

# IED AWARENESS TRAINING: ARE WE PREPARING OUR JUNIOR LEADERS FOR SUCCESS?

By Captain Therese L. Obidinski

**A**s the Senior Engineer Instructor for the Combined Arms Division, Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I teach Field Artillery Officer Basic Course (FAOBC) students and serve as the 30th Field Artillery Regiment's improvised explosive device (IED) subject matter expert. My mission is to advise the commander on the status of IED training and resources for the Captain's Career Course (CCC), Officer Basic Course (OBC), Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC), and Warrant Officer Course.

After much research on the ever-changing environment of IEDs, one crucial question was raised: Are we really preparing our junior leaders for success when they arrive at their unit, and ultimately, when they deploy? This is a rather broad question; part of the solution lies in adapting to tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) used by the enemy and another part on training a brand new second lieutenant—who already has a rucksack overflowing with mandated basic branch program of instruction (POI) requirements—on this prolific subject. To answer this question, we had to consider another approach that focused on the purpose of FAOBC and the critical IED information that should be taught at the student level with available time and resources.

The initial focus started with the purpose and scope of FAOBC. At first, the answer seemed simple. These students are not here to be engineer or armor officers. They are here to be field artillery officers, and their mission is to understand the role of the fire support officer (FSO) and how that role relates as a member of the combined arms team. These junior leaders will learn how to support the maneuver commander. However, they also will learn that despite their primary responsibility as an FSO, they could be directed to lead a security patrol, run a checkpoint, or even provide security in a convoy.

As these junior leaders participate in these other missions, they will encounter IEDs. According to a *Stars and Stripes* article dated 7 December 2005, as of 26 November 2005, IEDs caused approximately 39 percent of the 2,100 U.S. fatalities in Iraq. That's 821 Soldiers. The same article also stated that IEDs, along with other explosive devices, were responsible for about 50 percent of U.S. hostile deaths in Iraq, and explosive devices accounted for 8,452 of the U.S. troops wounded in Iraq—about 53 percent of the total number of hostile-fire wounds.

Unfortunately, the casualty statistics—and the enemy's methods—change every day; it is difficult to keep abreast of every change. If you browse Web sites dedicated to the fallen in Iraq, not only do you see the list of names but also the large

number of officers and especially junior officers listed among the fallen. With the 19-week training cycle for OBC and 7-week training cycle for BOLC II, one may ask: How do we prepare these junior leaders for the challenges that face them, and what tasks should we train?

## Training

**T**he United States Army Field Artillery School has focused resources on the new Field Manual Interim (FMI) 3-34.119, *IED Defeat*, dated September 2005, and the new Convoy Survivability Training Support Package (TSP), which outline IED collective and individual training tasks. BOLC II training on the Convoy Survivability TSP started in January 2006 and centers around two tasks: *Identify Visual Indicators of an IED* and *React to an IED*.

There are 14 tasks to train, and each task has its associated subtask. The challenge of IED training appears daunting at first. However, it is manageable, and we as leaders must focus on targeted training. We can't train everything in a school environment. These officers will receive more in-depth training when they transition to BOLC II and unit-specific training when they arrive at their follow-on assignment. Schoolhouse instructors can play a larger role in assisting commanders in the field if we train lieutenants more on basic IED tasks and provide officers with a more logical, methodological approach when identifying, assessing, and reacting to IEDs. This involves communication with leaders on the ground through tools such as open discussion forums <[www.companycommand.com](http://www.companycommand.com)>, the secret internet protocol router network (SIPRNET), the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), and other feedback mechanisms to determine what leaders expect from lieutenants when they arrive at their units and, specifically, what level of IED awareness training we can train here from shared real-world experiences.

## Resources

**T**he United States Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, is the proponent for IED training and procurement. The primary training support centers (TSCs) responsible for producing training aids are Fort Gordon, Georgia; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Knox, Kentucky; Fort Benning, Georgia; and Fort Lewis, Washington (regional). The Fort Sill TSC provides resources and training aids to Oklahoma (all counties), Arkansas (all counties), and Texas (all counties north of Wichita Falls). Just as the Fort Sill TSC supports other units outside of its installation, other TSCs have their area of responsibility. Training aids are assigned on

a priority basis, usually going to units that have upcoming deployments. Coordination for training aids can be facilitated through local TSCs. It is there to support training and will do the necessary requisition or coordination for the training aids and devices required.

Although there are IED training aids available, many private contractors bid for Army contracts to develop new training aids to keep pace with the contemporary operating environment. The United States Army Program Executive Office for Simulation, Training, and Instrumentation (PEO-STRI) is responsible for developing and fielding new training devices and systems.

The figure below shows the new Tactical Improvised Explosive Device 2 (TIED2) kit, an interim solution that is being fielded across the force to assist units with realistic training. The kit simulates the basic components of an IED, with a remote-controlled device and a radio-frequency transmitter. The system uses talcum powder to achieve a smoke-like signature effect. Compressed carbon dioxide (CO2) in tanks—the same concept as a paintball gun—is used to simulate the effects of a roadside bomb and other types of IEDs, each with its own unique signature effects.

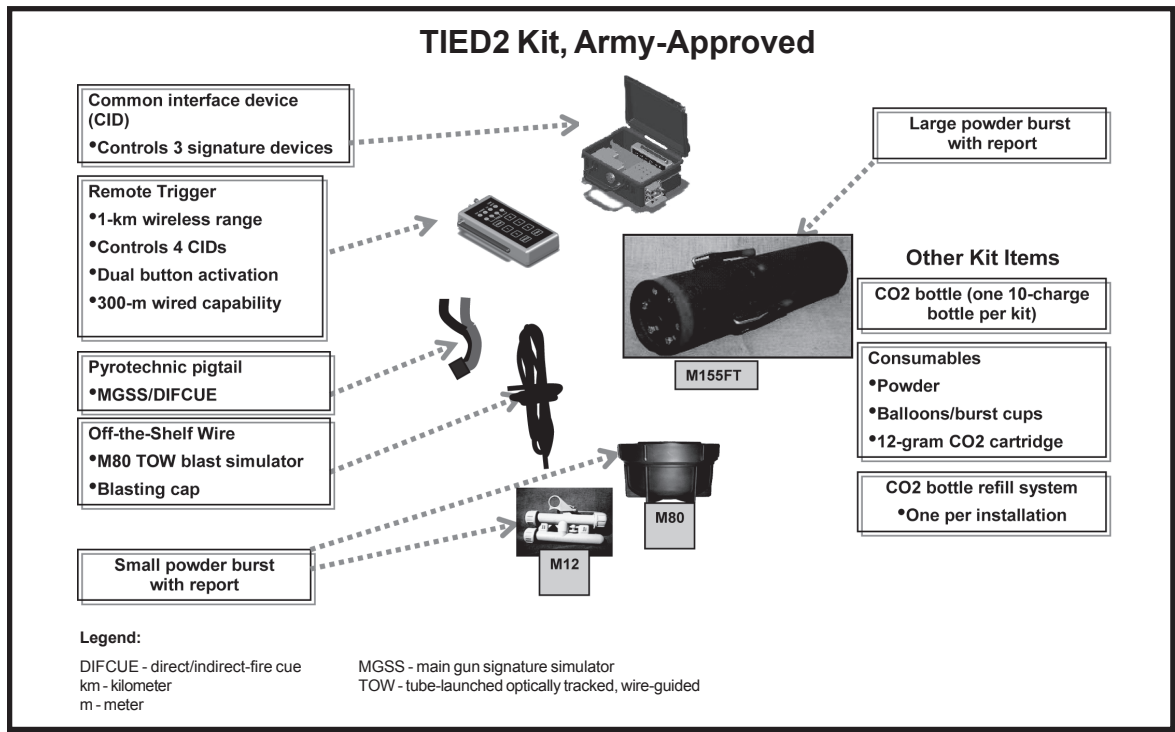
Another system developed at Fort Leonard Wood is the IED Effects Simulation (IEDES) Kit. The United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) validated the requirement, and the requirements document is being staffed at Department of the Army for funding in the 08-13 Program Objective Memorandum. IEDES provides a realistic training capability using different configurations of small, medium, large, and extra large munitions effects. The overall intent of the system is to help Soldiers and leaders plan, prepare, and react to IED effects.

It is important for all leaders and trainers to have a basic understanding of the TSC request process and to distinguish between Army-approved versus non-Army-approved systems. Trainers need to identify resource requirements early and submit requests through S-3 channels to consolidate and track requests. Higher headquarters should coordinate through local TSCs for requests. If training aids, devices, simulators, and simulations (TADSS) are purchased using Operations and Maintenance, Army (OMA) funds, they have to be supported using OMA funds throughout their life cycle. In other words, if you purchase items through a vendor directly, you will drain your own unit funds for restocking those items. If items are not ordered through the Army system, the Army has no record that there is a need for specific training aids. Therefore, the Army will not authorize the unit additional items (they are not on the property books), restock those items and, most importantly, units will not be funded by the Army for those items.

Currently PEO-STRI is fielding the TIED 2 (interim solution) on an Army Training Support Command-approved distribution plan. TIED 2 was designed to meet a specific need to bridge the gap in planning, preparing, and reacting to IEDs in a specific operational theater. At this time, the only validated and approved TADSS is the IEDES. If units procure any other devices, it is done at their expense. In addition, using devices that are not validated and approved is seriously risking the safety of the Soldiers conducting the training.

### Implementation

Currently, the Field Artillery School is involved in preparing a block of instruction on IED awareness training across the Regiment. This training will be



inserted in a field environment where it does not distract from mandated basic branch requirements. FAOBC students currently receive IED awareness training that draws upon real-world examples. We are also in the process of developing a plan to integrate and evaluate this training through situational training exercises during the FAOBC fires and effects capstone field training exercises. BOLC II instruction will evaluate IED training during convoy survivability operations and forward operating base exercises (FOBEXs).

### Conclusion

The integration of IED awareness training—determining where to insert classes and revising and evaluating training—is an ongoing process. The enemy's determination to use IEDs remains strong, and the methods are constantly evolving. If we can teach these junior officers basic methodologies, critical thinking, and the basics of identifying, assessing, and reacting to the IED threat, then we are preparing them for success, no matter what the task. According to the 2005 *Army Strategic Planning Guidance*, "Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom have shown that insurgencies can arise out of regime change and can hinder follow-on stability operations. The current enemy has adopted asymmetric strategies and tactics that

enable it to mitigate U.S. strengths. U.S. forces must adapt to the new strategic environment and develop proficiencies that counter these tactics."

It is important to provide junior leaders with the tools to adapt and to counter these asymmetric strategies and tactics in a nonthreatening environment, saving valuable training time when they arrive at their follow-on assignments. The time we dedicate to IED and leader training here at the Field Artillery School will help to familiarize junior leaders with the many challenges they will face in theater and in their military career. Focusing on leader development and critical thinking skills will provide the Army and the nation with more adaptive and responsive leaders at all levels.



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