

PP065 FISH-BOMBING IN SABAH: A DIVING TRAGEDY

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INTRODUCTION:

Fish bombing is an illegal activity that involves explosives to stun or kill schools of fish for easy collection. Based on a four-month study conducted by WWF-Malaysia in Semporna in 2018, a total of 263 fish bombings were recorded with only two records of fish bombing involving humans. This case is to highlight a rare case of fish bombing in Sabah that claimed human lives.

CASE REPORT:

A 31-year-old divemaster with his two students, both aged 23, were diving near Kulapuan Island, Semporna. A sudden loud bang was heard by boatmen near their diving spot. The boatmen quickly approached their diving site and dived only to see all of the divers were on the seabed 5.8 meter deep with broken diving apparatus but intact gas tank. They were retrieved from the seabed and cardiopulmonary resuscitation was done on the way to the hospital. The divers however, succumbed to death despite the resuscitation. Post mortem showed all three victims suffered extensive posterior rib fractures with tank-like imprints, massive haemothorax and skull fractures.

DISCUSSION:

All of them suffered primary and secondary blast injuries. Primary blast injuries are caused by pressure transmitted from the blast waves to gas containing structures, resulted in massive haemothorax in all of the victims. Secondary blast injuries are caused by fragmentation pieces and other objects propelled by the explosion, explained by the tank-like imprints on their back and their skull fractures. Most fish bombs are homemade from glass bottles with layers of powdered potassium nitrate and pebbles. These devices may explode prematurely without warning. These unfortunate divers happened to be at wrong place and at the wrong time when the bombs exploded. The regulations of illegal fish bombings should be enforced to prevent this tragedy to be happening again.