

10-18-1997

DDASaccident142

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

| | |
|--|--|
| Report date: 16/05/2006 | Accident number: 142 |
| Accident time: not recorded | Accident Date: 18/10/1997 |
| Where it occurred: Charkhab Village, Bagrami District, Kabul Province | Country: Afghanistan |
| Primary cause: Management/control inadequacy (?) | Secondary cause: Inadequate training (?) |
| Class: Handling accident | Date of main report: [No date recorded] |
| ID original source: none | Name of source: MAPA/UNOCHA |
| Organisation: Name removed | |
| Mine/device: white phosphorus | Ground condition: demolition site (explosives) |
| Date record created: 13/02/2004 | Date last modified: 13/02/2004 |
| No of victims: 2 | No of documents: 2 |

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 (?)
inadequate equipment (?)
inadequate training (?)
request for long handtool (?)
safety distances ignored (?)
visor not worn or worn raised (?)
inconsistent statements (?)

Accident report

An investigation on behalf of the UN MAC was carried out and its report made briefly available. The following summarises its content.

Victim No.1 had been a Team Leader for six months with the demining group involved [previous experience not recorded]. Victim No.2 had been a deminer for three years. The accident occurred in an area described as a "hard hillside". Both victims had attended a revision course one month before, and both had been on leave 44 days before.

The investigators determined that the victims went to check the Central Disposal Site. While checking that no UXOs were left (by hand) they uncovered some phosphorous which spontaneously ignited in contact with air.

The Team Leader said the accident was the victims' fault because they should not have touched the material.

The Section Leader said he was too far away to see whether the victims were working properly but they caused the accident by touching the material.

The victim deminer said it was his fault that he touched the material.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the victims should have used a rake/stake to turn over the ground instead of their hands, and that the accident was caused by poor command and control by the command group.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that after demolition of UXOs, the site should be checked with a rake with a handle at least two metres long, that UXOs found during clearance should be reported to a Battle Area Clearance team for disposal, and that only one person should check the demolition site.

Victim Report

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 182 | Name: Name removed |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: supervisory | Fit for work: yes |
| Compensation: 7,143Rs | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Helmet | Protection used: none |
| Thin, short visor | |

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Eyes

minor Face

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

Victim No.1's injuries were summarised as: burns on face and foreign bodies in both eyes.

A photograph showed superficial burns to the left side of his face.

A claim to the insurers was submitted saying that Victim No.1 had "a burn to his face damaging his eyesight in a way that was corrected by spectacles. A 20% vision disability" was assessed on 6th November 1997, when he returned to work.

Compensation of 7,143Rs was awarded (1.43% disabled).

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 183 | Name: Name removed |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: deminer | Fit for work: not known |
| Compensation: not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Helmet | Protection used: none |
| Thin, short visor | |

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Face

minor Hand

severe Eyes

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

Victim No.2's injuries were summarised as: burns on face and left hand: foreign body in left eye.

A photograph showed superficial burns to the fingers of his left hand.

A claim to the insurers was submitted saying that Victim No.2 had suffered 80% loss of vision in both eyes and was still off duty on 4th November 1997. He also had 1st degree burns to his left hand.

No record of compensation was found for Victim No.2 in June 1998.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as a "*Management control inadequacy*" because the tools required were not supplied and one of the individuals concerned was a field supervisor.

Whether a rake is the right tool for these circumstances is not clear. The identification and destruction of phosphorous filled devices requires specific training and its lack was not addressed by the investigators. The victims believed they were working properly whereas the

routines in place were clearly ill-thought out. Responsibility for providing safe SOPs lies with management, along with responsibility for ensuring that field supervisors are appropriately trained and apply those SOPs. The secondary cause is listed as *"Inadequate training"*.

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.

Gathering of further accident and medical treatment detail was prevented by the UN programme manager who denied all access to records in September 1999. Access has continued to be denied up to the date of completion of this version of the database.

Related papers

The demining group submitted a report saying that "While trying to place charge on a UXO, the charge exploded" and this was how the men were injured.

2000 MAC manager comment

The UN MAC manager in 1999 commented, "All demining NGOs and teams are well aware that they are not to deal with devices which they have not been formally taught to deal with. This was clearly a case where unqualified personnel undertook a UXO disposal task for which they were not qualified and did so fully aware that they were not authorised to deal with these types of munitions."