

## **Working Together to Defeat IEDs:**

### **The Case for Closer collaboration Between U.S. Military and Law Enforcement**

By Marc Tranchemontagne

More than a decade of war has given us hard-won experience in countering IEDs, and much of what we have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan about IEDs has been in collaboration between the military and federal law enforcement agencies. Close collaboration can help at home as well.

In support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the FBI, ATF and other agencies assigned many of their best special agents and analysts to the military's joint counter-IED task forces. Their efforts added rigor to processes that allowed improved countermeasures and force protection, targeting of bomb making networks, sourcing of IED components and support to prosecution of insurgents. Their expertise in evidence collection, forensics and investigative methods yielded key information about the network of bomb makers, designers, trainers, financiers, component suppliers, triggermen and other facilitators that made up the web of insurgent actors involved in executing IED attacks. Interagency cooperation made the counter-IED effort much more effective than it might otherwise have been if left to the military alone.

Ample precedent exists for collaboration at home as well. The U.S. Army and the FBI have jointly trained civilian public safety bomb squads at the Army-run, FBI-funded Hazardous Devices School in Alabama for more than 40 years. Military explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) personnel regularly attend FBI post-blast investigation courses and routinely support U.S. Secret Service VIP protection missions. Military EOD teams also provide local area response in municipalities that lack their own public safety bomb squads. Since 9/11, many supporting roles have been established between the military and federal, state and local agencies, with U.S. Northern Command having the lead for providing defense support to civil authorities in a range of contingencies from pandemic influenza, to disasters like hurricane Katrina or the I-35W Mississippi River bridge collapse, to terrorist events and WMD consequence management. Many of these contingencies are already tested in interagency training exercises; however, habitual training and operational relationships between military EOD teams and public safety bomb squads would further interoperability and rapid response to explosive hazards.

One thing that the military can provide to civil authorities is manpower. Our nation has a large body of combat-tested military EOD technicians experienced in the IED fight who could quickly mobilize to support federal efforts in the aftermath of an event like Boston or Oklahoma City, or worse, a sustained terrorist bombing campaign. Moreover, the military maintains mobile labs specifically created for the technical and forensic exploitation of IEDs. The maritime aspect

of this challenge, such as terror attacks in our ports and inland waterways, creates special problems for incident response, evidence collection, and technical exploitation. The military has the capacity to support federal law enforcement with additional personnel, such as EOD divers, and special capabilities for underwater search. Navy EOD divers are also the only entity trained and equipped to dive against improvised mines.

Public safety bomb squads would also benefit from greater access to the same advanced training in homemade explosives and IED electronics that military EOD technicians receive and advanced technologies such as improved robotics and optics, lightweight detection equipment, including handheld spectroscopy devices for field identification of homemade explosives, and electronic jammers. The Defense Department's 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* specifically addresses support to civil authorities for countering IEDs, stating that "DoD will assist civil authorities with counter-IED tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) and capabilities developed in recent operations." We ought to ensure the military's best practices are transferred to its domestic counterparts.

The future is hard to predict, but the proliferation of IED knowledge and availability of IED components suggests that this weapon will continue to be used by terrorists and criminals at home and abroad. Indeed, the IED has proven to be the most lethal, effective and fearsome weapon that today's terrorists have. Boston may or may not be a harbinger of the future, but what is certain is our need to take this enduring threat seriously. Homegrown or foreign, our best collective efforts across the whole of government are needed to meet it.

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