



ODUMUNC 2014
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Preventing Use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)

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Introduction

The scourge of land mines has been a serious problem for civilians and soldiers alike in conflict regions for over 150 years. Since the late-1980s, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have emerged as the most common and deadly form of land mine. These weapon specifically target people, unlike other mine warfare systems directed at armored vehicles or ships. Their effects are arbitrary, since operators often have no idea who will trigger blasts.

While states are getting out of the landmine business, other actors such as insurgents and terrorists are getting in. Since 2003, in the wake of the American-led invasion of Iraq, IED's emerged as the primary weapon of contemporary armed conflict, responsible for most of the casualties in many conflicts, often more deadly than small arms fire or artillery and rockets combined. They also cause a large number of civilian deaths and injury, often killing more civilians than military targets. Targets include anyone who might set off such a weapon.

An IED is a home-made (or more realistically, a garage-made) weapon based on explosives and a detonator, often improvised using readily available parts. A typical source of explosive is nitrate fertilizer and diesel fuel. Buried under paths or roads, or placed in walls near traffic or even in trees, they can be triggered by pressure-plate detonators, radio- or wire-controls or any of a wide range of initiators. They are used by many groups, mostly guerilla fighters. While they have been used by the armed forces of states, this is rare; government militaries have access to simpler and more reliable factory-manufactured weapons.

These kinds of devices have been used in several different of kinds of engagement/conflicts. In all instances, these devices have had massive effects and lethality on the battlefield and in public areas. Yet, because of the adaptive and sometimes fragile nature of these devices, they can and could be very dangerous/ deadly for soldier and civilian alike. As political conflicts and terrorism continue to arise in the coming future, nations in the United Nations will all have a stake in the regulation or illegalizing the use of these devices.

Figure 1. Small IED with detonator



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Background

The name originally coined by the British military to describe the bombs used by the Provisional Irish Republican Army in the 1970s, IEDs have been in used several different military conflicts and terrorist attacks, such conflicts ranging from the Vietnam War to present urban battles and political bombings. In the conflict in Afghanistan, there have been many injuries and deaths. IEDs have five main parts: a power source, a switch, an initiator, a container, and a charge. Without anyone of these parts, the device cannot function. There are different types of IEDs. These types of divide based traits such as delivery and trigger mechanisms and what is kind of agents it combine with. These devices become more dangerous when combined with objects like nails, glass, and piece of metal. IEDs become potentially deadly with the infusion with chemical and bio-agents. IEDs, also, can used as a booby trap or can be detonated remotely.

Recent or current conflicts where IEDs play a prominent role include:

- Afghanistan
- Algeria
- Columbia
- India (Maoist insurgencies)
- Iraq
- Lebanon
- Libya
- Mali
- Nepal
- Northern Ireland
- Philippines
- Russia (Chechnya)
- Sri Lanka
- Syria
- United States (Oklahoma City and Boston Marathon bombers)

The use of IEDs has spread widely, largely because they are readily fabricated and extremely deadly, making them a global menace and a seemingly permanent part of armed conflict everywhere. Without coordinated international action, their continued spread seems inevitable.

Current situation

In the current war on terrorism and other conflicts, many nations and organizations are trying to develop counter measures against IEDs. IEDs injure or kill the members of the conflicts and common people alike. The numbers of injuries outnumber those who are killed. Nations involved in the campaign to get rid of IEDs are the firstly the nations involved in the war on terrorism such as the nations of NATO and the governments of middle eastern nations like Afghanistan and Syria.

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The United States plays a leading role in counter-IED efforts, with specialized military organizations and technology to detect and defeat these weapons. The United States are searching for other technological solutions to the problem of IEDs. Many NATO troops have been killed or injury by these explosive devices since the beginning of conflict in 2001. Those directly involved in the conflicts are not the only ones affected by the existence of the dangerous objects. Dozens of civilians from different nations have been killed as a result of accidentally triggering or activating a device or by just being in the general area of the device as it explode. “NATO’s center for excellence defense against terrorism reports 972 terrorist attacks across Afghanistan in 2012, which killed 1,999 people and wounded 2,756 others. In 2012, COE-DAT found Afghanistan was the world’s third most frequently attacked country by terrorists (amounting to 13 percent of all world attacks) and the second most attack in the Asian region (27 percent of attacks) in 2012.” (Loven, 2013) Though Afghanistan and other Middle East nations feel the effect of IEDs, many nations are victims to the terrorist attack and IED bombing.

Figure 2. IEDs based on artillery shells and landmines



Role of the United Nations

Like the issue of leftover mines in demilitarized areas, the United Nations has a great interest in the disposal or illegalization of improvised explosives. As the repository of the Anti-Personal Landmines Treaty (APL), the United Nations is the center for global efforts to suppress land mine use. The APL Treaty is also known as the Ottawa Convention, discussed below. The UN also is vulnerable to IEDs, with hundreds of UN missions abroad, including peacekeeping operations (PKOs), development works, refugees and internally displaced persons exposed to the threat.

To deal with IEDs in the field, the UN created UNMAS, the United Nation Mine Action Services. UNMAS is part of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in its Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions. UNMAS was originally created for the deactivation of landmines leftover from years of wars and conflicts. The organization provides a service called Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Support: UNMAS Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Support is ideally placed to assist States in the development and training of an

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inherent capability designed to mitigate the threat of Improvised Explosive Devices. (Improvised Explosive Devices n.d.)

The ultimate goal of the UNMAS is the total eradication of dangerous explosives elements around the world. As IEDs are in different forms, the job of UNMAS is continuous and ever changing.

Landmark UN resolutions

While Improvised Explosives Device is a newer form of weaponry, its predecessor, the landmine is not new to the United Nations and has been addressed. Of greatest importance are the Geneva Conventions, especially the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention on the *Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War*. This prohibits all attacks intended to harm civilians or with random effects. Article 3 requires protection of noncombatants. No less important is the 1997 Anti-Personnel Landmines (APL) Convention, the Ottawa Treaty (named for the city where it was finalized), formally the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction*.¹ With 161 states party to the convention, the manufacturing, stockpiling and use of anti-personnel land mines is forbidden.² The treaty defines anti-personal mine as “a mine designed to be exploded by the presence, proximity, or contact of a person and that will incapacitate, injure, or kill one or more persons” (Mine Ban Treaty 1997). Improvised explosive devices clearly fall under the treaty’s authority. Most signatories have destroyed all their landmines, although some retain non-automatic mines, actuated by an operator, which is permitted.³ The principles of the convention have been extended to non-state armed groups (NSAs or NSAGs) by Geneva Call, a non-governmental organization (NGO). Geneva Call has negotiated agreements with more than 40 NSAs, in which they agree not to use such weapons.⁴

While most countries agree that the precedent of landmine use needs to be reversed, 31 states refuse to sign the Ottawa Convention, citing military requirements. Many non-state actors continue to use landmines and IEDs, refusing to be drawn into any system of restraint. IEDs are especially deadly, continuing to cause death and injury on a serious scale.

¹ The Ottawa Convention text is available at http://www.un.org/Depts/mine/UNDocs/ban_trty.htm

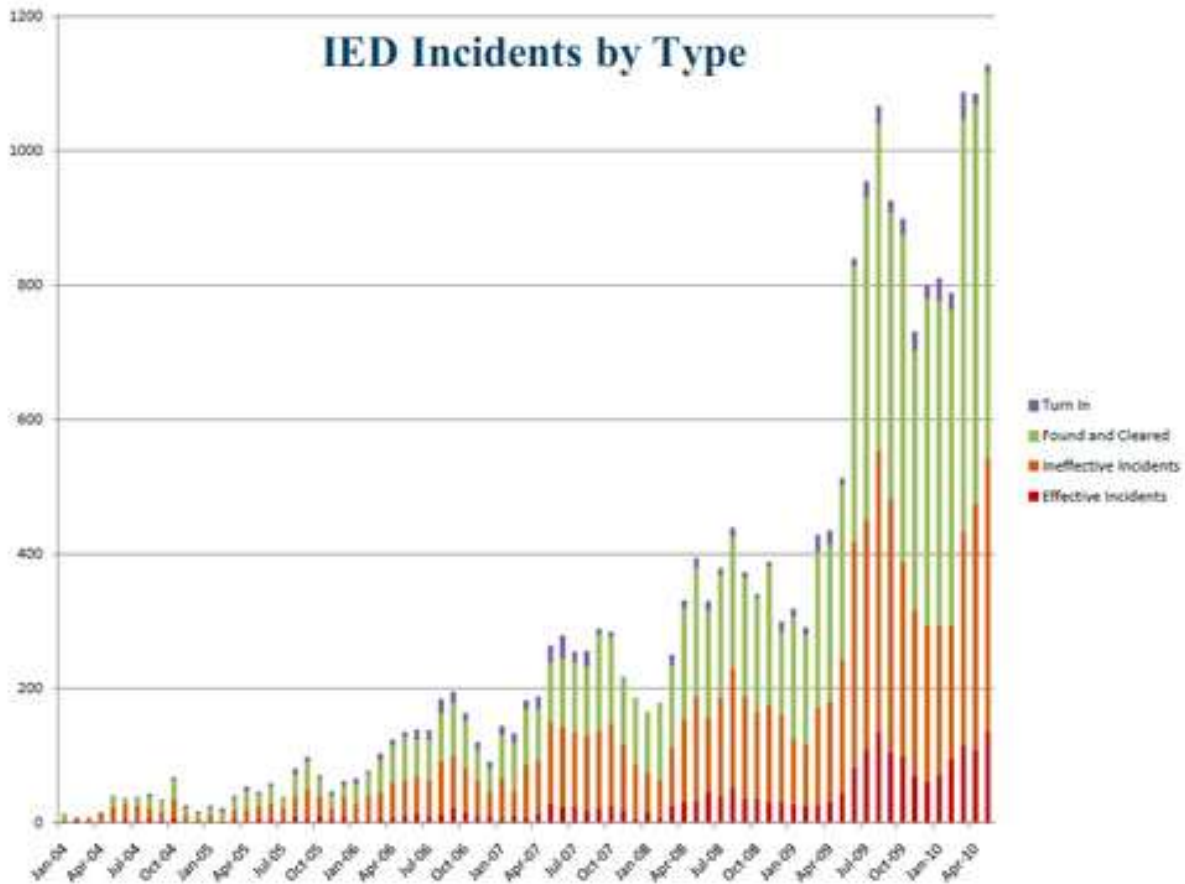
² Is your country a signatory? See The Ottawa Convention: Signatories and States-Parties, Arms Control Association, 2013. <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/ottawasigs>

³ *History of the movement to ban landmines*, International Campaign to Ban Landmines, 2013. <http://www.icbl.org/index.php/icbl/Treaty/MBT/Ban-History>

⁴ *Anti-personnel mines and armed non-State actors*, Geneva Call, 2013. <http://www.genevacall.org/Themes/Landmines/landmines.htm>

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Figure 3. IED Incidents in Afghanistan



Country positions

- **Afghanistan:** Having a serious problem with insurgency and terrorism, Afghanistan is greatly affected by IED problems. These often are targeted against the Afghan security forces, as well as the forces of NATO countries, the UN and other development agencies, as well as Afghan civilians. IEDs reduce the ability of the government in Kabul to show authority elsewhere in the country, harm civilians and harm national trade and commerce.
- **China:** China has experience with improvised explosive devices being used on its citizens. China strives to protect and secure its people and interests.
- **France:** France’s main goal is the protection of its people and its interests. In order to achieve this, France continues to support its allies both directly and indirectly in various forms.
- **Iraq:** Iraq has been more seriously affected by IEDs than any other country. The weapons are a major tool of sectarian terror and a major hindrance to development efforts by UN agencies and ordinary commercial activity. During the previous decade,

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tens of thousands of Iraqis have been killed or maimed, and the cost to the country in lost economic activity is incalculable.

- **Israel:** With the constant threat from outside forces, Israel is aware and launched efforts to counter act the use of IEDs, the most commonly used tactic of insurgents. The state of Israel strives to protect its borders and people but also its allies in the region.
- **Russia:** Russia has a history with IED attacks, mostly in the south Caucasus region where they are a routine part of the war in the province of Chechnya. Russia's approach to the problem has been slower than many others, affected by Moscow's determination to resolve such issues without foreign assistance.
- **Sri Lanka:** Sri Lanka has to deal with the IEDs as a result of the efforts of the anti-government Tamil Tigers, a rebel in the north that was crushed in 2009, although left-over and forgotten weapons continue to cause serious problems.
- **United States:** Since 2001, the United States military forces have faced the problem of improvised explosive devices. The United States, losing a great number of both military personal and civilians, has a great stake in the banning of IEDs. As the US continues leading the war on terror, it will continue to find a way to battle insurgencies and their main, most effective weapon.

Proposals

Most proposals for action on IEDs start with enforcing adherence to the 1997 Ottawa Convention. Not all countries agree, especially those who believe that states as sovereign actors have security requirements which must be addressed first. Instead they call for peace or military defeat of the adversaries as a precondition for greater cooperation. Other countries are suspicious of the financial requirements of landmine disarmament. They require assistance to disarm, but often hesitate about having foreign governments or even NGOs involved; they prepare to undertake destruction of sensitive military equipment themselves. Some worry that money allocated for development will be "lost" when transferred to landmine removal and destruction. Several governments prefer to keep their landmines as bargaining tool against insurgencies or other governments. Others have higher priorities or fear restrictions on IED use will lead to greater restrictions on other weapons of war, limiting their ability to undertake effective military action.

Another approach to action is to provide services for IED detection and removal. This is costly and requires financing. Currently most expertise is controlled by militaries, especially in the United States. Smaller countries—including some of those most affected—and international organizations often have difficulty benefiting from their expertise. NGOs also have growing expertise in landmine removal, but not in areas with active fighting.

The most effective long-term solution to the scourge is not defeating or directly engaging IEDs at all, but resolving the conflicts that make them attractive. Conflict resolution is the only approach with the promise of long-term effectiveness. It also is the most controversial and often most difficult to pursue.

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