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DoD Must Ensure US Counter-IED Efforts, Programs Continue

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By: Jeff Trumbore

I found two recent articles in *Homeland Security Today* on improvised explosive devices (IEDs) interesting and compelling in the argument they made concerning preserving counter-IED (C-IED) capabilities within the Department of Defense (DoD).

The article by [Executive Editor] Anthony Kimery, "With Cuts Looming, Will Pentagon Preserve Counter-IED Institutional Memory?" was focused on the impacts of downsizing the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO). The other article, by Patrick McGlynn and Godfrey Garner, "Preserving Counter-IED Institutional Memory," warned that, "While IEDs were one of the biggest threats to troops during the conflicts, the biggest threat today is losing the lessons we learned. If we don't protect institutional counter-IED knowledge, it will be one of the most significant intelligence losses in our nation's history."

I firmly agree with the authors that DoD must not forget the hard won lessons that have been learned by 12 years of almost constant contact with IEDs as the major weapon employed by our adversaries. The IED threat is pernicious and will present a domestic and transnational challenge well into our future. The continuing nature of the IED threat is highlighted in the President's February 26, 2013 policy statement, "Countering Improvised Explosives Devices." This document was released prior to the Boston Marathon bombing. The introduction stated:

"Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remain one of the most accessible weapons available to terrorists and criminals to damage critical infrastructure and inflict casualties, as was demonstrated in

the attempted bombing of Northwest Flight 253 on December 25, 2009, the October 2010 air cargo plot, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The tactics used in IED attacks continue to evolve as our adversaries seek to overcome countermeasures. This administration is expanding and broadening its counter-IED focus, building upon existing policy and strategy, which establish and implement measures to discover, prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate IED attacks and their consequences at home or abroad."

Clearly, IEDs pose a continuing threat to US and partner nations -- domestically and internationally. Wherever US national interests are tied to maintaining regional stability, the adversary is guaranteed to employ IEDs to try to gain the advantage. Sadly, upon reading the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), dated March 4, 2014, not one mention was made of IEDs or the threat they pose now and in the future.

The QDR, by design, is a major strategy document that indicates where investments will be made within DoD. One can assume that IEDs just did not make the cut line to be mentioned within the QDR. This omission is interesting because, as noted in the presidential document, IEDs will be an outgoing threat to this nation and its' interests.

The QDR does have at least 14 citations about weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the threat they pose to US interests. No one doubts that a WMD incident would be a catastrophic event, but the likelihood of a WMD incident is much less likely than an IED incident. Production, delivery and successful use of WMD has many technological and logistical challenges. Production, delivery and successful use of IEDs does not – an IED is far simpler to achieve logistically and technologically. Thus, one is left to wonder why IEDs were not mentioned in the QDR.

If the QDR is used as a guidepost for future DoD investment priorities, then the concerns raised by authors Anthony Kimery and Patrick McGlynn and Godfrey Garner are valid. While fiscal constraint is the reality confronting DoD, it should not be an excuse for ignoring proven threats that have severely damaged our interests and continue to be employed. The fact is we cannot ignore or wish away the IED.

In attempting to balance fiscal reality with the need to address the ongoing IED challenge to our national interests, I suggest the following ideas for consideration by DoD:

- JIEDDO remains the DoD advocate for C-IED efforts in terms of policy, technology, oversight of joint and service C-IED training activities; defense support to civil authorities; intelligence fusion with combat support agencies and federal agencies; an advisor to combatant commanders (CCDR) regarding countering IED threats; and fusion with whole of government counter WMD efforts.
- C-IED enablers within DoD are institutionally supported within programs of record and used in reoccurring joint, CCDR and Service exercises. C-IED actions and activities become embedded within the Joint Training System as defined in CJCSM 3500.03D, "Joint Training Manual for the Armed Forces of the United States."
- C-IED tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) are captured in joint, service and multi-service doctrine. This specifically includes efforts to codify methods and TTP used to "attack the network" of terrorist or non-state actors that use or could use IEDs.
- JIEDDO develops a close working relationship with Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) to counter the use of both IEDs and WMDs as many potential crossovers exist with regard to countering the potential user networks of IEDs and WMDs. Additionally, SOCOM is the arm of the military that has or can obtain the authorities needed to act in a global manner.

These are just a few ideas on how not to forget about the IED. Let us all hope that DoD does not forget about the IED as it struggles with the difficult demands of a resource constrained future.

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