DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date:	18/05/2006	**Accident number:**	250
Accident time:	not recorded	**Accident Date:**	23/09/1998
Where it occurred:	Baghi Langak village, Jalriz, Wardak Province	**Country:**	Afghanistan
Primary cause:	Unavoidable (?)	**Secondary cause:**	Unavoidable (?)
Class:	Excavation accident	**Date of main report:**	[No date recorded]
ID original source:	none	**Name of source:**	MAPA/UNOCHA
Organisation:	Name removed		
Mine/device:	Ordnance	**Ground condition:**	dry/dusty hard route/path
Date record created:	17/02/2004	**Date last modified:**	17/02/2004
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 equipment (?)

handtool may have increased injury (?)

victim working prone (?)

Accident report

An investigation on behalf of the UN MAC was carried out and its report made available in September 1999. The following summarises its content.

The victim had been a deminer for more than four years. He had last been on leave 38 days before and had last attended a revision course three months before. The accident occurred on a road described as "hard". Photographs showed very hard packed earth under a coating

of dust. The national authorities had asked for the road to be cleared as a priority and the regional MAC in Kabul had assigned the task to a mine-dog group.

They started work two days before the accident and subsequently found many AP and AT mines (mostly Italian). No one could find any parts of the device involved in this accident but the investigators decided that the size of the blast indicated that it was a "fuse/warhead" of a UXO.

Two dogs were run over the accident site and both signalled positively. The victim started searching with a detector where they had indicated and he got a reading. He marked the spot and started to prod in a "prone" position. As he approached the second marker he paused to remove the loosened earth with his hands. [It is not clear whether he raised himself up to do this.] As he removed the soil a device exploded, amputating his thumb and two fingers on his right hand. The victim stood up after the accident.

The victim was treated in the field and evacuated to the ICRC hospital in Kabul.

The Group Leader said that the victim was working properly when the accident occurred. He said that reducing the length of each demining mission (from 60 to 45 days) would reduce the chance of incidents.

The Section Leader said the victim was working properly and that two days later they found three Iranian AT mines less than ten metres from the accident site.

A witness deminer said that the victim was working properly and lying prone when the accident occurred.

The Victim said he was working properly when the accident occurred.

A photograph of the accident site appeared to show no "crater" at all.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the victim did not centre his detector reading adequately and so started excavating in the wrong place. They also thought it possible that he believed he was looking for an anti-tank mine so was careless about applying pressure as he removed the soil.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that revision courses stress the need to centralise readings and to avoid applying pressure when removing loose soil.

Victim Report

Victim number: 324

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:

severe Hand

AMPUTATION/LOSS

Fingers

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

No formal medical report was made available.

A photograph of the victim showed his right hand bandaged but with most of the damaged digits still in place. Surgical amputation presumably occurred later and it is possible that only parts of the fingers were removed.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as *"Unavoidable"* because there is no evidence to suggest that the victim was working improperly and it is not known how "detectable" the device which exploded was.

The fact that it is common for deminers to use their left (other) hand to sweep away loosened soil may be relevant. The left hand is then directly over any deeply buried device that may now be sensitive to detonation. While injuries at this stage of clearance are rare, the provision of a long handled trowel or scraping tool to remove the spoil could reduce risk.

The continued use of a short bayonet in Afghanistan (often with a gardening-glove issued for the left hand) ignores tooling advances made in other theatres. While some trials on university-designed equipment have been made in the region, none had been made using the tools found appropriate in other theatres as of September 1999.