



Oral Statement By

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Thank you, Chairman Young, Ranking Member Dicks and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to update you this morning on the Department of Defense's efforts to counter the IED and to disrupt the global threat networks that employ them. I've prepared a written statement which I would like to submit for the record.

First, let me begin by commenting on the retirement of Congressman Dicks. Congressman, thank you for your service and your support to our troopers and our military. And to Congressman Lewis and Congressman Hinchey, thank you as well. You've been great champions for our Armed Forces throughout your careers and for that we are very grateful.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say I share your concerns and we try to live the commitment that you talked about. And hopefully I can answer your questions today. I'd like to also thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership and the entire subcommittee for recognizing the importance of the counter-IED mission and resourcing it accordingly.

The funding support you provide has enabled the Department of Defense to rapidly field the critical counter-IED capabilities that our warfighters need to execute their mission. We still need to do more.

But let me say upfront that I believe the IED and the networks that use these asymmetric weapons will remain a threat to our forces and here at home for decades. The IED is the weapon of choice for threat networks because they are cheap, readily available, largely off the shelf, easy to construct, lethal and accurate.

This trend is readily apparent in Afghanistan as you highlighted where IED events continue to rise. In the past two years, IED events have increased 42 percent, from 9,300 events in 2009 to 16,000 events in 2011. And this year, we're on track for 2012 to meet or exceed the historic number of IED events we saw last year. As a matter of fact, this past June, June 2012, we had the highest number of monthly IED events we've recorded.

Contributing to these numbers, as Ranking Member Dicks mentioned, are the fertilizer explosives which remain a significant challenge in Afghanistan. Today, 87 percent of the IEDs employed against coalition forces are made with homemade explosives. And of those, 74 percent are made with ammonium nitrate derived from calcium ammonium nitrate, a common agricultural fertilizer that is ubiquitous in the area.

While the overall number of IED events is high as you mentioned, our ability to find and neutralize them before detonation has improved steadily — helping to reduce U.S. casualties by more than 40 percent this past year.

Now, many factors have contributed to the decreased effectiveness of IEDs in Afghanistan including our attempts to apply the lessons learned in theater to our pre-deployment training, fielding an increased number of counter IED capabilities, everything from airborne sensors to hand-held devices, especially focused on our dismounted troopers. And commanders and troopers on the ground continuously refining their tactics, techniques and procedures tailored to the threat they face in that region.

As we begin to transition combat operations in Afghanistan and look at 2014, we must not lose our focus on the mission at hand. U.S. forces and civilian personnel will remain the target of insurgent IED attacks and the IED will remain the weapon of choice. From our experience in Iraq, the reduction of U.S. forces must not equal a reduction in counter-IED or other critical capabilities.

As the military footprint in Afghanistan decreases this drawdown and transition will require flexibility to shift priorities rapidly — providing the requisite counter IED capabilities, situational awareness and security and protection for these remaining troops.

While the IED has been the focal point of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq during the last decade, it is not exclusive to those countries or region. The global spread of threat networks and proliferation of IEDs and associated technology are pervasive and continue to affect U.S. security at home and interests abroad.

Since 2007, IED incidents outside of Iraq and Afghanistan have increased to average more than 500 incidents per month around the globe. Since January 2011, there have been more than 10,000 global IED events occurring in 112 countries executed by more than 40 regional and transnational threat networks.

The extremist networks that employ IEDs have proven to be resilient, interconnected and extremely violent. Globalization, the Internet and social media have extended the reach of these organizations providing platforms for recruiting technical exchanges, training, planning, funding and social interaction.

While we in the military adhere to Napoleon's dictum to “march to the sound of the guns,” these threat networks march to the signs of insecurity and take the IED with them. We see this in Colombia, Pakistan, Syria, Bahrain, Nigeria

and Somalia among others. Wherever we see turmoil and insecurity, we see the spread of these networks and their use of IEDs.

Today, as we see in Afghanistan, and in the future, I believe U.S. forces will operate in an IED environment. I believe it's a reality of the 21st century warfare and we must plan accordingly. Currently, the department, led by Deputy Secretary Carter, is in the process of reviewing the number of proven capabilities that we have developed over the last 10 years during the course of these conflicts to determine which ones should endure.

And as part of these, I've recommended five counter IED capabilities which I believe should be institutionalized. First, we must preserve the ability to rapidly provide counter-IED material solutions in response to this dynamic threat. The constantly changing threat environment requires the Department of Defense to maintain a higher level of institutional acquisition agility and continued investment and counter-IED research and development. Moving forward, DOD must acquire and deliver capabilities in months, not years.

The second enduring capability is the ability to fuse operational information and intelligence, from all sources, to produce actionable intelligence for our commanders — delivering analytical products that meet the needs of both our operational commanders and our domestic security partners.

This is accomplished through a robust and powerful network of partners with whom analytical tools, methodologies and most importantly information and intelligence can be shared to identify, and then exploit, the vulnerabilities of these global networks. The speed at which our enemies operate requires us to operate just as fast and be just as networked.

Third, counter-IED training, as you mentioned, must endure and be permanently integrated into our Service training institutions and centers. This is not a passing phenomenon. As we've learned in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can provide the best counter-IED capabilities and tools to the warfighters, but without the timely and relevant training component, that a full capacity of equipment and tactics will never be realized. Moving forward, we must train to conduct operations in an IED environment which includes an agile networked enemy.

The fourth enduring capability is our ability to conduct timely and relevant collection, analysis and technical forensic exploitation of these devices and identify emerging IED technologies. This is done through a process we call Weapons Technical intelligence, referred to as WTI — and we're very closely partnered in with the FBI on this.

During the past years -- eight years -- JIEDDO, the military services, U.S. interagency and our multinational partners have developed a highly effective WTI process to derive forensic evidence, fingerprints, DNA and biometrics from these devices that we've recovered on the battlefield in order to identify personnel and then target them.

Our tactical commanders in Afghanistan increasingly focus operations to collect biometrics and forensic data and several have referred to this capability as a "game-changer." WTI removes a violent extremist's greatest defense -- anonymity -- and makes them vulnerable to attribution which is why the WTI capability must endure.

Fifth and finally, the enduring global IED threat requires a whole-of-government approach. As we move forward, we must continue to synchronize our counter-threat network capabilities among our domestic, international and other security partners. It is not a military mission alone.

And today, we are working with an expanded interagency group to identify the vulnerabilities and target some of these networks that we've talked about that are moving these materials into Afghanistan.

Maintaining this momentum against an adaptive threat requires the continued focus of the intelligence community however, in order to focus on these networks and to provide us a common intelligence picture that we can target.

We will continue to face an ever present threat from an overlapping consortium of networks employing IEDs as a weapon of choice. We have to continue to pursue this whole-of-government approach, knitting together all the tools we have at our disposal in order to non-kinetically attack these networks including their finances.

These five recommended enduring counter-IED capabilities are integrated into the department's process being led, as I said, by Deputy Secretary Carter. With his leadership, I am confident we are on the right track to institutionalize these capabilities, but much work remains to be done.

In closing, the IED and the networks that employ these weapons are here to stay, operationally and here at home. As we have done from previous conflicts, we must account for this enduring threat and retain the hard earned capabilities. It is our responsibility to learn and adapt our institutions accordingly.

But I'd like to leave you one final thought. I understand the toll that these weapons have taken on our troopers and their families, the deaths, the terrible life-changing injuries, I see this. And I promise you, we are committed to providing every possible capability we can to protect our troops into 2014 and beyond. This is my mission.

Chairman Young, Ranking Member Dicks, members of the subcommittee, again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, thank you for your support and I now look forward to your questions.