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Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 11/07/2011	Accident number: 747
Accident time: Not recorded	Accident Date: 10/05/2010
Where it occurred: Kakayankulam Village Nr Vavuniya, Northern Sri Lanka	Country: Sri Lanka
Primary cause: Management/control inadequacy (?)	Secondary cause: Management/control inadequacy (?)
Class: Handling accident	Date of main report: None
ID original source: None	Name of source: Various
Organisation: [Name removed]	
Mine/device: M40 rifle grenade	Ground condition: not recorded
Date record created:	Date last modified: 11/07/2011
No of victims: 2	No of documents: 1

Map details

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

Accident Notes

inadequate investigation (?)
no independent investigation available (?)
visor not worn or worn raised (?)
protective equipment not worn (?)

Accident report

No formal report of this accident had been made available. What follows is reproduced from press releases and the researcher's interviews with those involved in Sri Lanka.

Victim No.1, a French national (age 55) died in an accidental mine blast in Kakayankulam village on May 10th. He died after been admitted to the Vavuniya General Hospital. At the time of Victim No.1's demise, he was attached to the [Demining group] in Sri Lanka as a Senior Technical Advisor.

Victim No.1's military career lasted for 28 years as a Navy Seal of French Navy. He specialized in the underwater mine clearance, counter-terrorism and counter-pirate activities. After his military career, Victim No.1 joined [Demining group] and went on to humanitarian demining sector, working in a variety of countries, such as DRC, The Congo, Lebanon, Albania, Iraq, Sudan, Loa, Guinea Bissau, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka.

VAVUNIYA, Sri Lanka — A hospital official says that a French deminer is dead following a mine blast in northern Sri Lanka. The official said that 55-year-old [Victim No.1] of [Demining group] was dead when he was brought to the Vavuniya General Hospital, following the blast Monday [10th].

"From [Demining group] Sri Lanka to the other demining organizations. During routine operations in Kakkayankulam, [Victim No.1] was dealing with an item of unexploded ordnance which inadvertently exploded. He was CASEVAC to Vavuniya hospital where he subsequently died from his injuries."

In private interviews in April 2011, it was learned that Victim No.1 had been injured by a 40mm rifle grenade.

In line with government requirements in Sri Lanka, the grenade had been discovered during clearance, marked and left for disposal by the Sri Lankan army. So the grenade was in a marked area inside the cleared part of a manual demining worksite.

Deminers reported that the Victim was in a particularly happy mood that day. The Victim went to the grenade without telling anyone and began to dismantle it. His actions can be reliably inferred because the black cap of the grenade was undamaged at the site (and featured in the first site photographs after the accident). So it seems that the Victim got some way into the grenade before it went off in his hands. Severe hand (amputated fingers), arm, and upper body injury resulted - with bubbling blood and air from open chest wounds. From this it is inferred that the device detonated in his hand and in front of his chest. He was not wearing PPE at the time.

The site ambulance was summoned but the driver slewed the vehicle into a tree while turning it to go to the site. The medic [Victim No.2] was struck on the head by a loose oxygen cylinder which caused brain damage. He was reported to still be in a coma in 2011. There was another [Demining group] site nearby and it took "only minutes" for a second ambulance and medic to arrive and move Victim No.1 to the hospital in Vavuniya. Victim No.1 was talking throughout the ambulance journey, but in French so no one understood what he was saying. When he arrived at Vavuniya hospital he was met by another French speaker from the [Demining group] who was with him for "a few minutes" before Victim No.1 was pronounced dead.

Victim Report

Victim number: 937	Name: [Name removed]
Age: 55	Gender: Male
Status: supervisory	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: Not made available	Time to hospital: 40 minutes (approx)
Protection issued: Frontal apron Long visor	Protection used: None

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES: severe Arms; severe Chest; severe Hand

AMPUTATION/LOSS: Fingers

FATAL

COMMENT: No formal medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 938	Name: [Name removed]
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: medic	Fit for work: not known
Compensation: Not made available	Time to hospital: 40 minutes (approx)
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: None

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES: severe Head

COMMENT: No formal medical report was made available. Victim still in a coma more than six months later.

Analysis

The primary and secondary causes of this accident are listed as a *Management Control Inadequacy* because the victim was a member of the management team and appears to have been taking unauthorised and unnecessary risks without wearing PPE. It is not known why he wanted to FFE the grenade. The demining group had two FFE examples of 40mm grenades on display when visited in 2007.

The severe injury suffered by the medic when an oxygen cylinder struck his head indicates that the ambulance vehicles used by the demining group have loose items inappropriately secured. This was still the case over a year later and is a further indication of a *Management Control Inadequacy*.

A formal accident report and details of the Medic's current condition have been requested.