

12-23-1998

DDASaccident165

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 17/05/2006	Accident number: 165
Accident time: 08:27	Accident Date: 23/12/1997
Where it occurred: Mok Heoun, Route 502, Banteay Meanchey Province	Country: Cambodia
Primary cause: Unavoidable (?)	Secondary cause: Unavoidable (?)
Class: Excavation accident	Date of main report: [No date recorded]
ID original source: none	Name of source: CMAC
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: AP blast (unrecorded)	Ground condition: electromagnetic hard
Date record created: 14/02/2004	Date last modified: 14/02/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 1

Map details

Longitude:	Latitude:
Alt. coord. system: MF M2822	Coordinates fixed by:
Map east:	Map north:
Map scale:	Map series:
Map edition:	Map sheet:
Map name:	

Accident Notes

inadequate equipment (?)
no independent investigation available (?)
squatting/kneeling to excavate (?)

Accident report

At the time of the accident the demining group operated in a two-man drill whereby one deminer used the detector and marked any signals while the other looked for tripwires, cut undergrowth and excavated any detector readings. A third deminer may have been resting [it is not known whether the group had changed from three-man to two-man teams at this time].

A brief accident report in Khmer was found at the country MAC in January 1999. The translated content is summarised here.

The accident occurred on the bank of a pond that was drying up. The ground was very hard and minerals in the ground made clearance operations difficult. The platoon was clearing a path to the pond so that the operation had access to water. An ex-Khmer Rouge soldier informed the platoon that a large number of Type 72A mines had been laid around the pond and the water had been poisoned with insecticide. Two deminers from the same demining group had accidents in the area on 28th August and 19th November 1997.

On the morning of the accident the victim was working as a prodder man on an upward incline of 30°. The detector man got a reading, marked it and called to the victim to investigate. As the victim was excavating he saw a white metal tube about the size of a finger but did not recognise what it was. He continued to prod around it and he initiated the mine with the tip of his prodder.

The victim suffered many superficial injuries on his arms, thighs, on his face and on his chest. His eyes were filled with dust but were probably saved from more serious injury by the safety spectacles, as indicated by the debris found on the lenses. [He lost an eye later.]

An investigation of the accident site revealed that the ground was very hard and there was evidence of excavating by working from cracks in the ground. Considerable force was needed to break the ground.

The victim gave a statement saying that he had to squat on the slope and so the explosion occurred at chest height. He said he was able to walk away from the accident site but was aware of dust in his eyes.

Conclusion

The crater measured 14cm deep and 22cm wide, but no evidence of a mine was found. For this reason the report concluded that the victim had detonated a B40 (RPG) with the tip of his prodder, or the victim prodded onto a Type 72a and all the fragments were blown into the pond behind him. The investigators could not be certain because no mine fragments were found.

The investigators decided that the victim had not softened the ground with water, had failed to prod at 30°, had not prodded at 2cm intervals and had used excessive force. The victim did not have enough room to lie down to prod and so had to squat. The investigators believed that if he had been lying down he might have suffered more severe injuries.

Victim Report

Victim number: 210	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: yes
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: 1 hour 33 minutes
Protection issued: Safety spectacles	Protection used: Safety spectacles

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Arms

minor Chest

minor Face

minor Legs

severe Eye

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Eye

COMMENT

See medical report.

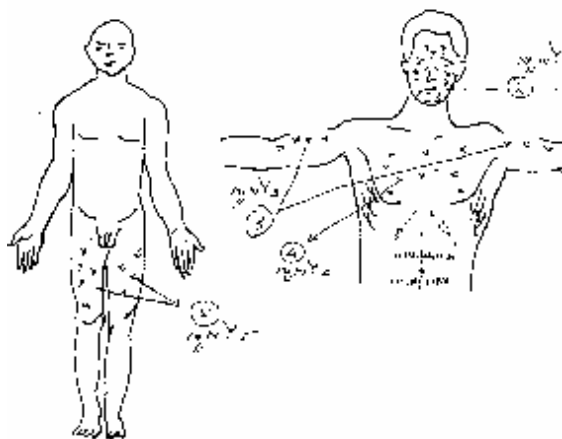
Medical report

The victim's eyes were both swollen and full of dust and sand, and he had minor injuries to his chest, upper arms and thighs. The accident occurred at 08:27 and he arrived at Mongkul Borey Hospital at 10:00.

A doctor's note in the file stated that the victim's right eye became infected by dust from the explosion and it was removed on 27th December 1997 to prevent infection spreading to the other eye.

The victim left hospital on the 30th January 1998. The doctor was of the opinion that he was able to work.

This medical sketch accompanied a compensation claim.



Analysis

The primary and secondary cause of this accident are listed as "*Unavoidable*" because it seems likely that the victim was working according to his SOPs when the accident occurred. The investigators decided that the victim had been working improperly but their failure to determine whether the explosion involved a fragmentation or a blast device does not give confidence in their experience. [A fragmentation device would almost certainly have caused fragmentation injury if any of the associated blast hit the victim, so a blast device or fuze is assumed.]

There is some evidence that the victim was not provided with appropriate tools and was expected to work in a situation that made an accident likely.

The investigators stressed the belief that the victim was better off squatting than lying prone and did not criticise his breach of the group's published SOPs. This illustrates a schism in the group's management. The group's office management and many Technical Advisors said the deminers must work one way, while the field supervisors allowed them to work in another.