

# IS IMPLEMENTATION OF WESTERN C-IED ENTERPRISES SUITABLE WHEN PROVIDING DONOR C-IED ASSISTANCE?

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## INTRODUCTION

Owing to the transnational nature of the networks which facilitate IED use, regionally coherent C-IED responses are deemed necessary. Strategic approaches to such regional C-IED efforts are required for them to be effective. The resulting C-IED enterprise developed and implemented often requires C-IED donor assistance<sup>1</sup> to the IED affected state or region. In the absence of such strategic coherent enterprises, the resulting assistance can often be disjointed and less than optimal. At times C-IED efforts<sup>2</sup> have been oversimplistic, promoting silver bullet solutions which are often technology and equipment intensive. At other times proposed approaches can be overambitious, involving the reinvention of the wheel and lacking the resources to make the initiatives a reality. In many cases, C-IED efforts have involved attempts to shoehorn elements of previously used Western templates into action within a specific operational environment. This article will examine aspects of Western C-IED enterprises illustrating their complexities and how their realisation is more challenging to achieve than might otherwise be considered. For the purpose of this and several related articles, C-IED enterprise is the collective term to describe all initiatives, activities, assistance, capabilities and capacities that contribute to the C-IED efforts intended to at least match but ideally

overmatch<sup>3</sup> the threat posed by the use or threatened use of IEDs and can involve anything which is intended to predict, discover / detect, prevent, protect against, respond to / neutralise, recover / exploit, mitigate against, or deter IED attacks. The article will illustrate how attempts to replicate or implement Western C-IED enterprises when providing C-IED donor assistance is not the best approach. We will first examine the need for regionally coherent C-IED enterprises as to date, such efforts have often been disjointed, lacking in coordination, and in some cases cooperation. The content of this article is informed from research conducted by the author as part of a MA in strategic studies which examined and identified C-IED strategic principles for East Africa.

## *Regional and Global C-IED Efforts - UN and the African Union (AU) C-IED Responses*

The UN has acknowledged the enduring and pervasive threat posed by IEDs in contested and fragile security environments. They have stated that since 2014, a steady increase in the number and complexity of explosive ordnance threats has been recorded against UN personnel, national defence and security forces, civilian populations, and other actors within UN mission areas. On 24 May 2021, the United Nations Security Council requested an independent review to address

the nature of this increasing threat and suggest actions that the UN Security Council, secretariat, missions, and troop / police-contributing countries, amongst others, can take to reduce and mitigate the threat. On 23 November 2021, the report was delivered with recommendations which emphasize that responses needed to be integrated, coherent and proactive, as well as responsive.

Like the UN's findings, the AU C-IED strategy stated that it is necessary to confront this challenge in a united effort through the African Union Commission, Regional Economic Communities / Regional Mechanisms, Member States and peace support operations. Thus, a whole of continent perspective is needed to develop regionally specific threat-aligned approaches to confront this transnational threat. Such regional approaches, coordinated and supported by the African Union Commission, need to involve a suite of complementary enablers which seek to prevent, counter, and respond to the use of IEDs. Such regional strategies must complement wider member state national security strategies as well as their national security architectures and state interests. While regional approaches are required for effective C-IED enterprises owing to the transnational nature of the networks who employ them, there are potentially other benefits to regionally coherent C-IED enterprises. C-IED strategies may be an effective means to achieve more with less resources. On a cost benefit analysis basis the development of regional C-IED strategies can be worthwhile endeavours if they provide the way to achieve a greater impact (closer to the desired ends) from less means (resources needed).

### ***The US Response to IED Use***

According to the latest US Army C-IED strategy (February 2022), after the IED rose to prominence during the conflicts of Afghanistan and Iraq the US and allied militaries commenced the development of C-IED efforts. However, before this response to IED use in Iraq and Afghanistan, other IED affected states had undertaken initiatives and collective efforts to counter their use but did not use the term C-IED. Examples include the UK, Turkey, Sri Lanka and Colombia.

These collective practices referred to as C-IED continue to evolve.

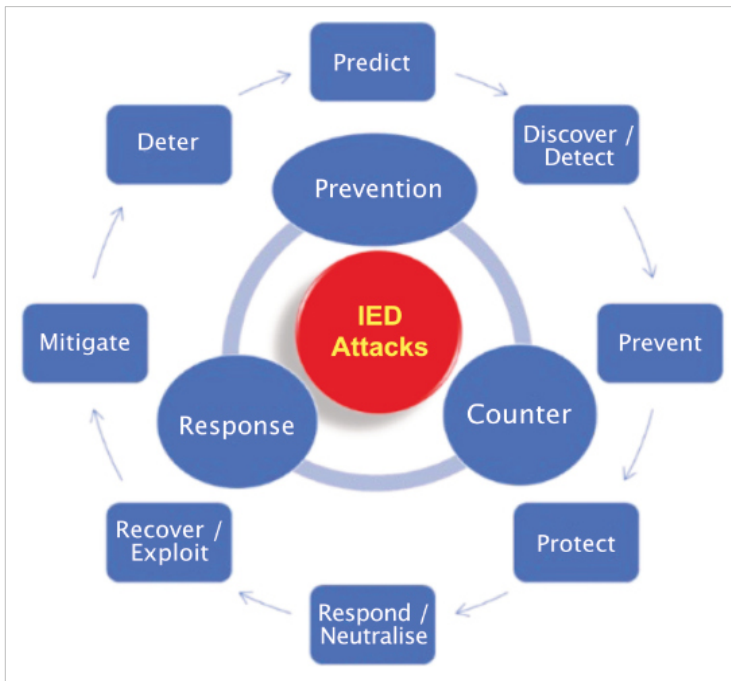
At a national level, the US established the Joint Improvised Explosives Device Defeat Organisation (JIEDDO). Originally created in 2006 to devise and field new technologies to help identify roadside bombs and other improvised explosives that were quickly becoming the weapon of choice of insurgents against US troops, by 2008 it had a budget of US \$4billion per annum. NATO, the European Defence Agency and many of the nations operating in both theatres, along with those facing IED attacks domestically, also contributed to the development of C-IED; however, JIEDDO with its immense budget along with the US's commanding role in both theatres and within NATO was a key influencer in how C-IED developed. By 2012 with the on-going effectiveness of IEDs against US and coalition forces in Afghanistan, JIEDDO was at the height of its power within the US military establishment. Reflecting the growing influence of JIEDDO within the US military and the global increase in IED use (with IED attacks exceeding 4,000 in 2011), on 26 February 2013, the White House released a policy statement on countering IEDs. This Presidential Policy Directive is referred to as PPD17. The subsequent proliferation of IED use in Pakistan, across the Middle East, North, East and West Africa, to name but a few, as well as sensationalist attacks in the West, e.g., UK, US, France, Belgium, and Spain, saw multiple national, regional and international C-IED efforts.

The US which has one of the most mature and developed defence and security architectures have strategies dedicated to several national security and defence issues. However, it has no dedicated national C-IED strategy but has had several supporting documents that seek to coordinate national C-IED efforts. The US military have produced several C-IED strategies such as the US Army C-IED strategy. Two other influential US C-IED documents were PPD17 and the JIEDDO C-IED Strategic Plan for 2012 – 2016. While PPD17 is not a national C-IED strategy, it does provide three policy objectives along with eight actions intended to guide US security and defence policy makers. It also provides five examples of success for

these actions. PPD17 conceptualises a C-IED cycle<sup>4</sup> that involves the steps of discover – prevent – protect against – respond to – recover from – mitigate against IED attacks. This six component C-IED cycle can be adapted into an eight-component cycle as shown in the figure below,<sup>5</sup> providing a good framework to appreciate potential points within an IED attack cycle that C-IED efforts may be focussed on to achieve desirable effects to prevent, counter or respond to IED attacks or threats thereof.

PPD17 offers a tool for those within the US engaged in the C-IED enterprise, to ensure their C-IED efforts remain strategically aligned to their government’s C-IED policy. Its concluding sentence is insightful in terms of what a national strategy should endeavour to achieve. It talks of a whole of government approach integrating national, sub-national, private sector and global participation in C-IED activities to best position the US to discover plots to use IEDs domestically or against its citizens abroad, before those threats become imminent.

The JIEDDO C-IED strategic plan was a tool to provide strategic direction to the US military establishment’s efforts to counter the threat posed by IEDs. It was intended to provide a unified and coherent approach to efforts by the US defence establishment to counter the use of IEDs against US forces both when on expedition and when necessary, domestically in support of US federal agencies. Its overall goal was to mitigate the effects of IEDs on the commander’s freedom of manoeuvre and to set the path for the C-IED efforts in collaboration with partner nations, interagency, and intergovernmental organisations to enable the defeat of the IED as a weapon of strategic influence. The document heavily influenced US military C-IED during the decade of the 2010s and, by default, subsequently influenced NATO C-IED, that of US allies and elements of the US military-industrial complex. While efforts to develop national and regional C-IED strategies, can harness certain elements of this JIEDDO strategic plan, it falls short of what IED affected states and regions require for several reasons, which include inter alia:



1. Domestic C-IED is secondary to expeditionary C-IED;
2. Afghanistan was the focus;
3. Inconsistency in what countering IEDs means;<sup>6</sup>
4. Explanation of attack the network is too narrow and below par for a strategic document;
5. Primary response to IEDs is heavily technology and equipment focussed with the secondary target audience being elements of the US military industrial complex.

For these reasons, the JIEDDO strategic plan fails as a guide to C-IED development, investment and implementation.

Figure 1. C-IED cycle.

## NATO

Most notably, NATO has its Allied Joint Doctrine for Countering IEDs, AJP-3.15.<sup>7</sup> Many western militaries either adopt or adapt AJP-3.15 as C-IED doctrine for use by their armed forces. For example, within the Irish Defence Forces from circa 2007, the Ordnance School led many efforts to develop C-IED both at the tactical development level, through to operational capabilities and informing strategic perspectives which included efforts to adapt NATO AJP-3.15 C-IED for Irish Defence Forces' use.<sup>8</sup> Overall, the NATO AJP-3.15 publication could not be used directly by an IED affected state in developing a national C-IED strategy. Instead, it was designed as military doctrine and intended for use within the wider NATO ecosystem for militaries that are NATO configured and resourced accordingly. It was intended for military strategy and operations rather than national strategy. That said, there is much content within the NATO AJP-3.15 publication that could be harnessed to inform an IED affected state on what they may consider for their militaries if their military are to be a component of their national C-IED strategy.

### *Western C-IED Approaches*

No western national C-IED strategies have been identified and it is noteworthy that the US is the only state identified as having independently developed a C-IED strategic plan and a PPD on C-IED. However, several western states have various C-IED policies, initiatives, strategic plans, and doctrines which they employ. In terms of domestic C-IED, there are various approaches taken by western states to counter the threat. In most cases, western nations' C-IED is primarily conducted under the umbrella of counter-terrorism (CT) or a criminal justice approach and hence it is a domestic law enforcement issue. This in turn means that typically, domestic C-IED comes under national security or criminal justice or potentially a hybrid of both, and predominantly has no military involvement. For example, the US JIEDDO strategic plan for the US military was primarily expeditionary focussed and, only intended to support US federal agencies who have primacy domestically. However, in

some cases western militaries can have a more substantive role in domestic C-IED, most notably in the provision of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD). For example, the Belgian military provide all national EOD capabilities as do the Dutch military within The Netherlands and the same for Malta. This is similar to the provision of all EOD capabilities by the Irish Defence Forces within the Republic of Ireland to the national police force, An Garda Síochána, in an aid to the civil power role.

### *The UK C-IED Enterprise*

To explore the provision of C-IED donor assistance, it is informative to examine the UK C-IED enterprise and how these evolved to be considered by many as the lead C-IED nation as it was being developed in the first decade of the 2000s. Examining how this transpired, can assist understanding why so few Western nations have standalone formal C-IED strategies. There are two primary reasons why the UK was considered the leading nation in this area. Firstly, the British retreat from empire saw them engaged in several significant counter insurgencies that exposed them to asymmetric threats, including clandestine attack methods in the form of boobytraps and IEDs. UK armed forces and their local constabulary forces were exposed to such threats in Hong Kong, Aden, and Cyprus. Other nations, post WWII, were exposed to IEDs as they retreated from empire, most notably the French for example in Algeria. However, it is the author's contention that it is the British retreat from empire and their exposure to asymmetric attacks from 'Irish terrorism,' which included IEDs, going as far back as the Fenians and the Irish Republican Brotherhood 'dynamite wars' which marked out the British experience as different. The London Metropolitan Police along with other elements of the UK security services had to counter a clandestine organisation undertaking terrorism using methods which included IED attacks. Within Ireland the British military and other security forces had to contend with IED attacks during the Irish War of Independence and subsequently intermittently in Northern Ireland, especially along the border up to 1969, such as the IRA border campaign of

1956 – 1962. From 1969, British security forces faced what became the most sophisticated and possibly the most effective use of IEDs up to that time. ‘The Troubles’ saw the UK military deployed to Northern Ireland in an aid to the civil power role in support of Northern Ireland security forces, in what could be considered an expeditionary overseas deployment for many of the British military who deployed. The name given to the British Armed Forces’ operations during ‘The Troubles’ from 1969 to 2007<sup>9</sup> was Operation Banner and was considered an internal security operation. Coupled with the operations in Northern Ireland, was the relatively steady rate of IED attacks on the UK mainland. This resulted in the UK police and security services direct involvement in C-IED efforts. It was these experiences during ‘The Troubles’ that exposed them to sophisticated IED use that significantly influenced the development of their C-IED enterprise which evolved and subsequently set them apart from other IED affected states. All the military, police and security service experiences in C-IED, both domestically and in a quasi-overseas role, resulted in the UK becoming the most reputable, experienced and expert nation at C-IED by the turn of the twentieth century. This left them as the lead nation when the need for C-IED arose in Iraq and Afghanistan; however, it is essential to understand the complexities of this British C-IED enterprise.

By circa 2005, the British C-IED enterprise had developed from ‘The Troubles’ and also in response to an emerging Jihadi threat, requiring a hybrid approach involving a mixture of counter-insurgency (COIN) practices, counter-terrorism (CT) and criminal justice approaches. The UK has no single C-IED lead agency. Instead, it has at times involved the British military, local police forces, locally raised infantry regiments, security services, domestic, foreign and defence intelligence, state and local forensic capabilities, military and London metropolitan EOD and search teams, and CT police units. Their EOD capabilities reside with the military, except for the Greater Metropolitan London area where the UK Met SO15 EOD has responsibility. The various elements of the British defence, security and justice apparatus

employed during the Troubles from 1969 to 1991, when the Cold War was on-going, faced no major funding or resourcing restrictions. Their C-IED intelligence capabilities involved police forces relating to criminal use of IEDs, with UK Security Services (MI5) involved with national security IED issues and the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) potentially involved if there is an international, foreign state or foreign non-state actor element to it. There is a potential for the involvement of multiple security agencies involving civilian, police and military intelligence elements. For offensive attack the network activities, the UK military, can execute overseas actions with a variety of UK police and security service elements involved in the same domestically. Such attack the network operations can include raids, interdictions and arrests, being executed under a criminal justice approach or a CT framework. When done under a CT approach to C-IED it becomes even more complex as the UK military act in support of police elements as was the case for example when special forces operatives were embedded with London Metropolitan Police during the period of June 2017 in relation to terrorist attacks in London. The same complex array of actors can be seen within the UK defence, security and police sectors when it comes to IED exploitation with forensic personnel and various laboratories of varying expertise and capability involved. When providing C-IED donor assistance an appreciation of the UK national C-IED enterprise illustrates its interconnected multi-agency and flexible approach. It is equally important to appreciate the time scale and resource investment required to develop such decentralised capabilities within mature and well-established defence, security and justice structures.

### ***Afghanistan's National C-IED Strategy***

Expanding the focus beyond western C-IED efforts, one nation stands out for its national C-IED strategy, Afghanistan.<sup>10,11</sup> In 2016, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan’s office of national security council, internal affairs directorate produced the nation’s second national C-IED strategy, with the first such national C-IED strategy produced in 2012. The Afghan

Internal Affairs Directorate were significantly assisted, supported and advised by ISAF in developing and implementing these strategies. The partnering and outreach chief during the drafting of the first Afghan national C-IED strategy stated that the outreach and partnering cell of the ISAF HQ (4 Star) C-IED branch was deeply involved in the development of the C-IED Strategy with its Afghan government partners; however, it was always a theme of the strategy that it would be Afghan led. A second key point is that these strategies were developed within a fragile state, countering a violent and destabilising insurgency. Many of the ministries and security forces were embryonic and underdeveloped, as they countered IEDs. The background to the development of the Afghan national C-IED strategies is an important consideration when attempting to use it as a model to provide C-IED assistance. Overall, the question may be posed, whether the western dominated ISAF alliance, resourced and forced the development and implementation of their paradigm of a national C-IED strategy for Afghanistan?

## **CONCLUSION**

While regional initiatives to coordinate C-IED can be slow paced in comparison to national efforts which are typically faster paced the need for regional approaches to countering IED use is promoted due to the transnational nature of the threat. This is a monumental challenge and one that will be generational in length, but it can be done if the appropriate internationally coordinated approach is taken, provided there is international cooperation and appropriate resources allocated. It is unrealistic to think such a grand strategic endeavour will have 193 UN member states' consensus; however, even with majority buy in from key UN P5, G7 and G20 nations, over the period of a decade massive progress could be made. In any such grand strategic endeavour, it is necessary to see that individual developing nations will not be able to do this alone but will need active support from a cooperative international security ecosystem. Such support may involve regional and international organisations such as, the UN, AU, NATO, EU, ECOWAS, INTERPOL,

WCO. It is proposed that owing to the maturity of Western law enforcement, security and defence architectures and the greater resources available to them, coupled with the often-evolutionary nature of their development, attempts to replicate or implement such C-IED enterprises in the provision of C-IED donor assistance is not considered to be best practice. So, how can an IED affected region and its supporting donors best go about developing effective C-IED strategy? It is proposed that C-IED strategic principles are needed to achieve the required impacts and outcomes when providing C-IED donor assistance, which will be the subject of a subsequent article in the Counter-IED Report. ■

## **NOTES**

1. C-IED donor assistance refers to C-IED support provided on a bilateral basis, on a joint initiative from two or more States or by an international organisation, e.g., EU, League of Arab States, ECOWAS etc or an alliance e.g. NATO, to an IED affected state or region.
2. C-IED efforts refer to all initiatives and activities undertaken by a State, organisation or entity to at least match but ideally overmatch the threat posed by the use or threatened use of IEDs and can involve anything which is intended to predict, discover / detect, prevent, protect against, respond to / neutralise, recover / exploit, mitigate against, or deter IED attacks. C-IED efforts can include inter alia, training, mentoring, advising, accompanying, assisting, technology and equipment provision and intelligence support.
3. The US Army C-IED strategy 2022, states “developing capabilities to maintain overmatch is a critical enabler,” when assessing IEDs as a multi-domain threat into the future.
4. The C-IED cycle presented has eight steps involving predict, discover/detect, prevent, protect, respond/neutralise, recover/exploit, mitigate and deter. These steps intend to collectively achieve the desirable effects of preventing, countering or responding to IED attacks or the threat thereof.

The eight steps provided in this cycle may not necessarily always be present in any given C-IED effort.

5. The eight named steps are a synthesis of various C-IED cycles reviewed as part of this research. In the defining of C-IED efforts within this research a seventh and eighth step of deterrence and predict were included to those in the US Army C-IED cycle. In addition three US Army C-IED cycle steps were expanded with discover to explicitly include detect, respond to include neutralise (when possible) and recover to include exploit so lessons can be learned to feed all other parts of the C-IED cycle.
6. Its strategic vision speaks of reducing the effectiveness and lethality of IEDs which is realistic and achievable; however, its mission statement, refers to defeating "the IED as a weapon system of strategic influence." (p. 1) The defeat of IEDs is not a realistic end state with the strategy acknowledging the IED "will remain an enduring global threat due to the accessibility of materials and the potential strategic impact resulting from their use." (p. 3) As such the acknowledgement in the foreword that "we are never going to stop all IEDs" (p. iii) should have been followed throughout, with a threat mitigation approach to counter their use adopted throughout the document.
7. As of April 2022 this NATO Counter-IED doctrine is under review.
8. As of 2015, a working draft of this adapted C-IED doctrine was developed and being used to inform Irish Defence Force C-IED thinking and approaches.
9. British Army deployment in NI was under the military name Operation Banner which formally ended on 01 Aug 2007; however, a latent, virulent but low capability IED threat has persisted from dissident republican groups since the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.
10. The author has been made aware of the potential existence of a Pakistani national C-IED strategy; however, despite extensive efforts the existence of such a strategy could not be confirmed or denied. Potential C-IED security sensitivity within

Pakistan may contribute to challenges in answering this question.

11. The author is also aware that from 2018, the concept of a C-IED strategy for Kenya was mooted. As of mid-2022 it was recorded that Kenya was in the process of developing a national strategy in C-IED.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Paul Amoroso** is an explosive hazards specialist and has extensive experience as an IED Threat Mitigation Policy Advisor working in East and West Africa. He served in the Irish Army as an IED Disposal and CBRNe officer, up to MNT level, and has extensive tactical, operational, and strategic experience in Peacekeeping Operations in Africa and the Middle East. He has experience in the development of doctrine and policy and was one of the key contributors to the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal Standards and the United Nations Explosive Ordnance Disposal Military Unit Manual. He works at present in the MENA region on SALW control as well as in wider Africa advising on national and regional C-IED strategies. He has a MSc in Explosive Ordnance Engineering and an MA in Strategic Studies. He runs a consultancy, Assessed Mitigation Options (AMO), which provides advice and support in relation to conventional and improvised weapons and explosive hazard risk mitigation. This article reflects his own views and not necessarily those of any organisation he has worked for or with in developing these ideas.

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