

United States Air Force Ground Accident Investigation Board Report
On-Duty Fatality
Joint Base Balad, Iraq
15 September 2010

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On the morning of 15 September 2010, six members of the 332d Air Expeditionary Wing's Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) flight performed controlled detonations of unserviceable ordnance on the EOD range at Joint Base Balad (JBB), Iraq. The unserviceable ordnance included various munitions as well as M1028 cartridges that were divided among six planned positions at the detonation area. A group of nineteen non-EOD military members were allowed to observe the detonations as casual observers. Six of the nineteen observers volunteered to initiate the detonations from a concrete structure on the range approximately 769 feet from the detonation area. EOD members positioned these six volunteers under the structure where they had direct line of sight visibility to the detonation area. The other thirteen observers took positions around the concrete structure; most where they could directly view the blasts. The type and amount of ordnance detonated on 15 September required all individuals within 2,092 feet from the detonations to have both frontal and overhead protection from the explosions. The EOD team chief conducted a safety briefing to both the EOD members and all of the observers covering the safety procedures for the controlled detonations. The Range Safety Officer (RSO) then positioned himself in front of the six volunteers and directed the first volunteer to initiate the first detonation at approximately 0941 hours local time. A few seconds after the first explosion, the RSO directed the second volunteer to initiate the second detonation.

At approximately 0942 hours local time, fragmentation from the second controlled detonation struck two of the six volunteers selected to initiate the detonations. A large fragment of a M1028 cartridge base plate struck an active-duty Air Force Senior Airman in the chest then exited his left side and struck an active-duty Army Staff Sergeant in the right forearm and left groin area. The Air Force member is assigned to 332d Expeditionary Operations Support Squadron, 332d Air Expeditionary Wing, at JBB, Iraq. The Army member is assigned to the 334th Quartermaster Battalion supporting Task Force 6-30 at JBB, Iraq. No other individuals, equipment or facilities were injured or damaged.

EOD members and observers immediately provided basic life-support and limb-saving techniques to help the two injured military volunteers. At approximately 0945 hours local time, Air Force and Army Emergency Responders arrived on scene and took over providing first aid. The 332d Expeditionary Medical Group's Chief of Aerospace Medicine arrived on scene and pronounced the active-duty Air Force Senior Airman dead at 1009 hours local time. The Army Staff Sergeant was transported by ambulance to the JBB hospital at approximately 1015 hours local time. A short time later, Air Force Mortuary Affairs transported the Air Force Senior Airman to the JBB mortuary.