

DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 19/04/2006	Accident number: 89
Accident time: not recorded	Accident Date: 14/06/1997
Where it occurred: Tapi Tajbeg, Ward 7, Kabul City	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Unavoidable (?)	Secondary cause: Inadequate equipment (?)
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 AP blast	Ground condition: agricultural (abandoned) bushes/scrub grass/grazing area hard
Date record created: 24/01/2004	Date last modified: 24/01/2004
No of victims: 1	No of documents: 2

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 metal-detector (?)
inadequate investigation (?)
handtool may have increased injury (?)
request for better PPE (?)
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 for three years. It was 13 months since he had last attended a revision course and 45 days since his last leave. The accident occurred on agricultural land on a hillside: described as hard. A photograph showed flat and dusty ground with grass with many small trees.

The investigators determined that the victim was prodding with a bayonet in the squatting position, but was not wearing a frag-vest. He was wearing his helmet when he prodded onto a PMN mine. The victim's bayonet was "lost" and the helmet damaged.

The Team Leader said that metal contamination in the ground made it hard to differentiate readings and the ground was very hard. He said that such accidents might be avoided by issuing deminers with visors only, not helmets.

The Section Leader blamed the ground contamination, and acknowledged that the victim was also in error for prodding at the wrong angle.

The victim's partner said he was doing his job properly and that the continuously signalling (Schiebel AN/19) detector was the cause. He said better mine detectors would help prevent such accidents.

The victim said the area was not suitable for working prone, but that he did not know "the exact cause" of the accident.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the detector was constantly signalling so the victim could not centre the reading properly and so may have marked it poorly. They thought that the victim's helmet and visor saved his eyes from serious injury. They concurred that the ground conditions were unsuitable for prone prodding.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that extra care should be taken in the clearance of such an area.

Victim Report

Victim number: 120	Name: [Name removed]
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: yes
Compensation: 150,000 Rs	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Helmet Thin, short visor	Protection used: Helmet, Thin, short visor

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Arm

minor Legs

minor Neck

severe Hand

severe Leg

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Fingers

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

The victim's injuries were summarised as two fingers of his right hand amputated, also right foot injury and left hand fragments.

A sketch showed fragments to both shins, fingers of right hand amputated, fragments on inside of left arm and in neck. [Note: The medical report is the only place where the fact that both legs were also hit by fragments is mentioned (even the deminer himself forgets them in his own statement).]

A disability claim was made on 14th June 1997 describing his injuries as "complete and compound" fractures of right hand – amputated index finger and last phalanx little-finger, skin grafts and fractures set. Wound right leg (foreign body removed surgically). As a result the function of his right hand was described as "limited".

Compensation of 150,000 Rs was forwarded on 13th November 1997.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as "*Unavoidable*" because it seems likely that the victim was working properly (as directed) when the accident occurred.

The fact that the victim was expected to work with a detector that did not allow him to pinpoint his finds was a failure of group management. The inadequacy of the detector was well known but had not been addressed. Either the detector should have been replaced with a better machine or a different clearance method used. The secondary cause is listed as "*Inadequate equipment*".

The use of a squatting position to "excavate" was in breach of UN requirements, but not in breach of the demining group's unauthorised variations to those requirements. The failure of the UN MAC to either listen to field feedback and adapt the SOP for local conditions, or enforce their own standards may be seen as a further management failing.

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.

Related papers

The deminer was interviewed in Kabul on 22nd July 1998. A photograph of him reconstructing his working position when the accident occurred is shown below. At the time of the interview he was working with the demining group as a guard/chawkidar.



The victim showed his injured hand – one entire finger was amputated (the index finger) and the top of the fore-finger. Scars between the third and fourth finger had contracted causing the fingers to be hooked and partly disabled. He showed a long scar on his right leg that may have been caused by his bayonet – but he said he was unconscious so did not know whether it was the bayonet or the blast.