

Brazzaville Ammunition Depot, Republic of the Congo – 04 Mar 2012

MSIAC
Munitions Safety Information Analysis Center



At 0800 hrs on the 4th Mar 2012, a series of blasts rocked Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo, killing a confirmed 250 people with many others missing. An additional 2300 people were injured and over 13,000 people were left homeless.

The source of the explosions was a Congolese Army ammunition depot in a densely populated area in the north of Brazzaville. According to state officials, the blasts were caused by a fire that was itself caused by an electrical short circuit, igniting a store of tank projectiles.

The force of the blasts was felt for several kilometres and widespread panic ensued as many people thought armed conflict had started. This forced the Defence Minister to appear on national television to urge calm and assure the population the explosions were the result of a fire at an ammunition depot and not a war or a coup d'état.

In the aftermath of the blasts, the streets of Brazzaville were covered with metal and other debris. Fires spread through the city, burning homes and businesses. The fires continued to ravage Brazzaville on the 5th March threatening to ignite a second ammunition depot housing larger munitions.

As a result of the accident, the government promised to move all military camps out of the capital, a promise which had also been made after an explosion in 2009.

UN experts, foreign armies, and NGOs helped clean up the blast site and reported that 200,000 kg of munitions had been collected and destroyed.

Six soldiers were sentenced to 15 years in jail for causing the short circuit which led to the fire and the deputy secretary general was sentenced to five years of hard labour for the disaster.

In the months after the explosion, cholera broke out in the capital as a result of poor sanitary conditions in the sites housing the 14,000 displaced people, leading to even more fatalities.



250 Fatalities

2300 Injuries

US\$672 Million Damages (2012)