the mine, and apparently this caught in a reef. Anyway, whether that was the cause or not, the mine exploded. The men on top of the cliff were spattered with water and other debris, and the windows in a house three-quarters of a mile away were broken.

Another story which the bomb-disposal people tell may be considered to prove that there are no risks in the work at all—or you may think it proves rather that a certain Maori who lives in an isolated spot on the New Zealand coast is a very lucky fellow.

A mine was reported at this remote coastal place. When the bomb-disposal

men arrived they found that the pakeha population consisted of the school-teacher and his wife. So they asked the school-teacher where the mine was. "Tied to a tree," he replied. "A Maori found it and tied it up."

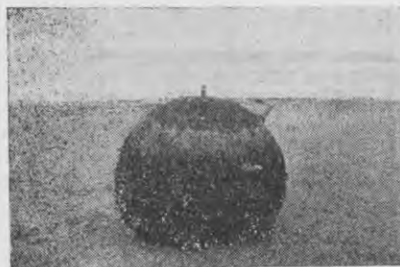
And when the Maori was asked to elaborate on this, he related the facts, in strictly chronological order.

"I get the cream," he said. "I put it in the punt and I start to row across the bay. Then I see something bobbing up and down and I say: 'That the mine.' So I get the wire and tow him in and tie him up to the tree. And then," he concluded, "I run like hell!"

It happened that the Maori had attached the wire to the only part of the mine it was possible to do so without exploding it!

The bomb-disposal men counter-mined this mine—that is, they blew it up with H.E. And when they turned over the mechanism plate which remained after the explosion, a huge crab, almost as big as a man's hand, scuttled off from under it—to safety.

All the men in the bomb-disposal platoons are volunteers, and all except one N.C.O. in each platoon are non-mobilized personnel. The platoons are divided into sections and subsections, and one subsection in each district is detailed for duty each week. That means that one subsection is on call each week. If a mine is washed up in the Auckland platoon's district this week, the men of the duty subsection are the men who will dispose of it. When the bomb-disposal men are away on a job they are on Army pay, with no family allowances unless the job takes more than seven days. Some employers, of course, continue to pay their men while they are away, but there are some who don't, and for their employees in the bomb-



An enemy mine.