

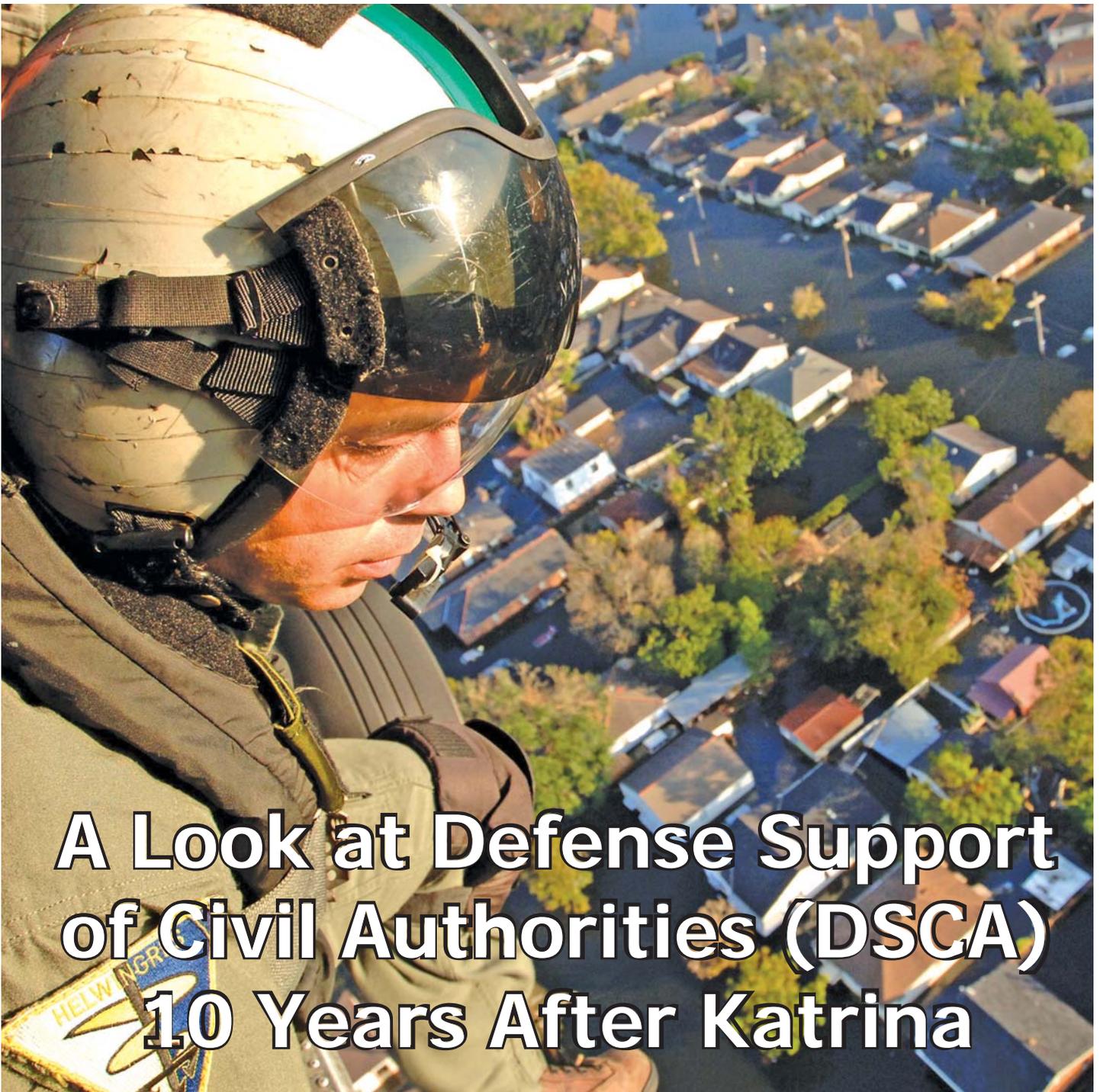
# AIR LAND SEA BULLETIN



Issue No. 2015--2

Air Land Sea Application (ALSA) Center

June 2015



## A Look at Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) 10 Years After Katrina

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US Navy Chief Aviation Warfare Systems Operator Scott Pierce, a search and rescue swimmer assigned to the “Emerald Knights” of Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Seven Five (HS-75), looks out from the cabin of an SH-60 Seahawk helicopter at the flooded New Orleans streets caused by Hurricane Katrina on September 7, 2005. (Photo by PH3 Class Kristopher Wilson, USN)

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# IMPROVING MILITARY EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL (EOD) DEFENSE SUPPORT TO CIVIL LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITIES THROUGH INTEROPERABILITY TRAINING

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The Salem County Bomb Squad, Oregon State Police, and the 710th Ordnance Company, stationed at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Washington, prepare for a buried cache scenario during 2014 Raven's Challenge 2014 in Salem, Oregon. (Photo by Dave Brennan Phillips)

By LCDR Ken Martin, USN, (Retired)

## INTRODUCTION

The deadly Boston Marathon attacks in 2013 emphasized the real and present danger of homegrown violent extremists using improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Concerns over terrorist attacks in the United States (US) have been renewed following the rapid successes of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), whose leadership calls for IED attacks in the US.

The ability to respond to IED attacks has improved considerably since 9/11. Public safety bomb squads (PSBSs) have improved capability and capacity in counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) response through growth, training, and equipment. Despite these improvements, the majority of PSBSs

remain full-time law enforcement officers with minimal time for training to maintain bomb squad proficiency.

Military EOD personnel gained unprecedented experience against IEDs in large quantities and complexity from operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Currently, the US EOD force is extremely well trained, equipped, and experienced to respond to IEDs. The Department of Defense's role in homeland defense and civil support is codified in policy and doctrine. However, much work needs to be done to formally enable partnerships and schedule training between military EOD and PSBSs. Military EOD's and PSBSs' critical contributions to each other through sharing tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP), lessons learned, and experience remain largely ad hoc and occur at the local level.

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Training between military EOD and PSBS enables knowledge sharing and effective response when EOD is called for operational support. Joint training also imparts and preserves many of the hard-learned lessons of Iraq and Afghanistan. Local-level PSBS and EOD leaders recognize the need for interoperability training and have formed partnerships to regularly conduct collaborative training and exercises. Exercises are particularly valuable because they allow leaders to identify doctrinal, training, and equipment issues. For two years, an interoperability training exercise, Raven's Challenge, was sponsored by the Army and executed and organized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). Raven's Challenge directly contributes to EOD and PSBS interoperability and draws attention to gaps and improvements that need to be addressed for domestic-IED operations on land and in maritime environments.

## RAVEN'S CHALLENGE

Raven's Challenge is a joint, interagency, intergovernmental, and multinational C-IED exercise. The exercise uses the National Response Framework and National Incident Management System for planning and executing emergency responses to IED events within the structure of the Incident Command System (ICS). At the tactical level, Raven's Challenge provides a setting for military EOD and PSBS to explore capability areas through realistic, high-intensity scenarios. Units share TTP and lessons learned and forge relationships that enhance interagency operations during an actual IED response at local, regional, or national levels.

Raven's Challenge 2014 encompassed four regions across the continental US with training areas in the following places.

- Northwest: Satsop Business Development Park near Elma, Washington and maritime sites at the Ports of Olympia and Tacoma, Washington.

- Southwest: Arizona National Guard Base Florence, near Phoenix, Arizona.
- Southeast: National Center for Explosive Training and Research, Redstone Arsenal, Alabama.
- Northeast: National Capital Region, Washington, DC.

Participants from more than 79 state and local PSBSs and 17 military EOD Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Army and Air National Guard units, representing 12 states and 5 Federal Emergency Management Agency regions, teamed up for the exercise. International military and law enforcement partners also attended, with participants from Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Mexico, and the Bahamas. Nearly 1,000 EOD, PSBS, intelligence specialists, and explosive detection K-9 handlers, across multiple departments and agencies at the federal, state, and local levels participated.

The planning team designed the training scenarios to observe various capabilities during military EOD support of civilian law enforcement agencies during an interrelated series of domestic IED attacks throughout the US. The exercise objectives were:

- Determine interoperability among EOD, PSBS, ATF, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
- Provide live fire energetic EOD tools collective unit level training.
- Make post-render-safe and post-blast assessments, carry out weapons technical intelligence operations (EOD), and perform bomb forensics.
- Share technical intelligence and information from incident sites through bomb management centers to the FBI's Strategic Information and Operation Center (SIOC), across first responder networks at the local, state, and federal levels.
- Execute mass transit and critical infrastructure incident response.

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Raven's Challenge provides a setting for military EOD and PSBS to explore capability areas through realistic, high-intensity scenarios.

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- Execute US Navy EOD and PSBS operations in the maritime environment (above and below waterline).
- Perform EOD and PSBS incident response with electronic countermeasures and counter radio controlled IED electronic warfare.

The exercise scenarios were linked across the four geographic regions through IED components, other materials, and evidence found at the scene. The exercise team established Bomb Management Centers (BMCs) at each training site for the first time. The BMC served as the local incident command and control center as well as a conduit to the local, state, regional, and national levels in the absence of a designated incident commander (IC), to whom the BMC would be subordinate during an actual event. The primary function of the BMC is to manage (operationally) response assets for the IC and request additional resources, if needed. During an event large enough to require a BMC, integrating EOD and PSBS and other responders through the BMC allows for efficient operations.

During Raven’s Challenge, EOD and PSBS teams were dispatched from

the BMC and reported the details of their responses that included providing materials and evidence. All response information was entered into a web-based portal. Responses that met certain criteria were relayed to the SIOC at FBI headquarters to be integrated at the national level. Personnel from the National Explosives Task Force manned the SIOC, analyzed all information provided by the BMCs in each region, and provided a daily summary to the BMCs to be further disseminated back to each local area. Combined military EOD and PSBS teams responded to a variety of scenarios including vehicle-borne IEDs, post-blast investigations, a buried cache of weapons, a hostage with a collar IED, a mass transit bombing with mass casualties, and an improvised grenade factory.

The positive outcomes of Raven’s Challenge demonstrate when military EOD and PSBS respond together, they quickly work through organizational and TTP differences to integrate effectively. PSBS and military EOD teams who had working relationships prior to the exercise performed at much higher levels of proficiency than those teams that did not. As in Boston, an existing

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First responders from the Washington State Police and 710th Ordnance Company assist an unidentified volunteer “victim” with simulated injuries from an improvised explosive device in a bus explosion exercise during the 2014 Raven’s Challenge in Seattle, Washington, 28 June, 2014. (Photo by Certified Explosives Specialist David Johnsen)

working relationship with local authorities led to immediate and seamless integration for military EOD personnel who supported local authorities.

## LESSON LEARNED

Interoperability of military EOD and PSBS communications systems remains a problem usually overcome by PSBS radios being issued to military EOD.

Military EOD units respond in tactical armored vehicles unsuitable for domestic civil support and response. For example, the Air Force Base Support emergency response vehicle (BSERV) provides a more functional platform than other military armored vehicles because it blends into the domestic operational environment. The BSERV is similar to a civil, commercial vehicle used by law enforcement and is large enough to hold all required equipment.

The following are other lessons encountered during Raven's Challenge.

- Military EOD and PSBS units do not possess a lightweight robotics system. This would provide a remote capability in unique EOD operational environments, such as inside a mass transit vehicle and in areas that are inaccessible by response vehicles.
- Military EOD and PSBS require additional advanced homemade explosives proficiency and interoperability training.
- Military EOD and PSBS require additional proficiency and interoperability training in proper evidence and forensic material collection.
- Interoperability training allows PSBS and military EOD the opportunity to see each other's equipment; understand differences in tactical approaches to problems; identify strengths and weaknesses; and, most importantly, identify capability areas that need further improvement.

## CONCLUSION

Lessons learned from the terrorist IED attacks during the Boston Marathon of 2013 indicate prior training and exercises for first responders directly contributed to their highly successful level of response (United States Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, 2013). The importance of participation in interoperability training is especially true for specialized support to ensure a fluid response during an actual, significant event. Large scale, national-level interoperability exercises, such as Raven's Challenge, provide military EOD and PSBS an opportunity to train side by side, share TTP, and exchange lessons learned. Additionally, interoperability training helps maintain the proficiency of military EOD and PSBS while building formal partnerships that facilitate essential knowledge transfer and sharing.

Increased resourcing and support of interoperability training exercises for PSBS and military EOD will contribute to an even greater response capability within the US and foster increased interoperability when military EOD supports PSBS and other civil law enforcement authorities.

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Ken Martin is an Associate with R3 Strategic Support Group. He retired from the US Navy in 2013 after more than 23 years of service as an explosive ordnance disposal officer and fleet diver. He holds a Master's in Terrorist Operations and Finance from the Naval Postgraduate School.

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