

Gërdec, Albania – 15 Mar 2008



At approximately 1200 hrs on the 15th March 2008, at an ex-military ammunition depot in the village of Gërdec, Albania, U.S and Albanian munitions experts were preparing to destroy stockpiles of obsolete ammunition.

The methodical destruction of the old ammo was supposed to occur with a series of small, controlled explosions; however a chain of events led to the entire stockpile going up at once.

The main explosion, involving more than 400,000 kg of propellant in containers, destroyed hundreds of houses within a few kilometres from the depot and broke windows in cars on the nearby highway. A large fire caused a series of smaller but powerful explosions that continued until 0200 hrs the following day. The explosions could be heard as far away as the Macedonian capital of Skopje, 170 km away.

The blast shattered all the windows of the terminal building at the country's only international airport, and all flights were suspended. Approximately 4,000 inhabitants of the zone were evacuated and offered shelter in state-owned resorts. The Albanian government declared the zone a disaster area.

Albanian authorities confirmed 26 deaths and 300 injuries as a result of the explosions with 2306 buildings damaged or destroyed. Of these, 318 houses were destroyed completely, 200 buildings were seriously damaged, and 188 buildings were less seriously damaged.

The suspected cause of the explosion was human error due to the use of untrained workers lacking the proper technical knowledge.



26 Fatalities

300 Injuries

Unknown Damages