DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date:	13/06/2008	**Accident number:**	574
Accident time:	14:35	**Accident Date:**	15/04/1999
Where it occurred:	Ba?ište, Kopaonik	**Country:**	Serbia
Primary cause:	Inadequate training (?)	**Secondary cause:**	Other (?)
Class:	Handling accident	**Date of main report:**	None
ID original source:	None	**Name of source:**	Printed report
Organisation:	[Name removed]		
Mine/device:	BLU-97 submunition	**Ground condition:**	not recorded
Date record created:		**Date last modified:**	13/06/2008
No of victims:	1	**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 (?)

inadequate training (?)

inadequate medical provision (?)

Accident report

No formal accident report was made available. The details of the accident are drawn from a study entitled “The impact of cluster munitions in Serbia and Montenegro” by Jelena Vićentić for Norwegian People’s Aid 2007 [date inferred].
http://www.npaid.org/filestore/YellowKillersNPA.pdf Text in square brackets [ ] is editorial. This record will be revised if more information becomes available.

“It is not known exactly how many casualties were caused by NATO’s use of cluster munitions in Serbia…, although research conducted by NPA has identified [that in addition to civilians], one deminer has been killed and three [severely] injured.

In connection with clearance of submunitions….one police EOD specialist was killed and one army EOD specialist injured during the conflict, and after the conflict one army EOD specialist and one professional deminer working for a private demining company were injured. [The] …two Army EOD specialists … both suffered amputations.

BLU-97 submunition, yellow paint removed by frequent burning of the grass

[A colleague of the victim reported:]

'We were destroying them on site, one by one, and we had been doing that from early morning that day. At about 2.30pm, we were invited to lunch at another hotel nearby. We started walking towards the hotel and then [the Victim] said that he had to go back. He saw a couple of yellow ones near the road and he said that he would not be able to eat in peace if he didn't get them out of the way. Refugees were driving by all the time, that's why he was so concerned. So he went back.

The rest of us kept walking for another five minutes and then we heard a terrible detonation. Somehow, we knew what it was. The sound was different, much louder; sinister, if I can put it that way. We knew that it was [the Victim]. We ran back and the only thing we could see was one blood-stained boot hanging from a tree. And then we realised that he had been blown to pieces. We had to pick each of the pieces up by ourselves; there was nobody else who could do it. The only part of his body that kept some of the human form was upper part of a leg. I will never forget that for as long as I live.'

The new aspects of BLU-97 submunitions were particularly frightening for clearance personnel. For even though some had received special training in submunition disposal two months prior to the start of the campaign, technical information on NATO weaponry was insufficient and myths about the number and sensitivity of the fuzing mechanisms quickly grew up, especially regarding the BLU-97 submunitions. Even clearance experts were extremely fearful of the threat – [Name removed], a military EOD specialist based at Priština airport, admits to having made the sign of a cross when first confronted with a 'field of yellow' – an area carpeted with BLU-97 submunitions.

[EOD teams often collected BLU-97s by hand prior to destruction.]

…despite the significant threat to the safety of the deminers, the rapid removal or destruction of duds during the conflict helps to explain why the number of victims after the attacks remained relatively low.

From the available evidence… this study believes that the following submunition types were used in the air campaign: the US-produced BLU-97 (the most common type deployed in combat); the UK-produced (R)BL 755; the US-produced Mk-118 (‘Rockeyes’); and the French-produced BLG 66. It is not known which NATO member deployed the BLG 66s and their use has never been officially acknowledged by any NATO member state.

Victim Report

Victim number: 750 **Name:** [Name removed]

Age: 45 **Gender:** Male

Status: deminer **Fit for work:** DECEASED

Compensation: Not recorded **Time to hospital:** Not recorded

Protection issued: Not recorded **Protection used:** Not recorded

Summary of injuries:

severe Body

severe Head

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Arms; Legs

FATAL

COMMENT: "blown to pieces". No medical report was made available.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as “Inadequate training” because it seems that the Victim had not been trained in the dangers associated with touching or moving the BLU-97. The training was not available at the time, so no criticism is intended. The secondary cause is listed as “Other” because it is uncertain what the Victim was doing immediately before the

accident. Because the Victim made the decision to deal with the visible submunitions on his own, it is presumed that no one present had authority over him.

Because the Victim's colleagues had to collect his body parts, it is inferred that no medic or ambulance was on site.

This record will be revised if more information is made available.