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Explosive found in river

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MUNISING — Michigan State Police at the Munising Post said Friday that an explosive device, apparently planted to free an ice jam on the AuTrain River last January, was found by a downstate fisherman earlier this month.

Gene Quattrin of Detroit was fishing at the mouth of the AuTrain River May 11 when he spotted the three-foot long white cylinder near the shoreline.

Troopers at the Munising post were notified and, when at the scene, waded out to the device.

Printed on its side was "Watergell, DuPont Explosive," troopers said.

Bomb specialists from the State Police Crime Laboratory in Negaunee transported the explosive to the Munising sanitary landfill, where it was detonated.

The 107th Combat Engineering Battalion of the National Guard in Negaunee had set 4,000 pounds of explosives in the AuTrain River in January to free an ice jam which caused flooding to several area homes.

Maj. Phillip White, who commanded the blasting project, reacted with surprise when told the incident had

not been reported to the National Guard.

"This is the first that I have heard about it," he said, when contacted by The Mining Journal.

White said a report of the discovery had not been filed with the battalion's headquarters in Negaunee.

White said the National Guard "would have wanted to be on the scene, or delegate someone from the battalion to oversee the situation," when the explosive was detonated.

White said the device could not have been accidentally detonated by a "noisy novice" and that it would have been nearly impossible to set it off accidentally.

"You could shoot it, drop it, kick it, use it as a baseball bat," and it would be harmless, White said.

Immediately following the incident, troopers from the Munising Post made a thorough search of the area and assured AuTrain residents that there was no further cause for alarm.

Area fishermen familiar with the area and the Coast Guard Auxiliary were asked to report any other sightings to the Munising post.

The National Guard will be at the site today to sweep the area to insure that the locale is free of any other devices, White said.