

25 January 2012

TO: Col Ron Stuckey

FROM: Linda Mahon

Memo for Record

At approximately 0820 on Wednesday, 25 January 2012, post employees began receiving phone calls stating that they had heard an explosion somewhere on post. Several minutes later, Col Hennigan received a phone call from Terry Wright, General Manager for Explo Systems, reporting that they had experienced an "air burst" in their "cryofracture operation". Since the post was not aware that Explo had a "cryofracture operation", Col Hennigan and I began an investigation into the matter.

The investigation revealed that Explo had been awarded a Research and Development Contract to validate a process involving freezing a munition in liquid nitrogen, then crushing it with a hydraulic press and then burning the debris in an open burn situation. The freezing and crushing operation is known as "cryofracture". The contract called for them to test the process on three separate submunitions that are not candidates for typical demil operations – the BLU-91/B, the BLU-92/B and the BLU-97/B. These items are known as "combined effects bomb(lets)" and are housed in large numbers (150 – 250 bomblets per weapon) in various Combined Effects Munitions that are dispensed from aircraft and provide wide area effectiveness against armor, personnel and material. Because they are assembled in such a way to "self arm", they cannot be disassembled. The explosion that was reported occurred while they were burning the debris from a BLU-97/B and the center booster assembly containing approximately 5 grams of PETN experienced a low level detonation. They started performing on the contract in November 2011. They had successfully completed the entire operation on all of the -91/Bs, the -92/Bs and half of the -97/Bs (leaving approximately 102 units left to burn) at the time of the detonation. They had obtained the necessary permits from LDEQ for conducting the open burn on S-line when they modified their RCRA Part B disposal permit in August 2011.

In meeting with Terry Wright, Ferris Callahan, Col Hennigan and myself yesterday, Explo continued to maintain that they were not aware of any restrictions placed on them by the post on what they do inside of S-line. They have been given the policies and procedures in writing and have been verbally informed on numerous occasions, but at your direction I will reiterate the requirements in writing again.

They were, however, cognizant of the fact that they had violated several State and Federal statutes in pursuit of this contract:

1. Change in status of buildings 1617 and 1631 from “not in use and secured to prevent entry” to in use. This change requires notification to the State Fire Marshal’s office and an inspection of the premises to insure that they meet Life Safety Codes. Not only did they not inform the Fire Marshal in advance of the change, but they withheld this information from him during his annual inspection on December 8, 2011 when he informed them that he needed to inspect all of their occupied buildings and they did not volunteer that 1617 and 1631 were “in use”..
2. Violation of post Transportation Policy that requires that all transportation of explosives on post complies with Department of Transportation regulations when they transported an unspecified quantity of open trays filled with explosive debris to the magazines in L-2 for storage pending the burning operation. Terry stated that they couldn’t disturb the trays by trying to pack them properly because the detonators were too sensitive and would function.
3. Storage of the open trays of explosive debris in the magazines in violation of post policy and the State Police, ATF and DoD regulations,
4. They had been “storing” them on S-line (in violation of State Police and ATF regulations requiring licensing, magazine construction and security) but moved them in advance of my inspection of their premises on 12/7/11 and the SFM inspection on 12/8/11.
5. Violation of the post Transportation Policy – again – when they moved them back to S-line to continue with the burning process.
6. Failure to obtain an approved DoD site plan for the two buildings they used for this operation.

They both maintained that the posts policies and procedures were issued to Explo long before either of them came to work for Explo and, therefore, could not be held accountable for not complying with them. Terry also claimed to have no recollection of subsequent conversations with Col Hennigan and me about our expectations from them that we be provided with adequate information regarding any contract that they were anticipating performing so that we could evaluate its impact on the post.

Terry reiterated again that it was their belief that Explo leased S-line and all of its facilities and that what they did inside of S-line was not subject to our control.

It should also be noted that when I saw the CBU-87 dispenser (the pod that holds the submunitions) on the dock in building 1629 in December 2011) he stated that it was an inert that had been sent to them so they could figure out how to safely remove the submunitions from it prior to the cryofracturing operation. He did not volunteer any information indicating that they were currently performing a live contract on the submunitions.

Since they, in fact, to have the necessary permits and procedures in place to perform the remainder of the burning operation, the only safe and sensible continuing action is to allow Explo to complete the burning operation as planned and for us to send out the normal notification that explosive testing operations are taking place on S-line in case they have another detonation. (Note: the State Military Department forfeited the right to prevent open burning and thermal treatment of explosives on S-line when they gave their approval as the land owner on Explo's Hazardous Waste Treatment, Storage and Disposal Permit with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality. The only limiting ability SMD would have on the operation is the requirement that Explo lease or have the ability to control usage and access to the required Quantity Distance arcs imposed by the operation.)

Had they followed Camp Minden's policies and procedures, we could have:

1. Reviewed their site plan, facilities and planned procedures for compliance with regulatory and industry best practices to insure that Camp Minden's interests were protected.
2. assisted them with obtaining occupancy approval from the SFM for buildings 1617 and 1631
3. assisted them in obtaining licensed an approved on-site storage for the explosive debris trays
4. made the necessary and proper tenant and community notifications regarding the burning operation so that the low level detonation would not have resulted in the local concerned phone calls
5. briefed the Force Protection personnel on the planned activities on S-line to include possible low level detonations and smoke
6. Prevented – or at least controlled – the danger to personnel, facilities and equipment that resulted from Explo's transport of the open debris trays to and from the magazines.



Col Hennigan:

As we talked earlier we are under contract with General Atomics through Picatinny to conduct cryofracture testing on several CBU/BLU mines. The 91 and 92s went without any kind of deflagration.

We are now in the process of doing the test burns on the BLU 97 which contains a small booster that if in an unknown orientation has a tendency to deflagrate. This morning this situation occurred and due to the low cloud cover created an unusual noise vibration that traveled into the other areas of the base.

We have approximately 150 more charges to burn and hope that you will allow us to continue with this process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Terry Wright". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Wm. Terry Wright

Vice President of Operations

Explo-Systems.