

DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 17/05/2006	Accident number: 153
Accident time: not recorded	Accident Date: 12/08/1997
Where it occurred: Jangalak, Ward 7, Kabul	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Unavoidable (?)	Secondary cause: Field control inadequacy (?)
Class: Excavation accident	Date of main report: [No date recorded]
ID original source: none	Name of source: MAPA/UNOCHA
Organisation: Name removed	
Mine/device: PMN-2 AP blast	Ground condition: grass/grazing area hard
Date record created: 13/02/2004	Date last modified: 13/02/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 1

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 investigation (?)
inadequate metal-detector (?)
handtool may have increased injury (?)
partner's failure to "control" (?)
request for clearance with explosive charge (?)
request for machine to assist (?)
squatting/kneeling to excavate (?)

Accident report

At the time of the accident the UN MAC in Afghanistan favoured the use of two-man teams (usually operating a one-man drill). The two would take it in turns for one to work on vegetation cutting, detecting and excavation, while the other both rested and supposedly "controlled" his partner.

An investigation on behalf of the UN MAC was carried out and its report made briefly available. The following summarises its content.

The victim had been a deminer since November 1995. It had been two months since the victim attended a revision course and 23 days since his last leave. The accident occurred on ground described as a riverbank that was hard, grassy and uneven.

The investigators decided that the victim had got a reading with his detector and investigated it but found nothing. He swept the area again and still got a reading, so without remarking the spot, he squatted to prod again [presumed to have been wearing his helmet and visor].

The Section Leader stated that the victim marked the reading on both occasions and was working properly except that he had failed to get a precise detector reading and so prodded too hard in the wrong place. He blamed ground contamination with many fragments and the ground hardness and recommended that such sites be cleared with a back-hoe machine.

The Project Supervisor stated the ground was unsuitable for prodding prone, so the victim was right to squat and was working properly. He recommended the use of explosive charges to investigate such readings.

The victim stated that he was working properly – and cited his small injuries to support his argument. He also said that his application for leave had been rejected and he might have been distracted.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the accident occurred because the victim failed to mark the position accurately, so prodded onto the top of the mine. He was prodding in a squatting position and without wearing the "anti-fragment" jacket [this may be misleading because frag-jackets were not provided - see "Analysis"].

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that all deminers must try to narrow down detector readings before starting to prod, that the Section Leader should be "strongly advised" because of his poor command and control, and that the anti-frag jacket should be worn when prodding in a squatting position. They added that field management should seriously consider the leave requirements of deminers.

Victim Report

Victim number: 196	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: not known
Compensation: not made available	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Helmet Thin, short visor	Protection used: Helmet, Thin, short visor

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Arms

minor Leg

minor Neck

severe Hand

severe Hearing

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Fingers

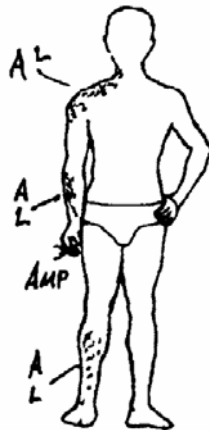
COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

The victim's injuries were summarised as three fingers of his right hand amputated, his ear-drum burst, and minor injuries to his right thigh, arms and neck.

A medic's sketch (reproduced below) included lower right leg injuries.



The demining group reported that the victim had sustained injuries to his right ring and middle fingers fractured and lacerated wounds to the right arm and superficial wounds to his right leg.

A disability claim was forwarded to the insurers on 12th August 1997 (but only forwarded for processing on 22nd January 1998). In this the "disability" was given as "left ear total deafness", and "right ear 20-30% total hearing loss".

No record of a compensation payment was found in June 1998.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as "*Unavoidable*" because it seems likely that the victim was working properly (within the procedures of his group). If he was not marking his detector readings correctly, that would represent a "*Field control inadequacy*" because his error was not corrected.

The investigator's claim that he should have been wearing a fragmentation jacket (if not working prone) must be seen in context. Two heavy NATO frag-jackets per team had been

issued some years before. Excavating in a squatting position was the norm, rather than an exception, so the jackets could not be used by everyone who needed them. As a result the jackets were very seldom worn (in any case, some were reported to have been commandeered by the Taliban forces).

It is a serious management failing that the UN MAC had long been aware that squatting to prod was common but had not addressed protective needs adequately, preferring to insist that the deminers under their indirect control should lie prone. They knew this was ignored because the data in their own accident reports showed that they did not. A similarly blinkered ignorance about the adequacy of thin visors and short AK bayonets also prevailed. The hand damage suffered in this accident illustrates the risks associated with short handtools.

The victim's severe deafness is common in Afghan claims at this time, when insurance favoured such injury and testing the validity of the claims was hard.

The agency that was used to make investigations for the UN MAC (based in Pakistan) at this time was frequently constrained by lack of funds, staff and transport. At times their movement was constrained by safety concerns. As a result, investigations were frequently delayed by weeks, meaning that an assessment of the site at the time of the accident was impossible.

Gathering of further accident and medical treatment detail was prevented by the UN programme manager who denied all access to records in September 1999. Access has continued to be denied up to the date of completion of this version of the database.