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In Remembrance: HALO Staff Killed by AT Mine

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Five Afghan deminers working for the Demining Agency for Afghanistan were killed when the bus they were traveling in was struck by a roadside bomb in Kandahar province on 14 April 2010. Thirteen others were injured. It is unclear whether the explosion was random or targeted against DAFA, a U.S.-supported demining group.

Following the attack, Afghan President Hamid Karzai called on Taliban insurgents to voice their grievances instead of resorting to violence, and reiterated his standing invitation to meet with any insurgent who renounces terrorism. Roadside bombs are common instruments of violence used by the Taliban in a country that has experienced near-continuous warfare for the past 25 years.

DAFA is a non-governmental agency, founded in 1990 and specializing in landmine clearance in the southern and western regions of Afghanistan. Following the explosion, the Special Representative to the Secretary-General of the United Nations issued a statement condemning the incident. "I deplore this attack on these courageous people who for years have devoted their lives to making Afghanistan safer for all," he said in a news release, stressing the fact that mine action is a neutral humanitarian activity.

Hussein Abdi Muhumed, driver for The HALO Trust, and HALO deminer Yousuf Xirsi Bashe were killed when their vehicle detonated an anti-tank mine while returning from work in the Dabogoroyaale minefield of Somaliland on 12 April 2010. Two other HALO staff, Section Commander Abdirahman Ismail Aden and deminer Hassan Dol Ali, were also injured in the accident. The explosion is HALO’s first mine-related death in their 10 years of clearance in Somaliland.

The incident occurred along a well-traveled stretch of road previously declared mine-safe. As a result, it is unclear who emplaced the landmine or how it went unnoticed. HALO, the police and the Somaliland Mine Action Centre are all currently undergoing investigations into the accident, and HALO stressed that no further statements can be made until these investigations are over.

In another incident, one landmine clearance expert was killed and another seriously injured while clearing mines at Mt. Igman in Bosnia in April. Police said the wounded man suffered from pieces of shrapnel in his neck and face but was hospitalized with non life-threatening injuries.