

DDAS Accident Report 743

Accident details

Report date: 05/04/2019	Accident number: 743
Accident time: 07:40	Accident Date: 11/10/2007
Where it occurred: Bint Jbeil, Kunin, Area 3.	Country: Lebanon
Primary cause: Victim inattention (?)	Secondary cause: Other (?)
Class: Handling accident	Date of main report: 16/12/2009
ID original source: None	Name of source: Press/other
Organisation: [Name removed]	Ground condition: hard, rocks/stones, steep slope
Mine/device: M77 submunition	Date last modified: 05/04/2019
Date record created:	No of documents: 1
No of victims: 1	

Map details

Longitude:	Latitude:
Alt. coord. system: UTM: 0730427 3670423	Coordinates fixed by:

Accident Notes

inadequate investigation (?)
no independent investigation available (?)
protective equipment not worn (?)

Accident report

The report of this accident is largely compiled from press reports, edited for anonymity. Another demining/EOD organisation was tasked to remove the explosive hazards left at the accident site and their report was made available in 2018.

11th October 2009 Lebanon

A press photograph showed the Victim squatting in desert with a white Ebinger-420 metal-detector.

Lebanon blast death of bomb expert

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

An "exceptional" bomb disposal expert died when he was trying to get rid of a cluster bomb in Lebanon.

The Victim was trying to dispose of an M77 submunition when it exploded, an inquest heard.

[The Victim] was working on a M77 submunition near Bint Jbeil on 11 October 2007 when the bomb exploded. He was trying to remove the part of the mine that made it functional.

[The Victim] "...was a supervisor of the team and went to work on an ongoing site and while he was conducting the clearance he had an accident with a cluster bomb," a spokeswoman for the UN Mine Action Co-ordination Centre (MACC) said. "We do not know yet if he stepped on the cluster bomb or there was an accident while dismantling it," she said.

The 36-year-old, a soldier with the Royal Engineers for more than 17 years. After leaving the Army he worked as an instructor in bomb disposal and had been in Lebanon for a month, working for [Demining group] clearing mines and unexploded bombs, when he was killed.

An inquest held yesterday in [place removed], heard that [the Victim] was trying to remove part of the device that made it functional when the accident happened on October 11, 2007 – the day after his birthday.

Post-mortem tests revealed that he died as a result of blast injuries.

RAF bomb disposal expert Squadron Leader [Name removed] told the inquest the method of bomb disposal, called render safe, was used only when the level of threat was "serious, grave and immediate". [Name removed] said he did not want to speculate why the bomb went off but said a number of factors could have contributed, such as the weather conditions or sand or grit caught in the device.

[The coroner] recorded a narrative verdict: "[The Victim] died while attempting to render safe an unexploded bomb," she said. "It exploded while he was carrying out this procedure."

After the inquest, [Demining group] director of ordnance management [Name removed] said [the Victim], a battle area clearance team leader, was deployed to Lebanon in September 2007. He said the bomb [the Victim] was trying to dispose of was dropped by Israeli forces during the 2006 war with Hezbollah.

A spokesman for [Demining group] said at the time: "[the Victim] was a shining example of those who work in this highly-dangerous field, without whom local communities are unable to rebuild their lives safely and confidently following armed conflict. Although he had only been with us for a short time, he had proved himself highly capable, an excellent leader and was well-liked and respected."

The separate demining/EOD team sent to make the area safe after the accident found 33 M7 submunitions, shown after being collected together below.



It is normal for these munitions to be 'gagged' by having the slide which blocks the firing pin held in place by wrapping strong adhesive tape around the fuze assembly. It is not normal to then break away the metal housing to remove the firing pin, but in this case that had been done.



Considerable force was needed to shear the metal but the result may have been thought technically 'safer' than simply 'gagging' the slide bar. Gagging prevents the pin falling onto the sensitive detonator but the pin is still there. By breaking the housing and removing the pin, there is less risk of an accidental detonation if the 'gagging' should fail.

However, the person leading the second demining/EOD team reported that gagging with several wraps does not fail so the intervention was unnecessary, and that the victim had died while doing something that he believed was inherently unsafe.

The second team also photographed the area of the accident, showing a rocky hillside with little vegetation.



Victim Report

Victim number: 934

Name: [Name removed]

Age: 36

Gender: Male

Status: supervisory

Fit for work: DECEASED

Compensation: Not made available

Time to hospital: Not made available

Protection issued: Not recorded

Protection used: Not recorded

Summary of injuries:

FATAL

COMMENT: No medical report was made available. No details of the injuries were recorded.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as *Victim inattention* because it seems that the Victim was trying to remove the firing pin from an M77, which is not generally accepted as a necessary risk to take. When the device must be moved, the norm is to render it safe by winding a “gag” over the arming slide to prevent it sliding out (using adhesive tape) before moving it. If the device has armed, the convention is to destroy it where it is.

Because no information about the context of the accident is available, it is not possible to judge whether movement of the device was necessary. The secondary cause is listed as *Other* because there may have been circumstances surrounding the accident that are not yet clear.

The only photograph of the Victim showed him with a detector in Lebanon and not wearing PPE. There is a convention among some EOD techs to avoid wearing PPE in hazardous circumstances, so it is possible that the Victim was not wearing PPE when the accident occurred. The M77 is a combined effects munition with a small explosive charge, anti-personnel fragmentation and an anti-armour shaped charge. PPE could have provided some protection against the blast and fragmentation, but not the shaped charge.

The “Inadequate investigation” listed under notes refers to the absence of a full accident report.