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The All Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Weapons



IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES: GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR A GLOBAL THREAT.

Findings and recommendations from an inquiry into the use of Improvised Explosive Weapons by the APPG on Explosive Weapons.

‘ I found the report interesting, particularly the opportunities for the UK to show leadership in Counter-IED work. DFID works across Government, particularly with the Conflict, Stability and Security Fund and with posts leading on stabilisation, to ensure the government’s response across the sector is co-ordinated.’

Rory Stewart MP, Minister of State for International Development

‘ Thank you for the valuable work the APPG has been doing to address the issue of IEDs. The UK remains committed to developing practical approaches aimed at reducing the use, availability and negative impact of IEDs when targeted against civilians.’

Harriet Baldwin MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defence

‘ I would like to thank the APPG for your valuable work on this issue. The opportunities for the UK to show leadership on Counter IED work which you identify are particularly important. FCO officials continue to work with departments across Government, particularly the Ministry of Defence, Department for International Development and the Stabilisation Unit to ensure we are driving this work forward.

My officials stand ready to work with you on your forthcoming inquiry focussing on the victims of IEDs.’

Sir Alan Duncan MP, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

INTRODUCTION

IED Components | JJ.Chatard, DICOD

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Explosive Weapons was established in 2015, and one of its first acts was to initiate an inquiry into the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and their impact on the humanitarian space.

This report summarises key points made in the written evidence submitted to the APPG inquiry into the use of improvised explosive weapons, and the discussions at the subsequent conference, and provides a set of recommendations for the UK government.



Why IEDs?

For many years the focus of advocacy around explosive weapons has been on the international campaign to ban anti-personnel landmines and the illegal use of explosive weapons against innocent civilians by mainly state parties and state party supported groups.

Times have changed, and the explosive threat has migrated from antipersonnel landmines to IEDs. Improvised explosive devices have become a weapon of choice for dissident groups and individuals and criminals around the world.

The Global IED Threat

IEDs now account for more civilian deaths and injuries than legacy landmines and explosive remnants of war. In 2012, c.3,600 people were killed or injured by landmines, attracting some \$681m of funding. In the same year, c.27,000 people were killed by IEDs. Outside purely military responses, the funding was negligible.¹



66 Countries & Territories have reported at least one civilian casualty from IEDs.

Definition: What is an IED?

There is no single, simple definition of what constitutes an IED: that such an ambiguity exists is due in part to the diversity of IED types and components, by virtue of being improvised, non-standardised weapons.²

Both the APPG EW conference and the inquiry were based on the NATO definition of an IED as:

‘ A device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass or distract. It may incorporate military stores, but is normally devised from non-military components.’³

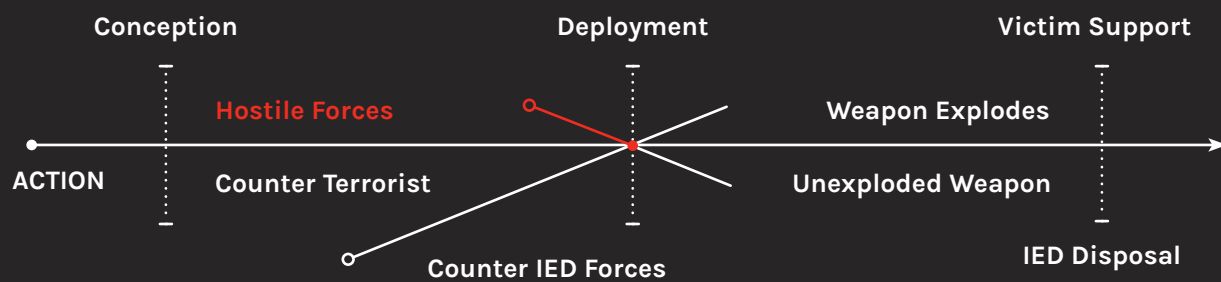
The threat spectrum challenge, from classic de-mining to complex improvised devices.



Global Solutions for a Global Threat.

The APPG inquiry focused on: the extent and form in which IEDs are being used and by whom, the UK Government’s policies in response, and potential recommendations or lessons to be learned. A wide range of different organisations and departments from government, academia, civil society, and the private sector were asked to submit evidence to the inquiry.

The evidence from different industry sectors involved in dealing with improvised explosive weapons and their aftermath clearly showed that organisations operated within clear and distinct parameters. To test this, participants at the conference were asked to place themselves into a capability matrix.



The exercise illustrated that there are clear areas in which statutory bodies, non-governmental organisations and private sector entities would operate – and one of the objectives of this report is to show that by working together and with the support of government and the international community, the threat of IEDs could be more effectively countered.





Roger Mullin MP & Iain Overton CEO (AOAV) | Page 7 Photography

On 15th September 2016, the APPG hosted a conference in the Houses of Parliament featuring an expert panel discussion of the evidence submitted and the implications and challenges which it presented. The conference examined the evidence in three sessions aligned with the three pillars of NATO C-IED policy. **‘Countering the Network’**, **‘Preparing the People’** and **‘Defeating the Device’**.

The discussions were chaired by the outgoing and the incoming chairmen of the APPG: **Roger Mullin MP** and **Matthew Offord MP**, and facilitated by broadcaster, Doctor and former British Army Officer **Saleyha Ahsan**.

The panel of experts comprised:

Agnès Marcaillou, Director, United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

Hannah Bryce, Assistant Head, International Security Department, Chatham House

Dr Laura Cleary, Head of the Centre for International Security & Resilience and a Senior Lecturer in International Relations, Cranfield University

Iain Overton, CEO, Action on Armed Violence (AOAV)

Major-General Jonathan Shaw, Chairman, Optima Group

Brigadier Gareth Collett, Defence Attaché Baghdad and Senior Explosives Engineer for the UK Ministry of Defence.

APPG Conference & Findings.

The evidence submitted, discussions held, and responses recommended by those who participated are broken down here in accordance with the three principal pillars of tackling IEDs:

Countering the Network.

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Preparing the People.

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Defeating the Device.

COUNTERING THE NETWORK

Counter-IED (C-IED) was originally a military term used to refer to preparing forces to safely operate in areas where IEDs were present. It is now a much broader concept, encompassing operations undertaken by humanitarian and commercial organisations. Inevitably these organisations will have different capabilities and capacities, resulting in differing approaches to C-IED.

These differences are particularly evident when considering Countering the Network. This pillar focuses on the networks which create and deploy IEDs or which spread the ideologies that justify the use of these weapons.

‘ If we can reduce the purposeful use of weapons by addressing the motivations and enabling factors that create armed violence respect for the right to safety & security will follow.’

- Danish Demining Group

Militarily, a crucial part of the pillar is the collection of evidence - forensically where possible - from the devices. This information can then be used to tie a device to a particular individual or group, which is key to eventually identifying suppliers, financiers and manufacturers. This kind of intelligence-gathering involved could be perceived as being part of a wider counter-terrorism or counter-insurgency effort.

‘Countering the Network’ is therefore so politically charged that some organisations are cautious to engage and appear to become active participants in a conflict. They may also lack the relevant expertise and technology, or mandate for this process.

For UNMAS and other humanitarian organisations, engaging in operations aimed at overcoming the networks behind IEDs undermines the humanitarian principle of neutrality. If UNMAS were to engage in actively countering the network it would undermine its neutrality and potentially make staff a target for attacks. As Ms Marcaillou put it: ‘if we do that we are dead.’

Despite this evidence, there may be other ways in which non-military organisations can add to efforts to counter IED networks. Evidence of the direct and indirect impacts of IED-related violence can be used to advocate for changes in states' policy. Non-military and humanitarian organisations can also work to create counter-narratives aimed at challenging the arguments used by people like religious extremists, and to build a stigma inhibiting IED use.

A number of attempts have been made to disrupt IED networks by targeting their supply chains and their access to precursor materials, but with mixed success. The improvised nature of IEDs means that blocking or limiting access to one component results in manufacturers finding alternative materials which are legal or easier to obtain. Combinations of innocuous, everyday substances can also be brought together to form a bomb. Curbing all potential precursor materials is therefore an unwieldy, if not impossible task.

‘Tracking precursors offers little viable solution.’

- Danish Church Aid

Legislation aimed at disrupting supply chains requires awareness of the complexity of the issue. Good policy, however, is dependent on effective implementation. Awareness of the issue and hazards of certain materials needs to be understood at all levels, from industry to policymakers to police and customs officials.

Another risk is the diversion of weapons and materials from poorly managed stockpiles. The proliferation of weapons throughout the Maghreb following the conflict in Libya is a sobering example.

‘Abandoned & unexploded ordnance can be salvaged to make IEDs.’

- Geneva Call

PREPARING THE PEOPLE

An essential element of C-IED is measures taken to ‘prepare the people’ for dealing with the IED threat. This is an adaptation of the NATO pillar for ‘preparing the force’ but broadened to take on responders, trainers, and communities, among others.

Humanitarian organisations working in areas affected by IEDs are at risk. This includes both those organisations directly focused on IED clearance and those with other mandates. In 2015 over 200 aid workers were killed or injured in attacks globally, according to the Aid Worker Security Database.⁴ In certain countries and conflicts, IED are responsible for a number of these casualties. In Afghanistan at least 122 staff were killed or injured in attacks involving IEDs between 2004 and 1 August 2014.⁵ In a desire to protect against this perceived threat, organisations have restricted the areas in which they operate and increased security around their compounds.

Preparing the People **cont...**

Preparing the 'first responders' to IED incidents is a vital step to mitigating the immediate impact of an attack. While there has been much focus on ensuring military forces are provided with appropriate training, the right degree of preparation must also be given to the police, health care services and fire departments which are in the front line against the threat (this will be covered more fully in the next APPG inquiry).

Many efforts around 'preparing the people' have focused on effectively communicating and training different groups. Communication strategies come in a range of forms from providing risk education training for displaced persons to producing strategic communications designed to discredit the narratives of extremist groups. Training for troops, humanitarians and contractors needs to be provided prior to deployment and subsequently refreshed. Furthermore, the equipment and technology which has been donated to governments also requires training in order for it to be used correctly and effectively.

DEFEATING THE DEVICE

Explosive weapons, whether improvised or otherwise, are not explicitly prohibited under international humanitarian law. However, the indiscriminate use of weapons, and the deliberate targeting of civilians are prohibited under international law. The high number of civilian IED casualties shows that they are often used in a way which does not distinguish between military objectives and civilians or civilian objects.^{6/7}

‘ There are no straight lines with IEDs and they are often highly unpredictable.’

- HALO Trust

IEDs are obliquely mentioned in Amended Protocol II of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) which regulates the use of mines, booby traps and 'other devices'. Although IEDs are not expressly mentioned in other international treaties, devices which are victim-activated may be covered by Article 2 of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and devices which are abandoned or unexploded are Explosive Remnants of War and may be covered by Article V of the CCW.

The applicability of the existing legal mechanisms and treaties, or the establishment of a new single treaty banning all IEDs, is of limited relevance to



users of IEDs who tend to overwhelmingly be non-state armed groups who do not consider themselves as bound by these obligations. However, these laws are part of a broader emerging international norm and groups which have a desire to eventually claim some form of legitimacy have an interest in respecting these standards.

A further impediment to raising the political profile of this issue is that fewer resources are available for advocacy work centring on IEDs. With no high-profile international treaty to mobilise resources, those working around advocacy on this issue must find other mechanisms.

Access to skilled and trained personnel is a crucial resource for countering the device. There is a high attrition rate for bomb disposal operators, and all the organisations working in IED disposal are competing for the same small number of operators. It takes considerable time to train new operators to the right level. Increasing the pool of appropriately qualified EOD operators should be the priority.

Funding for counter-IED activities must be directed appropriately, for a defined purpose, and sufficient standards must be maintained. There also needs to be monitoring and evaluation, transparency, and accountability mechanisms to ensure funds are managed correctly.

To avoid preventable deaths and injuries among IED operators, UNMAS are working on developing IED disposal standards to clearly define exactly what qualifies as a 'Counter-IED expert'. Introducing recognised standards would ensure that operators with appropriate skills are matched to each threat.



‘ The rapid and effective clearance of IEDs after national government or UN operations have taken place is key to returning a fragile state to normality. ’

- Optima Group

There is a need to think broadly about what resources and knowledge are required to counter the device, from forensic equipment to medical facilities.

Opportunities abound to learn from the experiences of other countries, particularly those developing IED specialisms, like the Ukraine, or those outside current conflict areas with historical knowledge, such as Sri Lanka. Building connections between law enforcement agencies would encourage dialogue between countries. In the past such agencies have been more willing to engage with their counterparts in other countries than through diplomats and policy makers.

Ultimately IEDs will be an enduring threat, and thus resources should be aimed at managing the threat. A key aspect of this will be through building infrastructure to counter the device, but such a strategy will also help to counter the network and assist with Pillar 3, preparing the people. This takes political will and long-term commitment, as well as an understanding that casualties will continue to occur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Four broad themes emerged from the evidence submitted to the IED inquiry and the subsequent conference. These form the basis of the recommendations which the All Party Parliamentary Group now offers to the UK Government and to the wider international community.

1. Funding

More funding, correctly distributed, is needed with a dedicated C- IED budget stream.

2. Research & Advocacy

Understanding IEDs includes carrying out research and disseminating the results of that research through advocacy. Academics and humanitarian groups have an important role to play in this area. Their data should identify places where funding could be better applied and, crucially, highlight the long-term socio-economic and human impacts of IEDs

3. Accreditation

There must be an internationally-recognised system of accreditation for C-IED activity, especially where it relates to disposing safely of the device. Without requisite levels of experience and expertise, and no means of distinguishing between expert and novice, more people will die.

4. Regulation

Regulations must become more efficient and results-driven and must identify the group or groups who are responsible for enforcing the legislation. Such a regime should take a holistic approach to C-IED work, and engage multi-laterally with the issue, from training local police and customs officers to tightening money-laundering regulations. Finally, there must be more done to stigmatise the deployment of IEDs, including prosecutions and advocacy where appropriate. In the provisions of CCW Amended Protocol II related to IEDs, under ART.3 after each mention of 'booby traps' the words 'or other explosive devices' should be replaced by the words 'or Improvised Explosive Devices'.

CONCLUSION

The APPG on Explosive Weapons sees itself as bridging the gap between legislators, policy makers, and humanitarian and commercial organisations that carry out mine action and C-IED activities on a daily basis.

An important role for the APPG is to ensure transparency of issues for Parliament and the public domain for debate and action.

By facilitating communication, the Group hopes progress will be made in addressing the widespread threat of IEDs, and the devastation these weapons cause to individuals, communities, and countries. The APPG exhorts the UK government to actively engage with IEDs as the real face of global terror.

The APPG would like to thank the following for submitting evidence to our inquiry:

Civil Society

Action on Armed Violence
 British Red Cross
 Danish Church Aid
 Danish De-mining Group
 Geneva Call
 HALO Trust
 MAG

Commercial Sector

Allen Vanguard Ltd now Worldwide Counter Threat Solutions
 The Blaythorne Group
 Optima Group
 Resilio

Academia

Centre for Blast injuries Studies, Imperial College
 Chatham House
 Conflict Arms Research
 Cranfield University

Statutory body

Croatian Mine Action Centre
 UK Defence Academy
 UNMAS

Endnotes

- 1 Action on Armed Violence Submission – S. 39
- 2 Paul Gill, John Horgan and Jeffrey Lovelace, IEDs, the problem of definition, *Studies in conflict and terrorism*, 34:9 (2011), 733.
- 3 NATO, 2007, Part 2, sec. I, p. 2
- 4 https://aidworkersecurity.org/sites/default/files/HO_AidWorkerSecPreview_1015_G.PDF_.pdf
- 5 https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20150409IEDs.pdf
- 6 Evidence submitted to the Inquiry by the British Red Cross.
- 7 However, it is possible to use these devices discriminately, for ex. a roadside IED which is triggered by a person who is able to observe the target.
- 8 Other devices are defined as ‘manually emplaced munitions and devices including improvised explosive devices designed to kill, injure or damage and which are actuated manually, by remote control, or automatically after a lapse of time.’
[http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/\(httpAssets\)/8B3DCD52D33DCC59C12571DE005D8A28/\\$file/AMENDED+PROTOCOL+II.pdf](http://www.unog.ch/80256EDD006B8954/(httpAssets)/8B3DCD52D33DCC59C12571DE005D8A28/$file/AMENDED+PROTOCOL+II.pdf)





The All Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Weapons is an independent group of backbench MPs and Peers, it was created to draw attention to the humanitarian consequences of the manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transport and unlawful use of explosive weapons. The group will raise the profile of the humanitarian benefits of mine action and counter IED work around the globe by awareness training and capacity building, campaigning for appropriate policy change and acting as a focal point for debate and the exchange of ideas, views and information.

The APPG on Explosive Weapons is supported by annual subscription fees from Associate Members, by individual sponsorship from companies and other interested groups through its secretariat.

The APPG is dedicated to providing a resource for all organisations or individuals interested in, and affected by, the issues surrounded explosive weapons.

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Leaders in explosive threat mitigation

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