An Airman assigned to watch over foreign workers working at a construction site near the flightline at a forward-deployed location spied something peculiar poking out of the ground recently. What Airman 1st Class Juan Jordan saw was an unexploded ordnance, probably left behind by Iraqi forces more than 15 years ago.

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“When I first saw it, I thought it was the edge of a barrel, but when I got a closer look, I noticed it was similar to what I had seen in the explosive ordnance part of my pre-deployment training,” said Airman Jordan, an avionics sensors maintenance apprentice deployed from the 9th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron at Beale Air Force Base, Calif.

After he alerted co-workers, they notified the 386th Expeditionary Civil Engineer Squadron’s explosive ordnance disposal flight.

The EOD Airmen then went into action, cordoning the area and digging away surrounding dirt to get a better look. Once they realized it was indeed a UXO, they began researching the object to determine just what the ordnance was. They found that it was the mother of all Russian tactical munitions dispensers, the RBK-500; a weapon designed to pop open at about 100 feet above the ground and spread 50 to 100 anti-personnel and material submunitions.

“Most likely it was lying outside a hardened aircraft shelter, and when coalition forces bombed the base (during Operation Desert Storm) it was thrown to where it was found resting,” said Staff Sgt. Jeremy Gibson, of the EOD flight.

Using a fully robotic wireless track vehicle, the system operator carefully plucked the UXO from the dirt and placed it into the sand-filled bed of a large truck used to move it to the disposal range located more than three miles from the extraction spot.

At the disposal range, the Airmen dug a hole and placed the UXO in its shallow grave. After attaching more than 100 pounds of C-4 plastic explosive to it, they covered it with 5 feet of dirt, returned to their positions, and Airman Jordan pushed the button to destroy the UXO.

“It was too cool,” he said. “I've never done anything like that before.”

After Operation Desert Storm, the base was swept for unexploded munitions by contractors, Sergeant Gibson said. However, some things “have been missed.”

“(Foreign workers) are paid to work, and that's what they concentrate on -- getting their job done -- and if they find something unusual, they often just toss it aside,” said Sergeant Gibson, citing a land mine recently discovered at another construction site.

He said the workers simply pulled it from the ground and pitched it out of their way.

“That's why it's so important for our force protectors to keep an eye on the construction sites, because they are the ones with the training to know what these things look like,” Sergeant Gibson said. "If they see something that doesn't look right, they're trained to shut down the operation and call us, and we come out and identify it.”

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