

8-5-2000

DDASaccident363

Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database
AID

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 19/05/2006	Accident number: 363
Accident time: 10:40	Accident Date: 05/08/2000
Where it occurred: Aab-I Khoban area, Sabzak area, Ghor province	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Other (?)	Secondary cause: Other (?)
Class: Hostile action	Date of main report: 15/08/2000
ID original source: MCPA (date inferred)	Name of source: Other
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: not appropriate	Ground condition: not applicable
Date record created: 21/02/2004	Date last modified: 21/02/2004
No of victims: 8	No of documents: 3

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 communications (?)

Accident report

Various documents pertaining to the events were obtained and the following introduction summarises some of the content. The introduction is followed by the Board of Inquiry (BoI) investigation document edited for anonymity. A number of witness statements are reproduced under Statements.

Introduction

The Board of Inquiry held their first meeting at RMAC Herat at 17:00 hours on 09 August 2000 in which the Director of MACA explained the aim and objectives of the board. The aims were listed as:

- a. determine the date, time, place and circumstances surrounding the [event];

- b. establish the identity of the victims and report any injury to other OMAR staff and the extent of damage to/loss of property;
- c. determine the effect of the losses on the operational capability of OMAR;
- d. determine nature of the victims' mission and whether it was correctly authorised;
- e. report on any weakness in the system or method of control which may have contributed to the [events];
- f. determine the extent of compensation payable to the victims;
- g. determine the effect of the [events] on future demining operations in the area;
- h. recommend any corrective procedures which could reduce the likelihood of future such [events].

The Director headed the Bol himself. The Governor of Herat cooperated fully with the Bol, recognising fully that this was not a police inquiry [see Related papers].

The mine awareness team and drivers were returning from a humanitarian mission at the time the tragedy occurred.

Chronological Order of the Events

At around 15:00 on Thursday 3rd August the two mine awareness teams of [Demining group] Team No. 1 and 2 called [Demining group] site office in Herat and spoke with the Operations Officer [Demining group] wanting to get authorisation for their travel and end of their mission period. The authorisation was granted. There was no contact between the two stated teams and [Demining group] Herat office on Friday, 4th August. At 06:45 on Sat. 5th August the two have called [Demining group] Operations Assistant Officer and mentioned that they are on their way towards Herat from Qalai Now (Badghis). The call was from [Victim No.1] (Team Leader of Team 1). The team in Badghis was told that since you have still 3 days remaining from your mission so you could stay for three more days. But the team responded that since the team from Qaysar (Faryab) had come they need to come with this team. They were authorised to proceed. Around 13:00 [Demining group] Herat offices tried to contact the teams but were not able to talk to them.

It was around 15:30 that [Victim No.8], one of the drivers of the two vehicles travelling together and who had escaped alive from the scene, informed the office that their vehicles were looted, the staff were killed, and the vehicles and some staff were burnt.

It was found out that after having breakfast at 08:00 on Saturday, 5th August 2000 the teams have started to move from Qalai Now (Badghis) towards Herat. The teams were travelling in two white Toyota 4 x 4 pickups. The vehicles had a distance of about half an hour from each other.

The bandits from 07:00 in the morning had blocked the road after Sabzak at a place called Aabi Khoban. [Vehicles were stopped and] the men were separated from the women and were ordered to stay in a deep valley near a stream of water while the women were sitting beside the vehicles and in a collapsed room on the right side of the road coming from Badghis side.

Arriving at Sabzak and then to Aabi Khoban area around 10:30. The first vehicles was ordered by the bandits who were more than 100 people, all taken positions and holding AK-47 and other machine guns, to stop and then ordered to go in which instance they started firing at them. The bandits were also communicating on VHF radios with each other. At about 10:40, the second [Demining group] vehicle arrived at the scene and was ordered by two persons standing on the right side of the road to stop "Dresh", while the two other persons at the left side of the road told them to go. As the vehicle was starting to move, the firing came from all sides, front, both sides and top of the mountains.

The bandits later went near the second vehicle pulled opened the driver door of the vehicle pulled off the driver's wrist watch and pulled him from the vehicle and threw him off the vehicle onto the ground. The driver [Victim No.8] pretended to be dead. In the same manner they pulled the other member of the team from the front seat beside the driver from the same door and threw him on top of the driver. They also took out the bodies of the two staff sitting in the back seat and threw them off the vehicle.

The bandits then started to loot the vehicle by cutting the ropes at the back of the pick up and checking the inside of the vehicles. While checking the bags and other items they said, "There are Dollars where are the Dollars?".

Around 10:50, a Taliban vehicle carrying around six Taliban came to the scene, they were stopped by the bandits and their guns were taken away and their hands were tied behind their back with their turbans and they were taken away. This Taliban vehicle was one of the two Taliban vehicles coming to this location. The second vehicle, seeing the site, reversed and ran away despite being shot at by the bandits.

At 11:00, seeing that the second Taliban vehicle had run away, the bandits started to burn the two vehicles of the [Demining group] and as well as the Taliban vehicles.

Between 11:05 and 11:20, they asked a few of the strong men among the people held by the bandits to carry the money (in Afghanis) from the vehicles standing on the right side of the road to the other side where they had their donkeys and horses standing. Some money was still left there but then they ordered one of the Jeeps to put the money in the Jeep and take it to the other side of the road.

At 11:20 one of the bandits came to the area where all the prisoners were kept and told them that from now on until 12:00 none of you should move from your place, everybody should remain in his place. Everybody was so shocked that they could not look up to these people however they were able to recognise them. The famous commander recognised by everyone was Dost Mohammad Lamani or well known by the name of 'Dostak' and the other commanders included Sarwar Yakdast, Sarwar Lang, Gulu and Naeem Khan who is brother of Haji Wazir Khan.

Between 12:00 and 12:30 when the bandits left the area the passengers/prisoners came out from their places and went near the burning vehicles. They saw that all of the three vehicles are burning and there are bodies in the two [Demining group] vehicles. There were few bodies inside the first vehicle of the [Demining group] while there were other bodies lying on the ground near the second vehicle. As the people tried to take the bodies away from the fire near the vehicles they found out that the driver of the second pretending death to be still alive.

The driver who escaped alive from the accident was then taken by a Jeep driver to [Demining group] Herat office and arrived around 15:30 where he informed all the staff about the ordeal. The [Demining group] office Herat informed the Security Focal Point, RMAC, the Governor, and the Commander of Police and requested the assistance of the commander of police/Governor to collect the bodies. At the same time two [Demining group] vehicles from the Herat office were sent to Khwaja Charshanbeh so that they could collect the bodies. However, they were told that they should wait for authorisation by the Governor. The governor did not allow that the vehicles to go to the area till the area was secured. [Demining group] Herat also informed their Head Office in Peshawar about the accident.

The UN RFSO was informed by FSO in Islamabad at about 15:45, following which he held a meeting with the Taliban Security Focal Point and the Governor about bringing the bodies back. The seven bodies were brought to Herat at 21:13.

Victim Report

Victim number: 460	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: supervisory	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available

Victim Report

Victim number: 461	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: civilian	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 462	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: Trainer	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 463	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: Trainer	Fit for work: DECEASED

Compensation: not made available
Protection issued: Not recorded

Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 464
Age:
Status: Trainer
Compensation: not made available
Protection issued: Not recorded

Name: Name removed
Gender: Male
Fit for work: DECEASED
Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 465
Age:
Status: Trainer
Compensation: not made available
Protection issued: Not recorded

Name: Name removed
Gender: Male
Fit for work: DECEASED
Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 466	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: driver	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 467	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: driver	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not applicable
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: none

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT

The victim died as a result of multiple gunshot wounds. No medical report was made available.

Analysis

This record is classed as "Other" because it differs from all others recorded in the database. The Victims were shot by anti-Taliban "bandits" while technically at work. While this is not a mine-accident, the victims were clearly identified as Mine Action staff, so the events are expected to be of interest to others working in the field.

From the evidence made available, it seems that the events may have occurred because the bandits gave contradictory instructions and the drivers chose to obey the one saying to "drive on". The evidence of the survivor implies that the bandits were undecided about what to do with the bodies, (whether to burn them) from which I infer that they may not have intended for there to be deaths involved.

Related papers

The record of an interview between the BOI and the Governor of Herat was made available. It is reproduced below, edited for anonymity.

The Governor mentioned that he would fully cooperate with the board in their findings and hoped that the board would be impartial in its findings. He mentioned that "I do not name or mention the Northern Alliance for this act as the board will be thinking that since we are at war with them we are blaming them for this act. But we have proof and evidence that they have been undertaking such looting acts. As part of his proof he should the letters written by these people and the radio communication that they had undertaken."

The Governor mentioned that the first time he took his duty as the Governor of Herat, he inquired about the opposition forces and the troublemakers in the Western region. He was told that there are a few opposition forces in the mountains who are undertaking looting. He gave examples of few [examples] committed by this group in Obey district, the killing which happened in Pashtoon Zarghoon and the third [event] was the burning of a vehicle on the way from Herat to Badghis. The Taliban on several occasion tried to smash these forces. Once around 10 of these forces were killed and some of them were taken as prisoners of war.

The Governor mentioned that we never thought that anyone would try to kill or loot the staff of NGOs as they are not related to any political organisation. This had never happened in the past and we never anticipated it for the future.

Responding to a question over what message these bandits are trying to send and to whom this message is directed, the Governor mentioned that there is no other specific message than to just disrupt the security situation in the Western region. He further mentioned that there is no doubt in it that who that specific person is, his name is Doost Mohammad, with a nickname called Doostak, he is an ex commander of Jamiat-I-Islami Afghanistan. He mentioned we have written evidence from him. He had stolen more than 200 million Afghani. On several occasion we tried to capture Doostak but he ran away from us once with 25 of his armed men. We attacked all of his men were killed [but] he with two of his men escaped. He mentioned that he is wanted for murder and the Taliban have about 20 of his follower still imprisoned by them. That is why [Doostak] did not kill the Taliban who were captured by him. Since he would be thinking of prisoner exchange. The Taliban have letters written by them to Northern Alliance regarding their operation and they the record of their conversation on radio.

Regarding burning of the vehicles and the staff it was mentioned that they wanted to create more fear and havoc among the people.

The governor mentioned that there were two Taliban vehicles going to that site, one vehicle was captured by the bandits, but the second vehicle which was in a far distance from the first vehicle was able to run away despite shooting at them and went to the nearby Taliban check post to inform them about the road block.

The governor promised that these people will be brought to justice and will be punished accordingly. On the request that if UN could talk to them once they are captured before they are punished the governor mentioned that if they are captured alive we will be able to facilitate that but if we cannot capture them their bodies will be available for inspection.

The governor also mentioned that the UN should take the steps to blame the other side for these sort of incidents, he mentioned that if the Taliban do a small mistake that is enlarged and they are blamed for it, while no action is taken against the other side.

In the end the BOI thanked the Governor for his time and appreciated once again the full cooperation provided by the Government during this accident. Along with the Governor we proceeded to the area where all MAPA mine action staff have gathered following their peaceful parade waiting for the speech of [the MAPA Director] and the Governor of Herat.

Statements

Eight statements were made and are reproduced below (edited for anonymity).

Statement 1

Extract from an interview with a BoI Member "SFP" at 15:00 on 11th August 2000

Q. How is a Taliban roadblock or checkpoint and how they check?

A. The Taliban have several check post, 1 for custom check post, 2 checking for guns and radios held by Taliban themselves travelling in the vehicle are authorised and 3 checking for other items such as antiques, etc.

Q. What happens if a vehicle in the Taliban check post does not stop, what do they do?

A. The Taliban will become doubtful and they fire in the sky, if still the vehicle does not stop then they inform the next check post by radio.

What happens when the Demining vehicles come to a check post? Since the demining or UN vehicles are well known they are told to stop but when the Taliban check post see that they are demining or UN vehicles they lowered the chain allowing the vehicle to leave and show their respect.

Statement 2

Interview with the Officer in Charge of the [Demining group] office in Herat, made at 16:45 on 11th August 2000.

Q. Does the [Demining group] have its own security SOP?

A. No, they follow the standard MAPA SOP.

Q. How do you sent your team to an area what do you do before?

A. We contact other NGOs/agencies in the areas by radios and inquire from them and I myself go to the area and physically verify the area and investigate the situation. Then I arrange accommodation for them. Each morning at 06:00 hours we receive morning report from all of our teams. They inform us of their progress and completion of their task. The other information that we gain is through attending the ANCB meetings held on monthly basis and we share that information with RM.

He had no contact with the two mine awareness teams since 4th August 2000 and they did not have a radio log book to record calls received by them. The teams were authorised through contacting the head office, on Thursday 3rd August between 14:00 –15:00 to travel back to Herat finishing their mission.

Q. How is the security situation in Badghis and Faryab?

A. The security situation in Badghis and Faryab is OK and there had been no problem. [I have] gone to the area several times.

Q. Have you heard that it was an act of revenge against the [Demining group]?

A. No. I never heard that.

Q. Have you heard that may be because the people were not hired from those provinces they might have done so?

A. No I do not think so, since we have hired people from everywhere. Recently we built teams from people of Badghis and Ghor.

Q. Have you heard that they were called Pakistanis?

A. I do not feel that they might be mistaken for or called Pakistanis. Once I was requested by the local authorities to provide them with the detailed list of our employees then I collected all staff ID cards and presented them to local authorities.

Q. At UN Regional Coordinator office weekly security meetings are held. Are you are kept informed and is the information passed to you?

A. My contact point is the Regional Manager, RMAC Herat, I always call him and get any update from him.

- Q. What do you think are the reactions of the drivers at the checkpoints?
- A. They never stopped me when they see the demining logo. The people have great respect for us and know us as was proven during the mourning ceremony held at the mosque people from all communities came to the mosque including the Shias to pay their respect.
- Q. Does your teams carry cash money with them?
- A. No. The money is transferred to their location through using the money changers.
- Q. Where does your mine awareness teams stay?
- A. The mine awareness teams since their size is small they stay with the manual mine clearance teams.

Statement 3

Interview with Supervisor of [Demining group] MCT in Maimanah (Faryab) made at 17:00 on 11th August at the [Demining group] office, Herat

- Q. How long were you in Maimanah?
- A. We were there since 20 days, prior to that we were in Shindand (Helmand).
- Q. How long you have been in Western region and where were you before?
- A. About four months and before our team was working in Central region.
- Q. How do you compare western region and central region and the procedures that they follow and implement?
- A. In my view both of them are the same and the procedures followed are the same in both the locations.
- Q. How do you see the security situation in Badghis?
- A. The security situation in Badghis is good and we have good relationship with the local communities.
- Q. It is important to us to be frank with the BOI, have you ever felt any threat or danger in Badghis?
- A. No I have never felt in danger at all. The local people respect us I have travelled in lonely area and deserts and was never exposed to any danger.
- Q. What are the major type of minefields that you are working on?
- A. Mainly the minefields in the area are anti personnel minefields.
- Q. What do you think why did they kill [Demining group] staff?
- A. Some people are not able to take when you are serving your country with full sincerity. They try to destroy those who helping the country and their fellow Afghans.

Statement 4

Interview with Operations Assistant [Demining group] made at 17:20 in the [Demining group] offices, Herat.

- Q. At what time did you have the last communication with the teams?
- A. On Saturday, 5th August 2000, at 06:45 I received a call from the teams that they are planning to come to Herat. The team which was based in Badghis under the supervisory of [Victim No.1], I told them that you have still got three days mission period why are you coming. They mentioned that since the other team from Qaisar has come to Qalai Now and are travelling to Herat, they need to leave with the team at the same time to accompany them. Around 13:00 I called them on radio again but there was no response from their side. It was around 13:30 that [Victim No.8] came to the office shocked and panicked and was shouting

that they have killed us, they have killed us. I cooled him down and then we called our operations officer who then informed the Governor, SFP and other people.

Q. At what time did you move to bring the bodies?

A. We moved from the office around 14:00 hours to go to the accident site and bring the bodies, however we were told by [our operations officer] to wait at a location called Karuck till they are authorised to go to the area and the area is secured. Then we were told to return back since the governor did not authorise them and since there were fewer Taliban forces in Karukh so the security could not be guaranteed. It was around 21:00 that the bodies were brought to Herat.

Statement 5

Interview with Section Leader Team B [Demining group] made at 10:45 on 12th August 2000. [This person was coincidentally at the site – among the civilians.]

Q. Please take us through [what happened]?

A. We moved from Herat at a passenger bus around 06:00-07:00 on Saturday morning.

Q. At what time did you arrive at the scene?

A. It was about 10:00-10:30. The accident had already happened but the cars were not burnt. All of the staff were already killed.

Q. What was the colour of the vehicle that you were travelling in and how many passengers were there?

A. Brown colour, around 9 people were with us travelling. The armed men told us to stop at the site near the parking areas of the looted car.

Q. Do you recognise anyone the looters?

A. No. All of them were armed. They had radios and guns.

Q. Did you ask anything?

A. No.

Q. How many people and vehicles were stranded?

A. There were around 500 people and the car were about 100 metre far from us.

Q. Did anybody mention the commanders' names?

A. No nobody talked about it.

Q. Did you help before you were leaving for Badghis?

A. Yes, I took the bodies away from the vehicles and went to the first vehicle to put out the fire.

Q. Did you see [Victim No.8]?

Yes. The deputy of health, took [Victim Np.8] with him. I wanted also to go with him but the driver of the jeep mentioned that he had space only for one passenger. Then I moved around 12:00-12:30 to Badghis and arrived at Badghis around 15:00-16:00.

Q. What do you think? Who is responsible?

A. I cannot say, who is responsible as I do not know.

Q. Why were [Demining group] staff killed and not others?

A. It was before I arrived at the accident. I do not know

Q. How long are you working in Badghis?

A. Two months

Q. Which places did you work before?

- A. I had worked in Southern and Western region mostly.
- Q. How is the security in these areas?
- A. Overall the security is good and the private vehicles were looted but we were never looted or involved in any such accident.
- Q. At what time did you see [Name excised] and did the commander ask him to come?
- A. No. I did not see him
- Q. Did you see anyone else being called upon to come up?
- A. Yes I saw another wearing a skin hat who went towards the vehicles and came back.
- Q. Usually when the mine action vehicles come to a check post what happens at a check post?
- A. They stop the vehicle and when they see it is demining vehicle they allow it to go.
- Q. Did you hear firing?
- A. No.
- Q. Were they always pointing guns at everyone?
- A. Yes, they were always pointing guns at us.
- Q. Did they take your money?
- A. No my money was not taken, since I had it in my pocket.

Statement 6

Interview with witness from Badghis made at 11:15 on 12th August 2000.

At about 04:00 we started to come from Qala-I Now to Herat. At around 08:00 we arrived at this location where the thieves had blocked the road. There were many vehicles stopped as we turned on a corner of the road. They said to us, "Where are the Talibans". Everybody kept quiet. Then they took us to the valley. They took the women to a separate location. I was shocked and went to the valley. They started firing.

- Q. Did you hear that why [Demining group] people went and killed?
- A. No. I do not know
- Q. How many people were there with you at that location with you?
- A. About 300 - 400 people. Due to fear I could not see anything. At around 12:00 everyone came out and they helped.
- Q. Could the [Demining group] vehicle have run away?
- A. No.

Statement 7

A statement from the surviving driver follows, edited for anonymity. Interview with the surviving driver was taken at 14:00 on 8th August 2000.

- Q. When did you move from Qalai Now area?
- A. We moved from our base in Qalai Now around 08:00 hours.
- Q. Can you tell us who were in the two [Demining group] vehicles?
- A. In the Vehicle No. 1 there were [Four named Victims]. In Vehicle No. 2, which was driven by me, were [Three named Victims].

At 08: 30 we stopped for a short while at a viewpoint on the top of a hill. We were about half an hour at distance from the vehicle number 1.

At approximately 10:30 hours they arrived at Sabzak area, while turning in a corner near Aab-I Khoban area armed people came all around us and two of them from the right side shouted at us 'stop!'; there were two others from the left side who told us to go. As soon as we moved a bit they started to fire at us from all directions. [A Victim] who was sitting with me on my right side seat in front was shot in his neck, he just looked at me and fall on my back and shoulder. I also lowered my head and rested on the steering [wheel] and my left hand around my head and my other hand on the gear. There were two people in the back seat as well who were also shot and were screaming. For a while about ten minutes it was completely quiet, the only thing I could hear was the falling of the shattered windows. All along I pretended to be dead and had my eyes closed.

After a while I could hear that someone came towards our vehicle and pulled my side door (driver's side door) pulled my watch from my wrist and took me from my arm and pulled me and through me on the floor. I fall down on my face on the ground and did not move at all having my eyes completely closed and having my left hand around my head. Then from the same door they pulled [another Victim] and threw him on me as well. Same wise they pulled the two of our colleagues from the backseat through the left side backdoor and throw them beside us. My body was covered with blood that came from the body of [another Victim].

Then they took out our belongings and searched the vehicles by saying that: "People said there were Dollars, where are they?". One of the men said "Let's put the bodies back in the vehicle and burn them". A second guy told him that "No they are already dead, you killed them why burn them?". The other one said then "Let's pull them away from the vehicle". I could only hear that and could not open my eyes. During the looting of our vehicle a Taliban vehicle arrived they stopped the vehicle and ordered them to get down and take the vehicle aside. I was very frightened that they do not order the vehicle to drive on top of the dead bodies and me, I covering my head with my hand slowly opened a little bit my eyes and looked so that the vehicle does not cross on top of us. I could see that it was Taliban vehicle. I could not see where they took the Taliban but they told in Persian that "Take them away".

Then all the three vehicles were burnt two of our vehicles and one Taliban vehicle. I could feel the burning of the vehicles as my feet got hot and were burning and could hear the tyres and other things inside the vehicles exploding. I prayed to God that if a wind could blow away the fire from my feet so that I do not get burnt and there was a wind, which blew away the fire and blew sand on my leg.

Q. How many vehicles were there?

A. There were about 100 vehicles including lorries, jeeps and other types of vehicles. Then there was quite for a while then I saw some people are approaching me and turn me on other side and said that this one is alive. Due to fear I could not open my eyes but then they told me that they were the prisoners held by the bandits and I should sit down. Then I rose and run towards the vehicle No. 1, and was shouting at [Name excised]. I saw the body of [Victim] was half out of the vehicle and burning. Then I saw the body of the [other] driver out of the vehicle also burning. I tried to put out the fire on him. There were bodies of [two other Victims] in the back seat of the vehicle also burning.

Then I took a Jeep towards Herat and asked the driver to take me to my office in Herat and I would give him whatever money he wants. As we arrived to Karukh, there was a Taliban check post that stopped us and was asking everyone about how much money was taken from them. There were one or two vehicles ahead of us, we mentioned that we are in rush we need to go quickly to Herat to inform our office we left the area. Then I came to the [Demining group] office in Herat and inform the office.

Q. Before leaving Qalai Now, did you feel any risk on the way?

A. No, we never had feeling of risk on this way towards Herat. We were a bit worried when we were coming from Faryab to Badghis but we never anticipated any risk in this area.

Q. Do you check security before you leave?

A. We ask other drivers or people who are coming on that way about the security on the way. On that day we asked the people in Qalai Now about the road in which they have mentioned that everything is OK.

Q. What were you wearing?

A. White Shalwar Qamis and black waistcoat.

Q. Did you see the first vehicle when you arrived at that point?

A. Yes I saw the vehicle on the road standing on its wheel astray from the road upright.

Q. Did they talk about you or said any word?

A. Yes, they mentioned that “they are Pakistanis, we have killed them”.

Q. What types of the vehicles were and were there any writing on the vehicles?

A. They were white new pick-ups given by UNOCHA with writings on them in Dari/Pashto and English with the Demining Logo and the name of [Demining group].

Q. How close were the people shooting?

A. About 30 –50 metre. Did you hear them speak anything else? No.

Q. What type of weapon they had and were they covering their faces?

A. They were holding mostly AK47, and covered their faces.

Q. How long have you been driver with [Demining group]?

A. Nine years

Q. Have you ever been accused of helping Taliban or Pakistanis?

A. No, but in some areas as we dress differently and we speak different language they ask us where are you from then we tell them that we are also from Afghanistan

Q. Did they have turbans?

A. Yes.

Q. Did they have beards?

A. Yes.

Statement 8

The following is an interview with a medical doctor who was among the civilians detained by the bandits. The interview was made at 16:00 on 11th August 2000 at UNOCHA Herat. With the exception of bandit names, the following has been edited for anonymity.

Q. Do you live in Herat or Badghis?

A. I live in Badghis. I am working with the Health Department of Badghis province.

Q. What were you doing on 05 August 2000 travelling from Badghis?

A. I was coming from Badghis to Herat to attend a health workshop on Tuberculoses at 09:00 hours here in Herat. Since I have a Jeep vehicle I was also carrying some passengers with me to Herat.

Q. Can you tell us how you started your journey?

A. On Saturday morning while it was still very dark in the morning we moved from Qalai Now. We had our tea at 07:00 hours in Lamina, then we moved along with one another jeep towards Herat. Between 08:00 or 08:30 hours we arrived at Aabi Khoban area. As we arrived until that location the weather was visible and clear. There was a big lorry standing across the road blocking the road and there were big stones around. As we crossed a corner two people stood in front of us pointing gun at us to stop. We stopped at that moment, and some one from them said shoot at them. I quickly got off my vehicles and went towards the armed people. They told me in Pashto, do you have armed people with you? I told them, No. Then

they told me to get everyone off the vehicle. From all around armed people came towards us and told us to get up in the mountain. They asked who is the driver and ordered me to drive my vehicle aside on the right side to a valley. I drove up and there were four or five other vehicles and two jeeps parked as well. They ordered me to go near to the water stream into a deep area. I went to the deep valley and found out that there were about forty other people. I just went there and sat with them.

The commander was telling them to tighten the Talibans that they have captured. Then I saw Dost Mohammad, the commander. By seeing him I had smile in my face as I knew him from before, he called me and told me why are you laughing. I just told him because I am happy then he said go to your place and sit down. Then I sat in a place where I could see the vehicles coming from Herat but could not see the vehicles coming from Badghis. Between 09:30 –10:00 we heard firing . It was firing from all around. For about 10 minutes firing stopped. Then again firing started. Then stopped. Then after few minutes the commander asked me to come to him. He was sitting on a big stone.

When I went near to the commander sitting on a big stone, he told me what help can you give to those people. I saw at that moment that vehicle which was shoot at was the demining that I had seen them on the way. I told him that these are the demining vehicles. He told me: 'Who are the demining? Then I told him that the UN. Then I told him bring the injured here I will be able to treat them and I am not ready to go there to the vehicles. Then he asked other people, how are the people in the vehicle? They told him that they are dead. They did not stop. At that time I saw that the people were throwing the belongings from the vehicles everywhere. The door were opened taking everything out. Since I was frightened I went back to where all other people were sitting. I was sure that they would kill us and I wrote my name on a stone as a memory.

Then they burnt the Taliban vehicle and the other two vehicles. The smell and smoke came towards us. Then 8 armed bandits came from the side down towards us. They were holding AK-47, machine guns and radios. They told us not to move till 13:00. Before that he asked few strong men to rise and come up, about 10 to 15 persons went with them. When they returned back we asked them: where did they take you? They told us that they took us to carry the money for them to the opposite side of the road to the valley where they hid horses and donkeys.

After when the thieves have gone I also went towards my vehicles. I saw that about 80 million Afghanis are missing from the vehicle. I asked a lady who was sitting there near the vehicles where my money had gone. She told me that they were taken by the thieves. Then I and those with me went near the burning vehicles. The vehicles were still burning as we came near them. The driver whom I understand that he is the driver later was near the fire. We pulled him aside away from the fire and we tried to turn him on his face, when I noticed that he opened his eyes and closed it back quickly. Then I hold by his hand and checked his pulse, and find out that he is still alive, I told him to sit down. As soon as he sat down he started shouting running towards the first vehicle calling the name of [a Victim]. Then we also went to the first vehicle pull the driver away from the vehicle so that he does not burn himself.

Then I took the driver and came to Karukh, it was around 12:30 hours. There was ahead of us two jeeps who were giving report to the Taliban. Then I took the passengers along with the driver to Karukh. As I was putting diesel in my car, the other passengers lodged theft reports at the district council . Then we move to come to [Demining group] office in Herat. Then I went to NPO, while I was already late. Everybody was asking me about the [attack] and in fact I was not sure what I was saying whatever came to my mind, I mentioned it.

Q. How many vehicles were stopped and how many people were there?

A. More than 100 people more than 30-40 vehicles were at that location.

Q. Could the women see what happened during the incident?

A. I do not think so, they could only hear what was happening?

Q. What type of radio were they using HF or VHF (big or small radios)?

A. There was another radio type of thing which was just blinking and was lying on the ground. I did not recognise what was it.

Q. How long was the distance between the commander and the vehicles?

A. The distance between the commander and the vehicle was about 500 meters.

Q. How did you recognise the demining vehicle that you saw from 500 metres?

A. I could see the backside of the vehicle which was towards us and saw the antenna.

Q. How did you see the antenna while the vehicle's back was towards you?

A. I could not see the antenna and know it from tarpal.

Q. Did you hear that they are Pakistanis?

A. No. But the Driver who was rescued could hear it and he told us.

Q. Why do you think they burn the vehicles and the bodies?

A. I do not know but in my view the first vehicle burnt was Taliban vehicle, which had a huge smoke and could be seen from far away.

Q. Did they stop other vehicles within that period?

A. Yes. They also stopped other vehicles coming from both sides of the road.

Q. What was the time between the two firings?

A. The time between two firings was about 10 minutes. Two types of firing one was rapid and there was another firing which was not that rapid.

Q. How many people were taken as Taliban?

A. Seven people that I saw, 9 persons travelling in a jeep who had with them one gun were asked whose jeep is that since there was a gun in it. The driver of that vehicle said the car is mine but the gun belongs to these 9 people. All of the 9 were taken away.

Q. Did you see anyone being killed from the Taliban?

A. We run away first ahead of everyone, but we heard the rumours that few Taliban were also killed.

Q. Were the Talibans separately kept?

A. Yes they were taken to the valley where they took all the valuables and the money. Among the Taliban one was accompanied by his brother, and his brother was shouting why are you taking my brother. They hit him back.

Q. How often do you travel?

A. I sometime come to seminars and workshops in Herat, within two months once.

Q. Have any [attacks] happened before?

A. We have heard some [attacks] such as the theft in Khwaja Charshanbeh, killing and looting in Karukh and other [attacks] near Karukh.

Q. Do you think that this road is secured?

A. No, it is very difficult to say which place in Afghanistan is secured or safe.

Q. There were about 100 people?

A. Yes.

Q. Anybody could have seen this event?

A. No, everybody was very afraid and were sitting in a secluded area.

Q. When you went to the vehicle were the engines running?

A. All of them were burnt.

Q. How do you know Dost Mohammad as you mentioned before?

A. He was President of Khad (the previous Intellegence Agency), I knew very well that he is Dost Mohammad.

Q. Did you hear the [Demining vehicles] vehicles come?

A. No I did not know and did not hear anything.

Q. When the first vehicle came did you hear radio call?

A. No I did not hear but other people were telling us that they heard talking from those people who were on top of the hills. We could see that they are speaking but we did not know what they were talking.

Q. How many were they and can you describe them?

A. Below 100 people. All of them were young. All of them were wild. We could see them very close since they were standing in front of us.

Q. If you were to run could you speed on them and run away from the scene?

A. No. When I stopped the vehicle about ten armed people came from all sides.

Q. Why did they kill [Demining group] staff?

A. I do not know, why they took my money while they know me as well.

Q. Do you remember anything else?

A. Yes, there was another [Demining group] staff among the passengers of the vehicles and [the Driver] told him to inform the office.