

3-23-1998

DDASaccident126

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 15/05/2006	Accident number: 126
Accident time: 17:15	Accident Date: 23/03/1998
Where it occurred: Balla Block, Farah Road, Farah Province, Balabolouk	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Inadequate survey (?)	Secondary cause: Management/control inadequacy (?)
Class: Missed-mine accident	Date of main report: [No date recorded]
ID original source: none	Name of source: MAPA/UNOCHA
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: grenade	Ground condition: sandy
Date record created: 13/02/2004	Date last modified: 21/02/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 1

Map details

Longitude:	Latitude:
Alt. coord. system:	Coordinates fixed by:
Map east:	Map north:
Map scale: not recorded	Map series:
Map edition:	Map sheet:
Map name:	

Accident Notes

inadequate investigation (?)

mine/device found in "cleared" area (?)

Accident report

An accident report was made on behalf of the UN MAC and made briefly available in September 1999. The following summarises its content.

The accident occurred on land described as a "sandy and flat" battlefield. The victim had been a deminer for five years and had last attended a revision course five months before. It was eight days since the last time off. The device was identified as an M77 grenade [in a letter to the UN MAC dated 4th October 1998].

The accident area had been cleared in the previous year and various UXO had been found, including half-buried mortars and M77 grenades. A seasonal wind had buried them. The

victim was walking over the cleared area at 17:15 from his "base camp" when he initiated the device. He "lost" both legs and suffered superficial injuries on his abdomen and hands.

The victim was treated on the site, then evacuated to the ICRC hospital in Kandahar, leaving the site at 17:50.

The Team Leader and Section Leader stated that, in their opinion, battle areas should be checked with "a locator" in order to prevent such accidents recurring.

The victim stated that he thought it probable that his foot touched a UXO while he was walking and it exploded.

Conclusion

The investigators believed that the area was only searched visually, and that this was not the appropriate search method for the area [see Analysis].

In an interview with an operations officer at the demining group, he stated that the device was either an M77 grenade or a "75mm Chinese type projectile" according to the pieces he found.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that on all battlefields where there could be "sub-munitions or UXO covered in soil...[that] will pose a threat to people walking in the area MUST not be classified as battlefield". They should be classed as AP minefields and cleared appropriately. They added that the accident area should be rechecked "maybe by dogs".

Victim Report

Victim number: 162	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: no
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Arm

minor Body

minor Hands

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Leg Below knee

Leg Above knee

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

The victim's injuries were summarised as a "right leg upper ankle joint amputation, a left leg upper knee joint amputation, and multiple superficial injuries to his right hand.

A mine accident casualty report included a sketch in which both legs were damaged but no amputation was recorded. The field document recorded the injury as "fatal" [which it clearly was not, given the hospital activity afterwards].

A hospital admission form included a sketch with both lower legs amputated. At the time the victim's pulse was recorded at 150, his BP at 80/30 and his Respiration at 26/min.

A medical assessment listed injuries as: "traumatic amputation of right leg. Injury of left leg - open compound and complicated fracture with massive lesions of soft tissue behind the proximal tibia, no circulation to the leg and foot. Necessary to do Ax....no nervous function."

The injuries were summarised as "serious crushing injury foot and ankle" to the right leg and a "serious crushing injury" to the left leg.

He was described as "critically ill [illegible] couple of days unstable with low BP and very low Het [illegible] now but oozing and bad smell from bandages. Therefore:

OT: DBR (R) [illegible] STUMP

COD (L) [illegible] STUMP

Necrotic muscle and some skin excised.

Antibiotics - continue penicillin IV

[Unfortunately the handwriting deteriorates.]

By 27th March the victim was described as "much better".

On 29th March his pulse was 180 and BP 96/60. DBR and COD on both stumps was performed.

On 31st the suggestion of brain damage was raised with BP recorded at 50/0 with no "peripheral pulse". Adrenalin was administered and circulation and breathing recovered. Three friends visited him - a doctor, a paramedic and a deminer colleague - and the hospital noted that none of them were willing to donate blood. The notes recorded that the blood was "finished" as the patient began to wake up. Oxygen and painkillers were administered.

The insurers were informed on March 24th 1988 that the victim suffered amputation of his right foot above the ankle and his left leg above the knee, and multiple injuries to his right arm.

Undated photographs of the victim showed him with his stumps exposed and partly healed. His right leg was amputated 15cm below the point of the knee. His left leg was amputated about the same height above the knee. There was no sign of hand injury.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as "Inadequate survey" because the original clearance of the area had been of devices on the surface only because "survey" had determined that this was the threat. The secondary cause is listed as a "*Management control inadequacy*" because the responsibility for ensuring that adequate clearance and surveys are carried out lies with management.

The area had been subject to a Battle Area Clearance. Some might think that a visual clearance of surface devices was not real clearance, but in Afghanistan under UN direction, BAC was often done as "surface" clearance with only visible ordnance dealt with. In areas where ordnance was known to have been buried by soil movement, demining was meant to occur. It seems that this did not happen at the site, so the site was wrongly classified during survey.

Gathering of medical treatment and compensation detail was prevented by the UN programme manager who denied all access to records in September 1999.

The agency that was used to make investigations for the UN MAC (based in Pakistan) at this time was frequently constrained by lack of funds, staff and transport. At times their movement was constrained by safety concerns. As a result, investigations were frequently delayed by weeks, meaning that an assessment of the site at the time of the accident was impossible.