

Banana Boat and Explosive Fish Bombs Leads to Arrests

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Solomon Islands The Royal Solomon Islands Police arrested two men at Alligator Creek after confiscating two bottles of explosives suspected of being "fish bombs". The men, ages 27 and 19, allegedly extracted the explosives from WWII UXO (type of UXO and explosives not reported) which are scattered throughout the islands. The explosives were placed into glass bottles and then a crude wick was placed into each as a means to initiate the device. Fishermen have been known to use the devices to stun and kill fish in an area in order to harvest their catch.

Police initially observed the men behaving suspiciously after landing their banana boat at a village on the western side of the river at Alligator Creek. Police questioned the two and performed a search of the boat. During the search, an old rusted tin can was found on the floor of the boat. Inside the can Police found the two homemade explosive devices. EOD was called to safely handle and dispose of the devices.

The two men were arrested and face several charges under the Fisheries Act of 1998 and the Explosives Act including using explosives for the purpose of fishing and extraction and possession of explosives. Although constructing, transporting and using so-called "fish bombs" is illegal, the practice is wide spread throughout the Solomon Islands. In order to better understand the problem and to develop a plan to combat the practice, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force held a meeting with other government agencies including the Ministry of Fisheries, Ministry of Environment, and the Honiara City Health Division. Besides the obvious explosives safety concerns, the group discussed concerns over the risks associated with consuming fish potentially contaminated as a result of the practice and potential damage to fisheries and reefs.