

1-13-2000

DDASaccident264

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 15/03/2004	Accident number: 264
Accident time: 11:50	Accident Date: 13/01/2000
Where it occurred: Shtupeqi Imadh, Karagac Distrct, Nr Peja	Country: Kosovo
Primary cause: Unavoidable (?)	Secondary cause: Unavoidable (?)
Class: Survey accident	Date of main report: [No date recorded]
ID original source: JR/KC/JF	Name of source: KMACC
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: BLU-97 submunition	Ground condition: agricultural (recent) hard
Date record created: 18/02/2004	Date last modified: 18/02/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 3

Map details

Longitude:	Latitude:
Alt. coord. system: GR: DN322 278	Coordinates fixed by: GPS
Map east:	Map north:
Map scale:	Map series: KFOR Misc 014
Map edition: 1	Map sheet: 3080
Map name: 1:50,000	

Accident Notes

protective equipment not worn (?)

metal-detector not used (?)

Accident report

There were two victims involved in this accident but one was a civilian (a child) and his details were not recorded by the investigator and so are not included in this database.

A Mine Accident Report was prepared for the country MACC and made available in August 2000. The following summarises its content.

The demining group were asked by UNHCR to conduct a Level 1 survey in the area where there had been a "cluster munitions strike". The group did not know whether any other groups had surveyed the area and did not refer to the IMSMA database at the MACC where relevant

survey information was already recorded. Work began at the site at 10:20 on the day of the accident.

The Level 1 survey involved being led around the site by local people and shown visible BLU-97s. The site Supervisor was being shown one area while an eight year old boy led the Team Leader "to another item beneath the snow just behind a 1.5m high wooden slatted fence". A photograph showed a snow covered path flanked by fences of wooden slats wired together with spaces between each slat.

The Team Leader could not see any devices and had turned to call the Site Supervisor at 11:50 when a BLU-97 on the other side of the fence detonated. The boy "suffered a cut nose" and the Team Leader "was deafened in his right ear and received minor metal fragmentation... to his lower right calf".

The Team Leader's injuries were described as:

"Minor metal fragmentation in the right calf (4-5 fragments according to the x-ray) and the victim was deafened in his right ear. The victim has to investigate his hearing later on and probably has [to] remove the fragments from his leg surgically".

The Team Medic gave emergency treatment within two minutes and the victim was taken by road to the hospital in Peja in an "emergency vehicle".

During the investigation, fragments from a BLU-97 were found, confirming the type of device involved.

The investigator decided that the direct cause of the accident was "probably" the boy touching the fence. The "parachute drogue [could] have fallen on the fence and frozen to the fencepost in winter or some part of the BLU was touching the fence..." The victim was a relatively inexperienced Team Leader with only 3 months and 3 days service. He had attended a refresher course at the start of January 2000. The CASEVAC procedures worked well and the demining group's SOPs were followed.

After the accident the remaining visible devices were marked "in order to be destroyed ASAP" and the remaining area was "marked off". The ICRC was carrying out Mine-Awareness activities at the time of the investigation and the demining group had held a briefing for all their teams "on the lessons learnt from the accident".

Conclusion

The investigator concluded that the "BLU was embedded in the frozen ground to a depth of about 25cm and as a result the force of the explosion was contained". Ground-frost was reported to be 10cm deep at the time of the explosion. The lack of severe injury was attributed to the shaped-charge being projected in another direction and "pure luck".

Recommendations

The investigator recommended that Level 1 survey information gathering "should not allow any local to point out or identify and kind of Mine/UXO or a possible area of Mine/UXOs other than from a distance...". The investigator added that all demining groups should gather IMSMA information "before departing for a task".

Victim Report

Victim number: 338

Name: Name removed

Age: 37

Gender: Male

Status: surveyor

Fit for work: yes

Compensation: not made available

Time to hospital: 50 minutes

Protection issued: None

Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

severe Hearing

severe Leg

COMMENT

No medical report was made available. The victim's DOB was recorded as 29/10/63.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as "*Unavoidable*" because the victim was working to approved SOPs and the detonation was initiated by a member of the public.

The investigator raised questions about allowing the public to get close to devices during Level 1 survey, but the device was unexpectedly buried and it is likely that neither the boy nor the supervisor were aware of the risks they took.

The report demonstrated an unusually thorough and critical approach to accident investigation. The Mine Action Co-ordination Centre which carried out the investigation was not engaged in demining, and this may (in part) explain the unusually objective nature of the investigation.

Related papers

In December 2001 the MACC reported that the Victim was recovered and working for another demining group as a Team Leader but he was still "hard of hearing" in right ear.

An internal preliminary accident report was found on file. It is reproduced below, edited for anonymity.

Internal preliminary accident report

The following accident took place 17 km west of Peja, GR 322 278 at the village of Shtupeqi Imadh on Thursday 13 January at 1150 hours. I am purposely keeping this brief as fuller report will be produced for the MACC with a copy being sent to the UNHCR Security Officer over this weekend. Furthermore, the accident was relatively minor, though there are important lessons to be learnt.

The Peja 'A' Team had been informed by UNHCR in Peja of suspected munitions in a village to the west of Peja. A contact name was given and on Thursday 13th the team proceeded with an international supervisor to the site. The contact was made and a level 1 survey was undertaken.

The team leader's suspicion from the contact's description of the area being a Cluster Bomb Unit was well founded as the local people showed the team 2 munitions and the location of a possible third. As the supervisor investigated the possible third, a young boy led the team leader down a safe path, close to a newly built school, to the location of another possible munition. The boy said it was on the other side of the fence. Nothing was visible as the ground was covered in snow. As the team leader turned to call the supervisor, the boy pulled back one of the fence slats which activated the submunition.

Further detail from the investigation will be forthcoming. The boy received a minor cut to his nose and the team leader a small amount of fragmentation to his right leg as well as loss of hearing in his right ear. The reasons for the accident were clear in today's investigation and I re-iterate that a full report will be made tomorrow. But, this accident was no fault of the team leader and deemed unpreventable under the circumstances.

[Unsigned]

Statements

A statement from the victim was on file. It has been edited for anonymity.

The Victim

On 12 January 2000 we have taken one task from UNHCR from contact person the president of the humanitarian organisation "Mother Teresa". He told us that the school have to begin soon and in the school garden are identified some cluster bombs.

On 13 January we all went to [Demining group] offices to get our tasks. The B Team went to do the clearance of the house in the town and A Team went to a village called Shypeq I Madh to do the task.

In a group supervised by [Name 1] were two EOD operators, me and [Name 2] and the driver, and two medics. Before we went to the school we contacted some persons on the way and they gave us a young boy around 13-14 years old.

We parked the cars in a way that in case of emergency we can act quickly, and also the medics were in their positions. Then we start to identify the cluster bombs that were not covered in snow. We identified four cluster bombs and then [Name 1] and [Name 2] photographed the place and I continued in searching for fifth bomb. In that moment the boy called me to and I walked towards him. The boy told me that the cluster bomb is over the school fences in a distance 1 to 1.5m away. I told the boy do not touch anything because there was a snow. In a mean time I walked towards [Name 1] who was around 15-20m away, to tell him that the place was covered with snow. Soon after I left I heard an explosion and I lost my consciousness without knowing what is happening. Probably the boy touched the fences and bomb exploded.

Later on I realised that my right ear was ringing and I saw blood in my right leg and I had terrible pain. The medic came and they cleaned up my wounds and they also noticed some metal pieces in my leg. [Name 1] informed our base in Prishtina and we went in Hos.