

Fishing Trawler Nets UXO Crew Unaware of Hazard

Posted At : December 4, 2009 5:05 AM | Posted By : Admin

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Cape Agulhas, South Africa A commercial fishing trawler fishing 90 miles off-shore pulled up a large old rusted metal cylinder. The crew had no idea what the strange object from the sea was but standard procedure was not to drop heavy objects brought up by their nets back overboard unless they were too dangerous to transport back. When the ship returned from sea, cranes were used to unload any large debris items found. Assuming that the rusted heavy barrel like object was nothing more than debris, the crew secured it to the deck and continued to fish.

When the trawler returned to port, the rusty object was unloaded from the trawler and placed next to a dumpster. It wasn't until an engineer from the Viking Fishing company who had previously served in the military noticed that the item may be a munition that everyone became concerned. The police were called in to inspect the object. The local South African police responding to the call reportedly used an explosive sniffing dog to aid in the inspection. When the dog alerted on the object indicating that it potentially contained explosives, the area was evacuated including nearby businesses.

Military explosives experts were called in to deal with the explosive hazard. The responding unit identified the munition as a British Mk VII depth charge. The depth charge, which contained 130kg of TNT, was rendered safe (detonator removed) on-site and safely transported off-site for proper disposal. The Mk VII depth charge was a common depth charge carried and deployed by British Royal Navy and South African warships during WWII.