



JOINT IED DEFEAT ORGANIZATION NEWS STORY



ATTACK THE NETWORK — DEFEAT THE DEVICE — TRAIN THE FORCE

JIEDDO takes IED fight to Africa

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Washington, D.C. — In response to a call for assistance from U.S. Africa Command, the Joint IED Defeat Organization's (JIEDDO) senior enlisted advisor traveled to Kenya to assess the continent's first counter-IED course recently.

Command Sgt. Maj. Todd Burnett's ability to counter IEDs is a matter of skill, training and instinct. He credits faith and his fellow soldiers for allowing him to walk away from 46 IED encounters – 23 of them direct hits.

As the senior enlisted advisor to the director of JIEDDO, he puts his knowledge and in-theater experience clearing routes to work to save other warfighters.

"I provide operational experience and insight based on deployments and first-hand, theater-based experience," he says.

In fulfillment of JIEDDO's Train the Force line of operation, Burnett regularly visits counter-IED training exercises to observe and critique them and bring back information about who is doing what where.

He recently received a call from Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Ripka, U.S. Africa Command's senior enlisted leader. He asked Burnett if he would assess the first counter-IED Level 1 training class offered in Africa.

The IED threat worldwide is persistent, but it has been climbing in recent months in Africa with a total of 17 on the continent in February, according to a report of open-source information compiled by the Centre of Excellence Defense Against Terrorism, or COE/DAT, an international military organization accredited by NATO. The report indicates the highest number of IED attacks in Africa in February occurred in Mauritania with five, followed by Somalia, Algeria and Nigeria, with three each.

According to monthly reports by COE/DAT, there were nine IED attacks in Africa in January; 16 in December 2010, 11 in November 2010, seven in October 2010 and four in September 2010. IED attacks in Africa for those months occurred in Somalia, Algeria, Nigeria, Kenya, Mauritania and Morocco.

The average number of IED incidents worldwide, outside Iraq and Afghanistan, has remained higher than 400 per month for the last two years.

To meet the IED threat and the possibility of neighboring African countries calling for assistance, soldiers from Kenya, Uganda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan and Rwanda gathered in Kenya for the training. Burnett agreed to provide an assessment and traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, to observe the one-week course. Instructors quickly realized that his knowledge was more up-to-date in some areas than the training they had readied. They asked him to assist with the training, so he stepped into a teaching role while there.

While his last deployment to the theater ended in 2008, Burnett returns to Iraq and Afghanistan regularly as part of his duties at JIEDDO.

"To achieve the mission, it's vital to stay as current and relevant to the fight as possible," he says. To that end, Burnett travels back to both theaters quarterly, rides patrols with various units and queries them to find out if the pre-deployment counter-IED training they receive is adequate, current and real-time for their area of responsibility.

While in the field, he watches soldiers use equipment developed and funded by JIEDDO, ensures the equipment is used for its intended purpose and that soldiers have proper field service representatives for it.

"I am able to come back to the training base where we are training pre-deployers and give firsthand information to assist in keeping our endeavors current," he says.

His voice is also the one that informs combatant command senior enlisted advisors and service branch senior enlisted advisors of the latest trends in their area of operation and the global picture of what they could see next or should be aware of. He shared that information with the African army students. Underlying the knowledge of JIEDDO achievements is the realization that IEDs continue to present a challenge.

"Although we have made great strides, service members are still making the ultimate sacrifice," Burnett says. "We will continue to find innovative ways to protect them by enhancing their equipment and updating their training. It's important to prepare them for what they are encountering now and in the future."

JIEDDO's critical purpose is to rapidly provide counter-IED capability in support of combatant commanders to enable defeat of the IED as a strategic weapon of influence. The organization does so by rapidly developing innovative equipment and technology, training troops and providing them with expertise.