

Bomb Disposal in Japan and Korea, 1953 to 1953.

Much is spoken of around Bomb Disposal, however some subject matters receive very little or no coverage.

Here is some information around the BD small part in Japan and Korea.

Information is from a file held in the Royal Engineers Museum, (REM) Archives.

Did Bomb Disposal have a presence in Korea, apart from a brief mention in the Corps History Volume X 1948 to 1960, which says;

A small RE BD Section formed part of BRITCOM Engineer Regiment in 1952 dealing with a number of unexploded bombs, including three influence sea mines, both in Korea and Japan.

The worked closely with the US Army BD Organisation, also maintaining a flow of BD intelligence to the UK. By mid-1953 the Section was disbanded, since neither the Korean air attacks were heavy nor residual tasks in Japan this meant they were not needed. Also the strength of the US BD presence, made them redundant.

Thereafter one BD trained Officer and two NCOs remained to ensure there was a flow of information back to the UK and render assistance if the US BD needed it.

From REM Archives.

1. During 1952/53 an RE BD Section which was part of BRITCOM Engineer Regiment operated in Japan and Korea, working in conjunction with the US Army Squads. The establishment of this section was:
Officer 1 (Captain)
Sergeant 1
Corporals 1
2. In 1952 the Section dealt with a number of incidents both in Japan and Korea, and in one period of 5 weeks dealt with 7 bombs and 3 influence sea mines, one of these being a Russian M26 contact mine, found at Kunsan on the Korean coast. The Section maintained a flow of BD Intelligence to the UK regarding the details of Russian ordnance found in Korea, and sent home samples of artillery and bomb fuzes for examination and subsequent BD training purposes.
3. During 1952, the BD Section RE was commanded by Lt later Captain D J W Dalby RE who was subsequently relieved by Capt F C Smith MBE RE (ex BD Scholl, Horsham) in Jan 53. Unfortunately, in April 1953, this officer suffered serious injuries to his hands and eyes when a Russian Type AM-A bomb fuze, which he was dismantling in readiness for dispatch to the UK, exploded in his hands. Despite the permanent damage to his hands and eyes and by considerable personal effort to overcome his handicaps, he was operating again from Seoul, Korea by the end of June 53. (Capt DJW Dalby was awarded the MBE for dealing with a UXB in Hong Kong, see at the bottom of the Korean details).
4. All in all it began to become apparent that neither the weight of enemy air attack on Korea nor the residual tasks in Japan justified the continuing full-time existence of the BD Section. In any case the considerable available US EOD resources (some 15 units) were well able to handle any contingency and especially so subsequent to the Truce concluded by Jul 53.
5. It was therefore agreed that the BD Section RE should be disbanded, but to ensure that there continued to be a flow of BD intelligence on Russian ordnance to the UK, and some assistance could be given to the US EOD organisation if it became overloaded, it was also agreed that 1 officer and 2 NCOs BD trained should be held on strength of 28 Field Engineer Regiment to provide this cover.
6. Special mention was made in June 1953 of some sterling work carried out by Sgt Mander (of BD Section RE) in support of 28 Fd Engr Regt, 1 Commonwealth Division during a detachment in Korea from Japan. (Sergeant Mander was awarded the BEM for dealing with a UXB in Hong Kong, see at the bottom of the Korean details).
- 7.

8. The officers in commanding BD Section RE remained in touch with HQ BD Unit (UK) throughout their respective tours and some valuable information was gained from the examination of Russian Ordnance and in working closely with the US EOD units who also provided a considerable amount of intelligence on their particular experiences in Korea.

Some additional information not held in the file, relevant to Captain Dalby and Sergeant Manders later service in Hong Kong.

DALBY, Derek James William MBE, (398140) Captain, Bomb Disposal Section, Malta Fortress Company, Royal Engineers

The Citation is taken from file WO373/122/63 held at the National Archives.

Posted in the London Gazette on the 24th May 1967. Supplement 41077. Page 3075.

At 4 pm on the 21 December 1956, Captain Dalby received information through the Malta Police that workmen engaged in excavating at (cannot read the location). He collected some essential items of the bomb disposal equipment and a few men and went straight to the site.

On arrival they dug away the soil surrounding the object and revealed a 250-kilogram German General-Purpose bomb. The fuzes could not be seen since they were underneath so he carefully rolled the bomb over.

On cleaning off the tops of the fuzes these were revealed as being a clockwork long delay fuze fitted with an anti-handling device and also an anti-disturbance fuze similarly fitted. This was the type of bomb which caused so many casualties to Bomb Disposal personnel during the last war.

The bomb was situated in the middle of a large built-up area and Captain Dalby therefore decided that it could not possibly be demolished in situ and that he must make every effort to neutralise it where it lay despite the considerable danger to himself which would necessarily result.

Accordingly, he personally drilled a small hole by hand into each fuze in turn and poured into a liquid to neutralise it. This action did not of course affect the anti-withdrawal device or the sensitive explosives in the fuze pockets. He next cut out a large hole through the outer casing of the bomb itself using a trepanning machine operated by a steam generator and finally steamed out the main explosive filling. During both these last operations the steam generator gave considerable trouble necessitating Captain Dalby's presence in the danger area in the vicinity of the bomb for more than would normally have been the case.

Throughout the whole of this operation which lasted 17 hours (until 9 O'clock the following morning), Captain Dalby showed a complete and utter disregard for his personal safety both in the decisions he took and in carrying out all the more dangerous tasks himself. He set an example to others who were working with him and their confidence in his ability to carry out this dangerous operation, through to a successful conclusion was obvious to all who were present.

Captain Dalby's courage and devotion to duty were exemplary, an inspiration to all, and in the highest traditions of the service.

MANDER, W BEM, (1895256) Staff Sergeant, Bomb Disposal Section, Malta Fortress Company, Royal Engineers

The Citation is taken from file WO373/122/64 held at the Nation Archives. Posted in the London Gazette on the 21st May 1957. Supplement 41077. Page 3075.

On 21st Dec 1956 a 250-kilogram German bomb was discovered at [location cannot be read], had uncovered part of what appeared to be an unexploded bomb.

On uncovering it this particular bomb was found to be fitted with two fuzes, one a long delay clockwork type and the other an anti-disturbance fuze, both of which were booby-trapped to prevent withdrawal. This was the type of bomb which caused many casualties to Bomb Disposal personnel in their efforts to dispose of them during the last war.

Being in a large built-up area the Bomb Disposal Officer decided that demolition in situ was not feasible and that every effort must be made to render the bomb safe despite the danger to which personnel working on the bomb would therefore be exposed. Staff Sergeant Mander accepted this decision as the natural and correct [next three words unreadable] and to work to render every assistance possible to his officer.

First, they bored a small hole into each fuze and poured in a liquid to render it inoperative. Since the anti-withdrawal devices and the highly sensitive explosives located in the fuze pockets could not be neutralised the bomb still remained very dangerous.

They next cut a hole through the outer casing of the bomb using a steam operated trepanning machine and finally steamed out the main explosive filling. The heat necessarily generated in the vicinity of the fuze pockets by these operations meant that detonation whilst they were in progress was by no means unlikely.

Although for much of the time it was possible to watch what was going on from a relative safe distance it was necessary to make several visits to the site to ensure that all was going properly. Such visits had to be made more frequently than normal as a result of the temperamental performance of the steam generator.

During the whole of the operations Staff Sergeant Mander was always actively assisting his officer. Throughout this 17-hour task he displayed the greatest personal courage and coolness.

He was fully aware of the danger of the task and the risks involved yet his demeanour and devotion to duty were exemplary and the greatest encouragement to all others present. Transcribed as best as can be due to original being a poor copy.

Corporal Hole was also awarded the British Empire Medal for this incident, see separate incident.