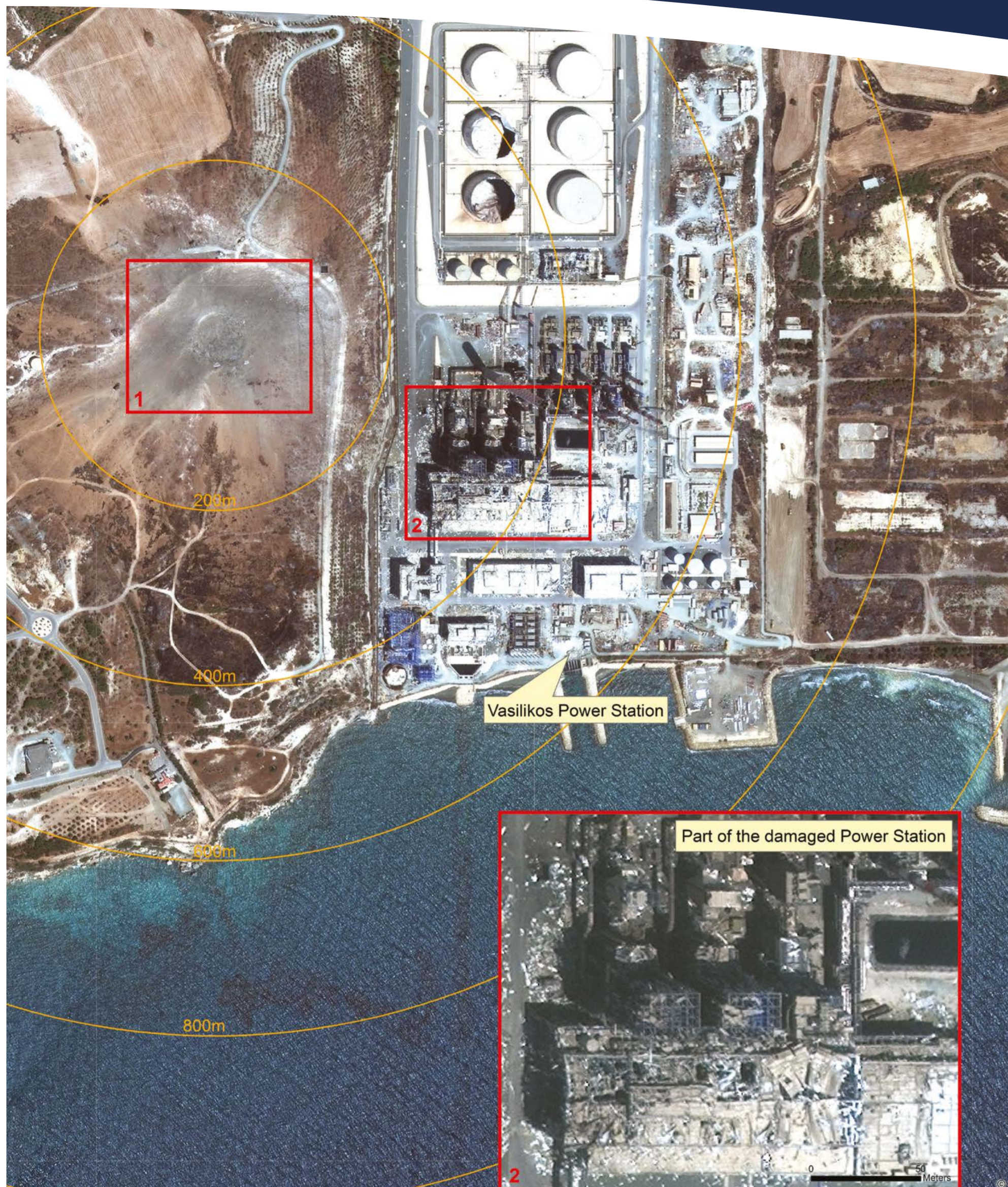


Evangelos Florakis Naval Base, Cyprus – 01 Jul 2011

MSIAC
Munitions Safety Information Analysis Center



In 2009 the US Navy intercepted the Cypriot-flagged, Russian-owned vessel, Monchegorsk, travelling from Iran to Syria in the Red Sea. On board was a significant quantity of UN Hazard Division 1.3 gun propellant, as well as some Hazard Division 1.1 black powder and other assorted munitions. The NEQ of the load is unclear but is estimated to be as high as 481,000 kg.

The United Nations exerted pressure on Cyprus to confiscate the shipment which was in direct violation of UN Security Council sanctions against Iran. The ship was escorted to a Cypriot port and the Cyprus Navy was given responsibility for the explosives, which it moved to the Evangelos Florakis Naval Base where they were stored in the open in 98 ISO shipping containers. The ammunition was stored en masse and was not separated to minimise and manage the risk as recommended by international best practice.

Two and a half years later one container was discovered with evidence of minor explosion and fire; the container was bulged and deformed. Seven days later on the 1st July 2011 at approximately 0530 hrs a fire was reported in the containers. Twenty minutes later at 0550hrs the containers detonated. The resulting explosion caused extensive damage in a wide area surrounding the blast.

The Vasilikos Power Station, the largest power facility on Cyprus providing approximately half the island's electricity, was severely damaged, causing widespread power cuts which affected much of Nicosia, the Cypriot capital, over 65 km away.

The blast killed 12 people immediately and injured a further 62, two seriously, with one dying later. Among those killed were Captain Andreas Ioannides, the head of the Cyprus Navy and Commander Lambros Lambrou commander of the Evangelos Florakis base. Also killed were four other Cyprus Navy personnel and six civilian firefighters who had been tackling the small blaze that led to the explosion. The cost of the damage caused by the blast was estimated at €3 billion with the loss of power supplies expected to cause ongoing economic loss.

Subsequent investigations found former Cypriot Defence Minister Costas Papacostas guilty of manslaughter and three fire chiefs were convicted of causing death through negligence.

13 Fatalities

62 Injuries

€3 Billion Damages (2011)