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Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) In Iraq-Afghanistan Wars

Abstract

Improvised explosive devices (IEDs) are homemade bombs that are constructed and deployed in certain ways. Since October 2001, IEDs have been responsible for over 3000 combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. These devices are designed to specifically kill, harass, or injure people or groups of people. In Iraq and Afghanistan, IEDs have been widely used. They are hidden behind guardrails and signs, inside animal carcasses, and under roadside debris, these encounters are very dangerous as they are causing thousands of death in Iraq and Afghanistan annually (Tanielian, 2008, p. 11). This strategy has taken a different direction where car bombs and vehicle-borne IEDs are used to strike markets, police stations, and mosques, injuring and killing citizens and U. S troops. However, U. S forces are now using a new strategy of countering the devices by disrupting portions, and utilizing intelligent sources used by insurgents. Apparently, insurgents are now quickly adapting to countermeasures which have led to the increase of very sophisticated IEDs. However, officials in the Department of Defense (DOD) have warned that IED technologies are supplied by Iraq, additionally; there is likelihood that the IEDs are also used by other terrorists and insurgents worldwide (Bird, 2007, p. 91).

Background

Improvised explosives are among the biggest threats to US soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. They are dreadful since they release shock waves that are capable of travelling about 1, 100 feet per second. IEDs have caused close to

60% of all American forces casualties in Iraq and over 48% of military casualties in Afghanistan, who have been wounded and killed. A number of observers and investigators in Iraq and Afghanistan depict that the biggest source of IEDs come from military ordnance deposits in Iraq, facilitated by insurgents. In Afghanistan, these IED munitions are funded by an opium trade which is expanding. Observers note that munitions used to develop IEDs particularly in Iraq mostly come from the military ordnance who are backed by insurgents. Similarly, in Afghanistan, funds from an expanding opium trade support the supply of IED munitions. Subsequently, the IED munitions in Afghanistan have grown from 58% in 2006 to 91% in 2007. Notably, this was one of the biggest supplies of munitions in the world. Still in the same year, the opium crop was reported to have grown to another 34%. Consequently, it is now the biggest supply of morphine and heroine in the world.

Researchers have indicated that Sunni Iraqis is the biggest group of suicide attackers in Iraq. Research shows that Taliban forces in Afghanistan have gradually learned many techniques about IEDs from the Iraqis. Subsequently, some of the forces in Afghanistan have become very dangerous in the region, reconstruction has become a nightmare. Seemingly, DOD has discovered that insurgents deploy and build IEDs through the use of networks. In Iraq for instance, IED cells that are highly skilled hire themselves out to groups such as; the Sunni group, and al-Qaeda. These groups advertise their skills on the internet to get contracts. Typically, an IED terrorist cell consists of five to eight people including a bomb maker, financier, triggerman, and a camera man (Kelly, 2008, p. 16).

On the face of it, IEDs have caused more than half of all American soldiers' deaths in Iraq, and an 8th in Afghanistan. These groups have no limits; the Iraqi insurgents make disturbing videos of wounded American soldiers and exploding cars and later post them on the internet to attract new supporters. Although the US combats are well protected, their standard-issue Kevlar combat helmet is capable of absorbing some of the force, but it cannot protect a soldier from shock waves. Seemingly, these devices are the biggest threats to US combats because their effects are very intense. Shock waves can pass through the nose, eyes, and mouth to the brain. Therefore, they represent the top killer for soldiers in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U. S government has spent close to \$60 billion over the past decade to destroy IEDs.

However, this battle is on the losing end because the IEDs account for 2 out of every 3 American casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq. Seemingly, out of the 9-14% IEDs that kill U. S. or injure soldiers, none has been found to injure or kill the enemy planting the explosive. Notably, 3, 366 U. S soldiers were wounded in Afghanistan last year. This represents 60% of all IED cases since the war began. Subsequently, human networks that are employed by triggering; planting and making the IEDs create more than 15, 000 jobs in various sections. To tackle this issue, the U. S has invested a lot of money in purchasing and installing sophisticated surveillance systems. The Army and the Air Force are the main surveillance bodies (Berman, 2011, p. 114).

U. S military officials deduce that the majority of dangerous weapons including EFPs and IEDs are smuggled into Afghanistan and Iraq by a section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard known as the Quds Force. However, many

insurgents in Iraq have espoused many U. S counter measures. The pre-detonators and electronic jammers are the latest technologies being evaluated. From early last year, JIEDDO has been funding close to 14, 000 jammers for Army and Marine units including Cougar Vehicles for clearing routes, robots for explosive ordnance teams, and portable jammer for dismounting operations. The current war against terrorism and conflicts including the use of IEDs is on another level. Many nations including the U. S are involved in the campaign to curb the use of IED in Iraq and Afghanistan. For instance, the U. S plays a major role to counter IED efforts with specialized technology and military organizations. These efforts are aimed at detecting and defeating IEDs and other weapons that kill hundreds of U. S soldiers. Since the beginning of conflict, many U. S and NATO troops have either been injured or killed by IEDs. Subsequently, dozens of native citizens have also been killed as a result of activating or triggering a device. In 2012, NATO's center for excellence state that, close to 2, 700 people were wounded and 2000 were killed in terrorist attacks in Afghanistan. Reports indicate that, use of IEDs which is a new form of weaponry used to kill U. S troops in Iraq and Afghanistan is rampant. Roadside bombs in Afghanistan have killed hundreds of soldiers as IEDs tear off Marines and soldiers. Current records on IED show that many soldiers are dying every day in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Obama administration has ramped down the role of the U. S combat, this is a clear indication that the war against IEDs is far from over. However, through coherent interventions, American casualties have significantly declined and troops are going back home. The pentagon's Joint IED defeat organization indicates that IED attacks in June 2011

increased when U. S troops were fighting raged across Iraq. Thrice a week, the wounded in stretchers and swathed in tubes land at Andrew Air Force Base in Washington. However, because troops collect data differently, it is very difficult to get actual figures of amputations, deaths, and injuries. The U. S authorities state that authoritative database give actual figures of the wounded and killed. For instance, in June 2012, the U. S command reported 4, 500 IED events. This is an indication that, these were roadside bombs that were disarmed and detected. In May 2011, the amputation rate was on a down slope. On the optimistic side, the rate of survival for amputated soldiers is better. The decline of the amputations is due to the increasing role in the fighting being taken by police and soldiers in Afghanistan, and also reduction in U. S forces in Afghanistan. US forces have declined from 100, 000 to 87, 000 at present. This plan is aimed at reducing the number of 67, 000 soldiers by the end of October this year. Subsequently, Marines fighting in various regions such as Helmand Province have reduced to 15, 000 from 20, 000. However, as these troops decline, American battle deaths decrease by close to a third. A close study between the past and the present records show that troops have been evacuating Iraq and Afghanistan in great numbers. A majority of those in Afghanistan have shifted towards the east as Taliban fighters increasingly target U. S soldiers. However, it is expected that IED casualties will continue because insurgents and Taliban prefer using stand-off weapons including IED instead of directly engaging American forces. Apparently, coalition and U. S forces have spent large amounts of money equipping and training Afghan securities in Kabul. However, despite these efforts, getting

Afghans on their toes seems to be an uphill task. A new strategy has been initiated where the U. S coalition is setting up a mini-surge of equipment and trainers to curb IEDs.

The newest strategy to combat IED is quite tactful. Efforts by the coalition have been quite complicated. They have included the slow distribution of protective gear, and high Afghan illiteracy rate. Aside this, there are plans to train Afghan troops. This plan involves signing of a bilateral security agreement which is aimed at permitting the best U. S troops to remain in Afghan. Presently, there is a huge training gap that needs to be filled. The Afghan military officials posit that, IEDs contribute to more than 80% of military casualties. In 2013, close to 6, 100 Afghan soldiers were wounded and 1, 200 killed, according to the inspector general. These IEDs have killed civilians as well. A recent report shows that, after stunning of the U. S military commanders in Iraq, the U. S army emphasized on the importance of bomb disposal and detection. On the other hand, Afghan soldiers lack protective suit, robots, night visions goggles, and jammers which are used by the U. S troops.

For the past 3 years, approximately \$8billion has reportedly been spent on efforts by the U. S to overcome IEDs. Several counter-IED initiatives have been funded including; operational readiness course, and the global Anti-Terrorism Course. Recent sources show that joint defeat organization funding to counter measure IEDs was \$1. 4500 billion. In the past 6 months, the coalition has assisted the Afghan police and army in establishing 327 explosive ordnance teams. Forces in Afghan defuse approximately 40 to 80 IEDs every day (Belasco, 2009, p. 812).

The number of IED attacks outside Iraq and Afghanistan has gone relatively unnoticed as the numbers double. For instance, in the first nine months of 2012, there was an average of 608 attacks in 99 countries every month. These implications are manifold. This implies that, even after the U. S campaign in Afghanistan ends, the Danger will not disappear. This would mean that governments do not necessarily have to stop visualizing IEDs as tools that are affiliated with Taliban and al-Qaeda. In real sense, a continuing threat would require an enduring capacity to curb it. With the spreading and growing use of IEDs, it is not easy to balance-of-cost problems. The U. S has spent more than eighteen billion dollars on certain anti-IED gear in the last four years. Subsequently, this issue is not only financial, there is more to it. There is need to have a coherent strategy such as a scalable and cheap solutions (Mattocks, 2012, p. 71).

One of the major challenges of curbing IEDs is that nations such as the U. S have spent lots of money solving the issue of IEDs in the recent past and at present. Instead, there should be efforts to curb this menace in future so that it does not carry on. We ought to ensure counter measures and prepare for better weapons to use. IEDs are huge threats today. However, with modern technologies such as modified ground robots, a lot of issue would be solved and IEDs controlled easily. A positive issue with combating IEDs is that the U. S and other nations are well equipped in the current war in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, in both wars, the biggest challenge is unconventional warfare. These are more of guerilla warfare where anyone can be an enemy. Insurgents are now quickly adapting to countermeasures which have led to the increase of very sophisticated IEDs. U. S forces are now using a new

strategy of countering the devices by disrupting portions, and utilizing intelligent sources used by insurgents.

Apparently, insurgents are now quickly adapting to countermeasures which have led to the increase of very sophisticated IEDs. However, officials in the Department of Defense (DOD) have warned that IED technologies are supplied by Iraq, additionally; there is likelihood that the IEDs are also used by other terrorists and insurgents worldwide. IEDs have caused close to 60% of all American forces casualties in Iraq and over 48% of military casualties in Afghanistan, who have been wounded and killed. A number of observers and investigators in Iraq and Afghanistan depict that the biggest source of IEDs come from military ordnance deposits in Iraq, facilitated by insurgents. IEDs have caused more than half of all American soldiers' deaths in Iraq, and an 8th in Afghanistan. U. S military officials deduce that the majority of dangerous weapons including EFPs and IEDs are smuggled into Afghanistan and Iraq by a section of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard known as the Quds Force. However, many insurgents in Iraq have espoused many U. S counter measures (Xydakis, 2005, p. 213).

It is expected that IED casualties will continue because insurgents and Taliban prefer using stand-off weapons including IED instead of directly engaging American forces. Apparently, coalition and U. S forces have spent large amounts of money equipping and training Afghan securities in Kabul. IEDs are huge threats today. However, with modern technologies such as modified ground robots, a lot of issue would be solved and IEDs controlled easily. To tackle this issue, the U. S has invested a lot of money in purchasing and installing sophisticated surveillance systems. The Army and

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