



Press Release

Mine Accident in Vanj



5 September 2006

On Friday 1 September 2006, at approximately 16:30 an APM was inadvertently detonated by a civilian on a mountaintop near the village of Khikhik in the Vanj region in Eastern Tajikistan as the result of which one person lost his life.

At approximately 18:00, the team leader of FSD demining group in the Vanj region, VAHHOBOV was informed that a mine accident had occurred at a site near the village of Khikhik 7 km away from the FSD campsite and that this accident had caused serious injuries to one person at the site. VAHHOBOV together with one medic, Mr. Zarofat Mahmudova, and two deminers went to the site with an ambulance.

Due to the location of the explosion, (approximately 2.5 km up on a mountaintop), VAHHOBOV and the two deminers set off to locate and carry the victim back to the ambulance at the bottom of the mountain for emergency medical assistance. The victim was located near the trek path together with one member of the local community who was by his side. Initial observations of his condition were noted as severe bleeding from both legs. The group carrying the victim on a stretcher descended the mountain in 22 minutes. Unfortunately the victim was pronounced dead upon arrival at the medic's point.

The victim was identified at 54-year old Zagirdavlat GANDUMOV, an inhabitant of the village of Shaud who had gone to the mountain to gather firewood. He leaves behind a wife and children.

TMAC confirms that the area was known as a dangerous mine zone to the local inhabitants, including the victim and visible danger signs had been in place for some time. Regretfully, this is the fifth such incident which has resulted in human fatalities (an additional 11 people have also been injured) this year alone.

In spite of these unfortunate incidents, demining operations in the Republic of Tajikistan continue as far as funds allow. Four groups of deminers have been working tirelessly in various regions of the country, including the Vanj region, since the beginning of this year's demining season in April. Since the beginning of the programme, more than 260,000 square meters of land have been cleared. These demining operations have also led to the discovery and eventual destruction of more than 2,000 planted mines and more than 700 pieces of unexploded ordnance.

The national mine action programme in Tajikistan is supported by international donations but continues to falter due to insufficient support and inadequate funding. Although Vanj region has been identified as high priority area for mine clearance operations, chronic delays (due to insufficient funding) have hampered demining activities. It is hoped that donors might support Tajikistan's bid for adequate funding for the purpose of investing in new heavy equipment and demining machinery in 2007 to accelerate operations in the area and prevent such tragic accidents from occurring in the future.