

Loaded rocket launcher found on Vancouver Island

BY CINDY HARNETT, VANCOUVER SUN OCTOBER 29, 2010



Police are appealing to the public for information on how a loaded, military-issued rocket launcher ended up in a bushed area off the Malahat Highway on Vancouver Island.

Photograph by: RCMP Handout, Vancouver Sun

RCMP are investigating after a loaded self-propelled rocket launcher with complete instructions on how to aim and fire the weapon were found by a tree pruner on the side of the Malahat Highway on Vancouver Island Thursday afternoon.

Steve Taylor, 33, couldn't believe his eyes when he looked down from the trees he was clearing — about 100 metres north of McCurdy Drive in Shawnigan Lake — to see something that looked like it was from the military.

Upon closer inspection he could clearly see the instructions.

"It said pull pin, aim through scope, and push trigger," said Taylor. "I had an idea it might be a rocket launcher at that point."

When Shawnigan Lake RCMP arrived at the scene — one officer was a former soldier — the weapon was identified as an M72 self-propelled rocket launcher.

"And it turns out it was loaded," Taylor said.

The RCMP said one live rocket grenade was in the tube.

The Canadian Forces Explosive Ordinance Disposal Unit was called in and took the weapon.

As of Friday morning, a spokesperson from CFB Esquimalt hadn't returned calls to comment on whether the launcher might have been from the base.

Taylor estimated the weapon was about 1.2 metres long and weighed 2.5 kilograms or less.

It's suspected that the discarded weapon had been in the dense brush for about six months, RCMP said.

Taylor, who works for Capital Tree Service, said the rocket launcher "was within throwing distance" from the highway.

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