

Disarmament and International Security Council

TOPIC A:

The question of Countering the threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices

Introduction:

This research paper will analyse the main issue of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), taking into consideration the background information, the major countries or organizations involved in the issue, historical events relevant to the use of IEDs, as well as UN treaties attempting to resolve the issue and possible solutions to mitigate the uses of IEDs.



Definition of some key terms and Organisations:

Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs):

Improvised Explosive Devices are unauthorized simple bombs or weapons made and used by unofficial forces. The weapon may take any form and be activated in various ways, harming both civilians and troops.

The United States Department of Defense defines IEDs as “devices placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic or incendiary chemicals, designed to destroy, disfigure, distract or harass...”

Background Information:

As mentioned before, IEDs are improvised explosive devices, such as car bombs, that often contain shrapnel and can cause considerable damage to their surroundings. IEDs are commonly used in conflict zones, utilized by terrorist groups to target ‘soft’ pressure zones, or in civil conflict. When these devices are used to strategically target an opponent or situation, it is known as an IED campaign.

Major Countries Involved in The Issue¹:

Afghanistan: Since the occupation of Afghanistan by the USSR in 1979, IEDs were supplied to Afghan resistance by the CIA, often these groups used to use only the explosive material from the equipment supplied, to generate larger explosions. Moreover, this is the number one preferred method used by the Taliban and other insurgents. This is the number one cause of death for foreign troops in the country.

India: IEDs have been used extensively in India especially by the Communist Party of India which wants to overthrow the official government (MAOISTS). On July 13th 2011, some terrorist groups from the occupied regions of Jammu and Kashmir used IEDs to attack several locations in Mumbai killing dozens of people. Most of the time, these IEDs are disguised as everyday items, thus proving their effectiveness.

Iraq: Throughout the Iraqi war (2003 - 2011), IEDs have again been used several times in a number of locations, severely impacting the Coalition forces (led by the US) resulting 64% of all the deaths. The most common locations for these IEDs were in animal carcasses, boxes, soft drink cans, they usually detonate as soon as a vehicle passes over it to cause the most amount of damage.

Syria: Throughout the Syrian Civil Conflict, the insurgent groups used IEDs to target convoys and other official government equipment. However, also the Syrian Arab Air Force has been used barrel bomb IEDs dropped from helicopters to counter the terrorist groups, often involving civilians.

United States: Apart from the USA being the number one country by the number of conflicts it is involved, it has a long dark history of IEDs, especially during school shootings. The Oklahoma City Bombing of 1995, was the worst involvement of IEDs in US history, resulting in the death of 168 people, thanks to an ammonium nitrate fertilizer and other stolen explosives. Also during the 1999 Columbine High School massacre were luckily the propane, car and pipe bombs used by the two student terrorists failed to detonate.

¹ "Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) – UNODA." *United Nations*, United Nations, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/convarms/ieds/>.

Lebanon: After Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, The Lebanese National Resistance Front and later Hezbollah, majorly used IEDs against the Israeli invaders. Hezbollah used IEDs principally to kick out Israel until their retreat in May of 2000 (liberation of Lebanon).

Israel: The attacks led by the Palestinians against Israeli nationals are common grounds for IEDs, these are still used today.

Russia: Within the region of Chechnya, Russian forces have been severely counterattacked by IEDs while fighting rebel groups during the First and Second Chechen war (1994 - 2009).

Nigeria: The terrorist group Boko Haram use IEDs to flourish their insurgency in Nigeria, Chad and Niger.

Somalia: The East African Islamist Militant group, Al Shabaab is currently using IEDs in the Somali civil war.

Pakistan: The Taliban use IEDs to target police, military, government security forces and civilians.

Taking Action/UN Treaties:

Due to the specific nature of IEDs, being produced outside of government or official oversight, there has been lacking approach to tackle the issue of IEDs. Only few initiatives have been implemented by both international and national organizations and the governments of the affected countries. Organizations such as UNODA, Counter-IED by EDA (European Defence Agency) or Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) are internationally working initiatives working towards sustained attention given towards the problem of IEDs. Countries have also implemented the prohibition of cross-border high-risk explosive chemicals identified as those most prevalently used in IEDs. The UN has also addressed the problem in their GA in years of 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 however it remains challenging to implement all resolutions.

Main Issues:

Low cost

IEDs can be constructed at a comparably low cost and with little difficulty, especially in situations of organized crime or conflict. IEDs are constructed with four main components; power, initiator, explosive, and switch. Batteries are often used to power the IED and provide heat. Some are constructed with gunpowder, others with chemical compounds. They are compounds that are comparatively affordable and easy to procure and assemble.

Easily constructed

IEDs are both easily constructed and placed. As mentioned before, they can be crudely put together and still pose a considerable danger. IEDs can be disguised as mundane objects - mail packages, shipping containers, backpacks or vehicles - and easily triggered.

Portable

IEDs can be made to be easily portable and placed in strategic locations where they can inflict maximum damage. They can be attached to vests, aforementioned mundane objects, or roadside locations. This makes them unpredictable and all the more dangerous.

Relevant UN Resolutions:

A/72/409 (72nd Session of the GA) - Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices²

Particularly for Operative Clauses: 3, 5, 10, 13, 17

This resolution from December 2017 which passed, tried extensively to tackle the issue IED by encouraging states to increase the trackability of these devices. In fact, large amounts of military equipment from government facilities are stolen and disappear into the unknown. These fall in the hands of insubordinate militant groups that potentially could build IEDs.

² "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices", General Assembly, *United Nations*, 11 December 2017, <https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/documents/ares7236.pdf>

Especially in the Republic of India. Moreover, this resolution actually did invite many countries, with success, to better enforce national policies, controlling the flow of said country. This is in full accordance with the International Ammunition Technical Guidelines, which better polices the stockpiling of conventional weapons and equipment.

A/71/187 (Report of the SG) - Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices³

Particularly for Sections: IMPACT ON CIVILIANS, IMPACT ON POLITICAL PROCESSES, MILITARY COMPONENTS

Since the passing of several UN resolution on the threat posed by IEDs, the former Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, published this report on the rising threat of IEDs. According to this report, the reason why IEDs are still proliferating is because of ineffective legislation that doesn't regulate the procedures that are already in place. Nevertheless, the International cooperation which is currently the best tool to use against these weapons, isn't developed enough, resulting in devastating impacts for many war-torn areas. Finally, this report extensively covers the relevant International Organisations and Specialised Agencies that assist states in countering the growing threat posed by IEDs, such as INTERPOL, Red Cross and Crescent.

S/RES/2365 (7992nd meeting of the Security Council) - Comprehensive Approach to Mine Action⁴

Particularly for Operative Clauses: 3, 4, 11, 14

This Security Council resolution from 2017, expressed the most urgent concern over the approach states should take when dealing with mines and other improvised explosive devices. Moreover, in the ethical point of view of the UN, it is the duty of every state to protect civilian populations from the dangers of these IEDs. Since the International Community advocates and supports the efforts made to clear these devices. In fact, when peacekeeping operations are underway, states should really emphasise the education on these explosive entities especially

³ "Countering the threat posed by improvised explosive devices", Report of the Secretary General, *United Nations*, 25 July 2016, https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/documents/20160725_71_187_sg_report_on_countering_threat_posed_by_ieds_0.pdf

⁴ "Security Council Resolution adopted at its 7992nd meeting", Resolution 2365, *United Nations*, 30 June 2017, <https://www.unmas.org/sites/default/files/documents/sres23652017.pdf>

to the youngest of the populations. Delegates should make reference to the United Nations Improvised Explosive Device Disposal (IEDD), for standards on this issue.

Possible Solutions:

As all issues discussed here at MUN, there is no one solution to solve everything, in fact, not even us Chairs can provide delegates with possible comprehensive solutions without favouring one country. However, in our opinion, as unbiased moderators of the debate have come up with some steps that the International Community could take in tackling the threat posed by Improvised Explosive Devices.

The Global Shield and The International Criminal Police (INTERPOL), provide adequate control over the transfer of militant weaponry, however, much of it is done illegally without even the sensing of the local governments. A new commission or committee of the UN could be created, tasked to look over the surveillance of government facilities where many materials that could be used to make explosive devices are stored. Although, this new program, if created, should benefit from every state's high interest since it would lead to the defective stockpile management of these facilities. Improving the counter efforts such as remotely by drone, or mine defusing

Furthermore, to comprehensively reduce the risk of more individuals acquiring such weaponry, states that grant licenses for the export of conventional arms and other explosive devices such as bombs should effectively implement several international guidelines on this phenomenon. Stricter border controls in accordance with the World Customs Organisation should be put into practice so that less/near to no material could enter a territory at risk of terrorist attacks or which is currently experiencing the conflict with insurgent groups.

Nonetheless, something more plausible is to reduce the availability of materials for the creation of IEDs such as gunpowder, C4 putty, pressure cooking appliances, unexploded bombs and shells and ignition timers. These are the main pieces of equipment that are somewhat available to the public in several countries, especially in the least economically developed areas.

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