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Humanitarian Demining Accident and Incident Database

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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 10/04/2019	Accident number: 818
Accident time: 10:30	Accident Date: 12/05/2014
Where it occurred: Samlot district, Battambang Province	Country: Cambodia
Primary cause: Inadequate training (?)	Secondary cause: Field control inadequacy (?)
Class: Vegetation removal accident	Date of main report: 12/05/2014
ID original source:	Name of source: Press
Organisation: [Name removed]	
Mine/device: AT (unrecorded)	Ground condition: not recorded
Date record created:	Date last modified: 10/04/2019
No of victims: 2	No of documents: 1

Map details

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

Accident Notes

inadequate survey (?)
inadequate training (?)
no independent investigation available (?)
inadequate investigation (?)
safety distances ignored (?)

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://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/blast-kills-deminers-battambang>

Blast kills deminers in Battambang

Two Cambodian deminers ... were killed on Saturday morning when an anti-tank mine exploded at a work site in Battambang province, according to the organisation that employed them. The [international demining organisation], a UK-based demining nonprofit organisation that has been in Cambodia since the 1990s, said its deminers, [Victim No.1], 30, and [Victim

No.2], 44, died in the province's Samlot district. An investigation into how the accident occurred is under way in conjunction with the Cambodian Mine Action Authority.

According to [international demining organisation] program manager [name removed], who released a statement about the explosion, [Victim no.1] was a 10-year veteran of the organisation, while [Victim No.2] had worked there since 2008.

The accident comes more than a year after four experts with [a different] demining NGO were wounded in January 2013 while disabling anti-aircraft ammunition at their training centre in Kampong Chhnang province.

[Name removed], an official in charge of victim data in Battambang for the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC), said the two men were combing the area on Saturday when the explosion occurred.

Samlot commune police chief, said that according to local villagers, the explosion blew one of the deminers 50 metres from the source, while the other man's body was torn into pieces. "Only 2 kilograms of the body's pieces were found and collected," he said.

Samlot had been a battlefield for nearly 50 years, starting with clashes in the mid-1960s. During the rule of the Vietnamese-backed government some two decades later, countless mines were laid in the area and all along the Thai border in what was known as the K5 project.

As recently as the late 1990s, when Khmer Rouge fighters defected to the government, former Khmer Rouge leaders deposited anti-tank mines there to protect the location in case conflict flared up again.

"Samlot is one of the heavier mine-affected districts, specifically anti-tank mines; it's quite heavy," said [name removed], director general of CMAC.

<https://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/two-cambodian-deminers-die-in-battambang-minefield-58458/>

Two Cambodian Deminers Die in Battambang Minefield: May 12, 2014

Two Cambodian demining experts were killed in Battambang province's Samlot district on Saturday after detonating an anti-tank mine while carrying out clearance work in the former Khmer Rouge stronghold, police said.

[Victim No.1], 30, and [Victim No.2], 44, were killed instantly when the men—working with U.K.-based organization [name removed] — inadvertently triggered the mine while cutting grass in the mine field at 10:30 a.m., said provincial military police commander [name removed].

"The two men were killed by an anti-tank mine shortly before the end of their shift at 10:30 a.m. on Saturday and their bodies have been returned to their families for funeral ceremonies," [he] said.

[International demining organisation] Cambodia program manager [name removed] on Sunday expressed his sorrow following the deaths of [the deminers], who worked for the NGO since 2004 and 2008 respectively, and said the organization was offering its support to the families.

"An investigation to determine the cause of the accident is currently underway in conjunction with the Cambodian Mine Action Authority and [international demining organisation] will ensure that any lessons learnt are shared with the Cambodian Mine Action community."

Samlot district police chief [name removed] said [the demining organisation] has about 40 deminers working in the district, which was a final battleground for Khmer Rouge insurgents and continues to register frequent casualties from landmines and unexploded ordnance.

While uncommon, several accidents over recent years have resulted in the death or maiming of demining experts. In January 2013, four American deminers were badly injured when a UXO exploded at a training centre in Kompong Chhnang province.

And in June, an explosives removal specialist was killed and two others were seriously injured in an accidental explosion at a mine storage warehouse in Koh Kong province used by [the International demining organisation] when a UXO detonated as the men tried to move it.[No reports of this accident have been found.]

Victim Report

Victim number: 1031	Name: [Name removed]
Age: 30	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: Not made available	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: not recorded

Summary of injuries: Extensive blast injuries; FATAL

COMMENT: No Medical report was made available.

Victim Report

Victim number: 1032	Name: [Name removed]
Age: 44	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: DECEASED
Compensation: Not made available	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Not recorded	Protection used: not recorded

Summary of injuries: Extensive blast injuries; FATAL

COMMENT: No Medical report was made available.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as 'Inadequate training' because the Victims were apparently cutting undergrowth (grass) in a manner that detonated an anti-tank mine (which is designed to require the weight of a heavy vehicle to detonate). It is uncertain what vegetation cutting tools they were using. It is possible that an anti-personnel mine was placed on top of the anti-tank mine and one victim stepped on the anti-personnel mine which initiated the anti-tank mine (being on top of the blast would explain one Victim being blown into small pieces).

Even so, they were working in a hazardous area without appropriate caution and moving into an area without searching for the mines as they advanced. They were also too close together for a safe working distance in a hazardous area when the mine detonated. Their training should have prevented them doing any of this. The secondary cause is listed as a 'Field control inadequacy' because their field supervisors should have corrected their errors.

It is possible that the Victims were working as directed, in which case the primary and secondary cause would be 'Management control inadequacy' for allowing the use of inherently unsafe procedures.