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Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

| | |
|--|--|
| Report date: 09/04/2019 | Accident number: 816 |
| Accident time: a.m. | Accident Date: 29/03/2018 |
| Where it occurred: Gazanchi, Martakert region, Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabagh) | Country: Armenia |
| Primary cause: Other (?) | Secondary cause: Other (?) |
| Class: Survey accident | Date of main report: 29/03/2018 |
| ID original source: | Name of source: Press |
| Organisation: [Name removed] | Ground condition: |
| Mine/device: AT (unrecorded) | Date last modified: 09/04/2019 |
| Date record created: | No of documents: 1 |
| No of victims: 5 | |

Map details

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Longitude: | Latitude: |
| Alt. coord. system: Not recorded | Coordinates fixed by: |

Accident Notes

inadequate investigation (?)

no independent investigation available (?)

Accident report

This accident was reported in the press. The press reports are reproduced below, edited for anonymity. Text in square brackets [] is editorial.

<https://armenianweekly.com/2018/03/29/-mine-explosion/>

Three [International demining organisation] workers were killed in a mine explosion in Artsakh on Thursday morning. Two more employees of the de-mining organization were severely injured in the incident, which took place in Gazanchi, in Artsakh's Martakert region.

A statement by [International demining organisation] indicated that the its employees were killed and injured by the accidental detonation of an anti-tank [mine]. "The staff members were in a vehicle conducting minefield survey duties at the time," read a part of the statement.

The organization also said that the injured are currently being treated at a hospital in Stepanakert. "We are working closely with the local police and authorities and have called in

external investigators to report on the full facts of the incident,” read another part of the [international demining organization]’s statement.

Hours after the announcement, the organization published a second statement publicizing the names of the three [deceased] victims: [Victim No.1], [Victim No.2] and [Victim No.3]. According to local sources, all three were local residents.

Artsakh law enforcement agencies have reportedly launched a criminal case regarding the incident. According to local media reports, an enquiry has been launched to determine the circumstances of the explosion.

<https://mirrorspectator.com/2018/04/05/three-workers-killed-in-artsakh/>

Three local employees of the [International demining organisation], an organisation tasked with demining land there, were killed by an explosion of an anti-tank landmine in Ghazanchi area of Artsakh on March 29. Two others were seriously injured.

Those killed ... were in a vehicle conducting minefield survey duties at the time.

Artsakh’s healthcare minister [name removed] personally visited the hospital to see the victims and the doctors.

According to a statement from [the international demining organisation], “We are working closely with the local police and authorities and have called in external investigators to report on the full facts of the incident.”

[The organisation’s] former regional director in charge of Artskh said on Monday, “We are conducting an investigation into the accident and this includes an external investigator. We don’t want to prejudge the outcome of this so we can’t say as yet what happened. What I can say is that the team that had the accident was conducting survey of areas to be cleared in the future — not mine clearance.”

He added that all work in Artsakh is currently suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

[He] said that the two survivors — [Victim No.4] and [Victim No.5] — are in hospital in Stepanakert and they are in stable condition. “We are closely monitoring their progress and ensuring they get the best care. We have a consulting physician equivalent (a UK-based doctor) in Stepanakert advising on treatment,” he said.

Three [International demining organisation] employees killed and 2 injured in Karabakh landmine explosion

...According to Shamshyan.com website, three people were killed and two were injured as an off-road vehicle exploded on a landmine at the neutral zone nearby Martakert town.

One of the injured [International demining organisation] employees is critical, representative of the Stepanakert hospital said. He is undergoing a surgery. The second injured is in a satisfactory condition.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/>

3 [International demining organisation] staff killed in Nagorno-Karabakh mine blast

YEREVAN, Armenia (AP) — Three workers of the [International demining organisation] have been killed and two injured in a mine explosion in Azerbaijan's separatist Nagorno-Karabakh region. All the victims were local residents, the presidential administration of the unrecognized republic said.

Nagorno-Karabakh has been under the control of ethnic Armenian forces since a 1994 cease-fire. Azerbaijan claims that Armenia's military also has troops in the region.

[The International demining organisation] said the Thursday morning blast occurred when the workers were surveying an area to remove explosives and their vehicle ran over a mine.

<https://jam-news.net/three-employees-killed-two-more-wounded-in-nagorno-karabakh-mine-explosion/>

Three employees of the [International demining organisation] were killed and two more were seriously wounded when an anti-tank landmine went off in Martakert district, Nagorno-Karabakh at noon. All the victims were local residents.

Employees of the [International demining organisation] ... were in a vehicle conducting surveys when the explosion occurred. Two individuals were also wounded and have been taken to hospital with both requiring surgery.

The Nagorno-Karabakh authorities have expressed concern that there were still numerous mines scattered around the area which may cause casualties.

<https://armenpress.am/eng/news/928325.html>

[International demining organisation] Artsakh manager raises concerns after fatal landmine blast, 31 March, 2018

The tragic incident in Artsakh once again proves the difficulties people face while demining territories and making the land safe for the population, [International demining organisation] Artsakh Program Manager [name removed] told Hayastani Hanrapetutyun (Republic of Armenia) newspaper. [He] refrained from giving any assessments to the incident yet.

The incident is being scrutinized and the public will be informed about the investigation.

"We are closely cooperating with the law enforcement agencies and the government of Artsakh. We also invited external investigators expecting to receive more complete information."

Doctors continue fighting for the lives of [Victim No.3] and [Victim No.4], the two survivors of the blast. Both underwent serious surgeries.

[Victim No.5] remains in a serious condition due to heavy blood loss. The deminer also suffered a ruptured spleen and kidney, along with numerous other traumas.

[Victim No.4] is said to be in a serious but stable condition and remains under intensive care.

Artsakh's healthcare minister Karine Atayan personally visited the hospital to see the victims and the doctors.

A vehicle belonging to [International demining organisation], a de-mining organization, exploded on a landmine in the Ghazanchi area of Artsakh on March 29, killing three deminers who were in the car. Two others were seriously wounded. In a statement following the incident, [International demining organisation] called the blast "an accidental detonation".

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 1024 | Name: [Name removed] |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: surveyor | Fit for work: DECEASED |
| Compensation: Not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Not recorded | Protection used: none |

Summary of injuries: FATAL

COMMENT: Extensive trauma causing death. No Medical report was made available.

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 1025 | Name: [Name removed] |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: surveyor | Fit for work: DECEASED |
| Compensation: Not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Not recorded | Protection used: none |

Summary of injuries: FATAL

COMMENT: Extensive trauma causing death. No Medical report was made available.

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 1026 | Name: [Name removed] |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: surveyor | Fit for work: DECEASED |
| Compensation: Not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Not recorded | Protection used: none |

Summary of injuries: FATAL

COMMENT: Extensive trauma causing death. No Medical report was made available.

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 1027 | Name: [Name removed] |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: surveyor | Fit for work: not known |
| Compensation: Not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: Not recorded | Protection used: none |

Summary of injuries: multiple trauma

COMMENT: Two days later the Victim was in hospital following surgery and in "a serious but stable condition". He remained "under intensive care". No Medical report was made available.

Victim Report

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Victim number: 1028 | Name: [Name removed] |
| Age: | Gender: Male |
| Status: surveyor | Fit for work: not known |
| Compensation: Not made available | Time to hospital: not recorded |
| Protection issued: | Protection used: none |

Summary of injuries: Multiple severe trauma.

COMMENT: . Two days later the Victim was in hospital following surgery and in a serious condition due to "heavy blood loss". He had suffered a ruptured spleen and kidney, along with "numerous other traumas".. No Medical report was made available.

Analysis

The primary and secondary causes of this accident are listed as 'Other' because the press reports contain insufficient information to determine whether any causes can be identified.

The demining organisation was conducting an information gathering survey rather similar to what was formerly called a Level 1 Survey. All field surveys entail entering areas that could be hazardous. 'Non-technical survey' work conducted in advance may identify areas that are very likely to be hazardous but an absence of information can never guarantee that an area is not hazardous, so the accident may have been 'unavoidable'.

If it was known that the route taken by the 'off-road' vehicle was likely to be mined, the survey should have been conducted using a manual search and slow, but safe, advance. However, it is likely that the mine (as with many mines placed on routes) was an isolated device (or one of a few) used to deny the route to others. If this was the case, it is probable that the demining organisation had no knowledge that the route was hazardous.

The fact that an official police investigation was conducted into this accident may indicate that the demining organisation's vehicle had been deliberately targeted by combatants who did not want their mines removed.