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DDAS Accident Report

Accident details

Report date: 15/05/2006	Accident number: 106
Accident time: not recorded	Accident Date: 13/03/1997
Where it occurred: Sarpoze, Ward 6 Kandahar City	Country: Afghanistan
Primary cause: Management/control inadequacy (?)	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-2 AP blast	Ground condition: building rubble residential/urban
Date record created: 12/02/2004	Date last modified: 12/02/2004
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 (?)
long handtool may have reduced injury (?)
partner's failure to "control" (?)
request for better PPE (?)
request for machine to assist (?)
use of pick (?)

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 four years. It was six months since he last attended a revision course and 34 days since his last leave. The ground in the area was residential land and the accident occurred inside a ruined building. A photograph showed excavations inside a high walled structure with loose soil to a depth of 1.5 metres. [The walls were of bricks made from baked clay which "melt" in heavy rain.]

The investigators determined that the victim was clearing inside a collapsed building. The mines were probably laid on the roof, which had fallen in, so may have been in any position in the ground. The mine was identified as a PMN-2 (from "found fragments"). The victim's visor shattered and a photograph showed jagged fractures and little evidence of blast impact. [This damage implies a twisting force on a brittle plastic, indicating that the visor was probably raised, so explaining the facial injuries.] The deminer's pick was also damaged.

The victim said he was working in a ruined house excavating a detector reading. The mine was under the ground on its side so he hit it with the pick as he worked [the pick is swung from the side at an angle of about 30° to the ground]. He said he was working properly and that more back-hoes are needed to prevent further accidents.

The victim's partner said that he was working properly and that the mine may have moved with the rubble and caused the accident.

The Section Leader said the accident occurred because the mine was buried at an angle, and asked for more back-hoes.

Conclusion

The investigators concluded that the victim was saved from serious injury because he was wearing his "armour jacket" and his helmet at the time.

Recommendations

The investigators recommended that the reason the visor shattered should be investigated and that, in future, clearance of such tasks should be carried out with a back-hoe.

Victim Report

Victim number: 139	Name: Name removed
Age:	Gender: Male
Status: deminer	Fit for work: presumed
Compensation: 3,929 Rs	Time to hospital: not recorded
Protection issued: Frag jacket Helmet Thin, short visor	Protection used: Frag jacket, Helmet

Summary of injuries:

INJURIES

minor Arm
minor Chest
minor Face
minor Hand
minor Neck

COMMENT

See medical report.

Medical report

The victim's injuries were summarised as minor injuries to both hands, fingers and face.

A photograph showed the deminer with both hands bandaged and some abrasions to nose and left side of face.

A medical report called all injuries superficial except the right forearm, which it defined as "soft tissue injury".

A sketch (reproduced below) showed injuries to chest, neck and face – but not forearm.



The insurers were informed on 13th March 1997 that the victim had sustained injuries to his right forearm, both hands, chest, neck, nose, and left side of face. A claim was submitted on 29th May 1997 describing the injuries as: superficial injuries on the hands, nose, left side of face, right arm and soft tissues.

Compensation of 3,929 Rs was paid on 27th June 1997. The low compensation is taken to indicate that his injuries were light enough for him to return to work.

Analysis

The primary cause of this accident is listed as a "*Management control inadequacy*" because the victim was working inside a ruined building without appropriate tools. The secondary cause is listed as "*Inadequate equipment*".

The accident investigators find no fault with the victim or his immediate supervisors, and appear to think the accident was inevitable under the circumstances. All those involved agreed that the deployment of mechanical assistance was needed.

The use of back-hoes in these areas of Afghanistan has been very successful but there are few of them and not all are serviceable. The failure to provide more and to deploy them widely is a management inadequacy.

His partner failed to ensure that his visor was not worn raised. It is possible that the frag-jacket was not worn. The sketch of injuries shows damage in areas that the frag-jacket would have covered and the fragments from no other blast mine in these records have been fast enough to penetrate a frag-jacket. However, the sketch omits other injuries so may be inaccurate.

The use of a pick and a squatting position to "excavate" were both 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 SOPs for local conditions, or enforce their own standards may be seen as a 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.