

Too Close For Comfort for Two EOD Airmen

Posted At : February 26, 2009 7:05 PM | Posted By : Admin

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Kirkuk, Iraq The 506th Air Expeditionary Group based at Kirkuk Regional Air Base in Iraq received a call to respond to a suspicious munition item. EOD responded and found what appeared to be a live rocket pointed towards the Coalition Forces Base Camp. EOD was unable to identify the exact type of rocket but had at least enough information to perform a basic render safe procedure on the rocket so they could safely transport it back to Base Camp for further analysis.

When EOD returned to Base Camp with the rocket, two EOD Airmen set up an x-ray system against the rocket in order to identify its contents. As the Airmen were walking away from the x-ray system, the rocket exploded sending a massive shock wave and fragmentation toward them. Luckily for the Airmen, several pieces of equipment (reported as a pressure washer and grill) blocked some of the frag. Other pieces of frag hit the two Airmen in their legs, arms and backs.

After the men were safely transported to a field hospital for medical assistance, an investigation of the incident found that the explosion was not an accident. Reportedly, insurgents booby-trapped the rocket using a smaller remote controlled explosive charge hidden inside of the rocket body. Apparently this was one of the first times that a booby trap was setup inside of a munition. Other munitions themselves have been booby-trapped but this particular design was clearly aimed at EOD operator by making it appear that the rocket could be rendered safe.

The two Airmen recovered from their wounds and each received a Purple Heart from Brig. Gen. Brian Bishop, inside the same compound where they were wounded.