

C-IED Theatre Exploitation Laboratory (TEL)

Primitive but effective forms of intimidation and terror, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) see an ever increasing employment both in Operational Theatres and in the homeland. Although the term IED has surfaced in later years, the phenomenon dates back several centuries. While the devices still remain relatively simple in design, the means of deployment have evolved and the numbers in theatre have increased immensely. The respect and consideration for collateral damage and lives of bystanders has also reduced among insurgents making IEDs an even more grim threat.

Counter IEDs aims at defeating not only the actual devices but more importantly the entire network and a cornerstone in doing so is intelligence. This requires drawing from a range of skills and resources in order to collect and exploit information in an efficient way.

What is exploitation?

Exploitation in C-IED terms implies recording and analysing information related to events, scenes, technical components and materials. The overall aim is establish the technical and tactical information from the attack and identify the IED supply chain. IED exploitation is achieved through a number of activities which try to technically characterise the IED involved and recover trace material of those who have contact with the IED. It is a key part of the intelligence process and is also designed to provide evidence and intelligence of those involved in the IED network.

All exploitation related activities are designed in order to aid the other key operational activities of the C-IED effort of predicting the activity of the IED network, preventing further IED incidents, detecting IEDs when they are emplaced and being able to effectively and safely neutralise them and mitigating the effects of those IEDs that do function against friendly forces.



In practice three levels of Exploitation exist:

- Level 1: Recording and sampling of information are key to Level 1. Often associated with incidents such as IED finds or the tragic consequences of when an IED has functioned, first responders, specialised Weapons Intelligence teams or Explosive Ordnance Disposal teams have the difficult task of trying to gather as much information as possible under time pressure due to the fact that the environment can be hostile.
- Level 2: Intermediate processing in theatre through forensics investigation is what comprises Level 2. This implies a forward deployed laboratory for the investigation of IED incidents and related activity with the purpose of aiding the C-IED effort at formation and theatre by informing the commander of the IED threat faced.
- Level 3: Level 3 involves a full scale crime laboratory that is dedicated to performing more time and resource consuming analysis that is not possible in theatre and is generally conducted in the homeland.

A novel approach to Pooling & Sharing

Currently there are only a few nations in the world that have the Level 2 capability and within Europe there are even fewer. With the ever increasing amount of IEDs in theatre there is a need for more Level 2 capabilities. Mandated by the Ministerial Steering Board in April 2010, the Agency then initiated the Theatre Exploitation Laboratory (TEL(D)) project that involves procuring a Laboratory, which would then be manned and deployed into theatre by a Lead Member State. A complex undertaking, this project sees EDA pushing the boundaries of what it can do and presenting a benchmark for Pooling and Sharing.

Funded by the EDA Operational Budget, the Laboratory is procured by EDA for all participating Member States (pMS). Any pMS can request to deploy the Laboratory for a period of time but in doing so it, as Lead Nation, assumes responsibility for its well-being and manning. The latter can however be supplied from other interested pMS upon request from the Lead Nation.



Built by Spanish company Indra, the Laboratory was delivered to EDA in mid-2011 and handed over to France who is the Lead Nation for the eighteen-month deployment to Afghanistan. Supported by Austria, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Poland, the Laboratory operates most successfully within the ISAF Framework since August 2011.



How it works

The neatly designed system utilises ISO containers to house the Laboratory when in operation as well as during storage and transport. This enables the Laboratory to be able to be transported easily on land, by air and by sea. It can be set-up in less than a week and is designed to withstand extreme weather conditions.

Devices, Materials, Artifacts and Traces (DMAT) are supplied by Level 1 Exploitation. With a team of around fifteen people, out of which a majority are highly skilled specialists, several types of investigation are carried out. Once Level 2 investigation is concluded, some DMAT are submitted to Level 3 for further investigation. Intelligence gained from the Laboratory is fed into the intelligence channels.

The Laboratory along with its manning accounts for a substantial increase in European C-IED capability and a powerful tool in forensic investigations. The TEL(D) project in itself is proof of what can be achieved through a multi-national collaborative effort.

More information is available at:
<http://www.eda.europa.eu>

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