

Improvised Explosive Devices: *Responding to and Managing the Complex Attack Scenario*

by Captain John Gormley and Firefighter Jason Brezler



roads and removing trash in hopes of reducing the deadly threat of IEDs. As the patrol of 24 U.S. personnel was advancing north past the city's electrical substation, the third of four armored vehicles struck an IED.

Wolverine...This is Yankee 6...Be advised IED strike in the vicinity of the Ethan and Cathy intersection. One vehicle has sustained significant damage and is immobile. Stand by for word on friendly casualties. Start me a Quick Reaction Force and Explosive Ordinance Disposal Team (EOD).

Yankee 6, Wolverine copies your message and is standing by for further word on the casualties.

The patrol leader sensed that insurgents might have used the IED as a means to draw the Marines into a more extensive ambush zone. He not only was concerned that there might be additional IEDs, but that there also might be insurgent snipers awaiting the opportunity to employ well-aimed fire against dismounted Marines in the street. As much as the patrol leader wanted to desperately dismount his personnel from their vehicles and turn them loose to hunt down, capture or kill the insurgent attackers, he believed that the multiple device threat was too great to assume such risk. Subsequently, he ordered the patrol to

recover and tow the damaged Humvee, move immediately out of the ambush zone and transport injured personnel to the closest friendly patrol base for medical evaluation.

Approximately 15 minutes after the first IED strike, an additional vehicle convoy, manned by a platoon of Weapons Company Marines, arrived. They encountered a secondary IED device partially buried alongside Route Ethan. The Marines quickly established a cordon around the potential IED. While awaiting arrival of the EOD team, a tertiary IED detonated, severely damaging yet another armored Humvee. The Marines dismounted the damaged Humvee and immediately came under small arms fire. The Weapons Company platoon initially had responded to assist Team Yankee after a single IED strike and now not only lost a vehicle of their own as a result of a secondary device, but found themselves in a sustained firefight.

The damage to U.S. Marine forces operating in central Fallujah that morning was relatively low; two Marines sustained non-life-threatening injuries and two armored Humvees were destroyed. The outcome could have been much worse. The insurgents effectively used a single IED to bait the Marines into an extensive ambush zone that included several marksmen and additional IEDs. There are lessons to be learned from this attack and the Marines' reaction to it.

Migration and evolution of IED attacks and secondary device techniques

The history of warfare and terrorism suggests that tactics and techniques are evolutionary in that individuals and organizations exploit techniques that were successful and discard those that proved ineffective. Terrorists seeking to generate violence on our domestic soil will canvas the lessons learned by

U.S. military personnel have been heavily engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001. The improvised explosive device (IED) has served as one of the enemy's most reliable and deadly weapons against both military personnel and innocent civilians. The IED threat includes the employment of secondary and multiple devices. This article, written by two FDNY members who recently served in Iraq and Afghanistan, describes critical operational and tactical aspects of safe and effective responses to IED incidents. Given that New York City remains a primary target for terrorists, these lessons are especially relevant to members of our Department.

Marines attacked with multiple IEDs in Fallujah, Iraq

On the morning of December 13, 2006, Marines assigned to Team Yankee, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, were conducting a vehicle patrol through central Fallujah. With the sound of a Hornet F/A-18 jet aircraft overhead, the patrol leader elected to survey reconstruction efforts in one of the city's most violent neighborhoods. The reconstruction efforts were aimed at improving the



(All photos this page) Roadside IEDs frequently are employed by the enemy to draw victims into a more extensive ambush zone, where snipers or more IEDs await.



Members are urged to review the following reference materials:

- *Fire Tactics and Procedures*, Emergency Response Plan, Addendum 3, Improvised Explosive Devices.
- AUC 190, Firearms, Ammunition, Explosive and Incendiary Devices.
- "Dirty Fires: Radiological Incendiary Devices," by then-Deputy Assistant Chief Joseph W. Pfeifer, in the 2nd/2006 issue of *WNYF*.

insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan and incorporate them into their planning for attacks targeting American citizens and emergency responders. The application of lessons learned from foreign battlefields is not limited to transnational organizations such as Al Qaeda, but also applies to domestic terrorists. For similar economic, logistical and operational reasons as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the IED will continue to remain the number one weapon in the terrorists' arsenal. Also, rest assured that terrorists recognize the demonstrated potency of the secondary and multiple devices as they have proved to be one of the most viable and dangerous threats to American servicemen.

Though rarely seen on U.S. soil, the presence of multiple devices with armed and active perpetrators is a legitimate threat, particularly considering its high rate of success overseas. Additionally, as is often the case in the Middle East, terrorists likely will exploit opportunities to profile and gauge response trends, patterns and techniques of emergency responders prior to launching a pre-planned attack.

The Incident Commander's role in managing an IED incident

Safe and effective response to an IED event or threat requires both appropriate tactical and operational procedures and measures. The Incident Commander (IC) has the responsibility to direct, coordinate and supervise myriad emergency response functions that include search and rescue, fire suppression, scene security, medical treatment and triage, scene preservation and damage/infrastructure assessment. The IC must ensure that these functions are carried out in a timely manner, while ascertaining that secondary/multiple devices are identified and isolated. Risk assessment, employment of additional and specialized resources and sound inter-agency coordination will assist the IC in the management of this challenging and potentially deadly scenario. Ultimately, the IC must provide clear and concise guidance to responders in the face of chaos, disorder, carnage and uncertainty.

The four Cs--tactical procedures and measures

In addition to effective incident command, the application of tactical IED *immediate action* drills (held at the Bureau of Training) by *all* FDNY personnel will contribute to a safe and effective operation. The four Cs have been developed by U.S. military personnel operating in Iraq and Afghanistan and have been modified for application to domestic IED incidents. The four Cs are conducted in no specific order, but must be performed by *all* responders operating at a suspected or confirmed IED incident. The tactical response of all members must be instinctive, effective and within the scope of FDNY SOPs (see Emergency Response Plan #3).

Consider--If an explosion has occurred and you are unable to determine that it was accidental in nature, assume it was an IED. Safety never should be compromised for positive identification of an IED. Use time, distance and shielding to minimize the effects from the blast of possible secondary and/or multiple devices.

Check--All Firefighters should check their immediate area for secondary and multiple devices by conducting a 25-foot (near) scan from their respective riding positions prior to dismounting the apparatus. After dismounting apparatus, members should conduct a 100-foot (far) scan. Firefighters should look for suspicious individuals and IED material and equipment (unattended bags and packages, suspicious vehicles, detonation cord, receivers, transmitters, cell phones, etc.) that may lead to additional IEDs. These

360-degree checks around the apparatus assure that the apparatus is not positioned in the vicinity of potential secondary and/or multiple devices. (It is the function of the Police Department, however, to find IEDs.) Members must obtain readings from the RAD 50 and UltraRadiac meters to monitor for the presence of radiological

materials and make a determination regarding SCBA use prior to entering the danger (kill) zone. Report readings to the IC.

Clear--All civilians and non-essential personnel should be cleared from the area. Ensure all incoming units and those already on-scene are aware of the situation. The safe distance is determined by several factors, which include the terrain (i.e., below-grade versus street-level), meter readings and location in relation to natural barriers and buildings. If necessary to evacuate viable victims, keep the time spent operating in the danger zone to an absolute minimum. Only trained bomb and explosive ordnance technicians should approach an IED.

Control--The established danger area should be cordoned off in order to control the flow of responding units and agencies. The purpose of the cordon is to prevent unauthorized personnel from entering the area, preserve the scene for investigation and provide outward protection and security against command/remote initiated IEDs. Remain alert for possible secondary device trigger personnel or snipers from your location and have a contingency plan in the event of a secondary attack.

FDNY takeaways

IEDs have caused more than one-third of U.S. troop fatalities in Iraq. Vehicle-borne IEDs, suicide bombers and surface-laid or -buried IEDs pose a deadly and continuous threat to U.S. forces operating in the Middle East and, we may presume, here at home. Even more dangerous than the IED is the threat of secondary or multiple explosive devices, which could target FDNY members as part of a complex attack. The complex attack scenario is commonplace on the streets of Iraq and Afghanistan to the degree that after an explosive device detonates, troops of all ranks immediately and instinctively begin thinking about other secondary devices and multiple threats. The initial IED is designed to injure personnel, damage equipment and generate chaos. The secondary and/or multiple device is designed to inflict death and injury on a much-greater scale, specifically targeting responders. Sound Incident Command practices, coupled with the timely application of the four Cs, will help contribute to a safe and effective response.

About the Authors...



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IEDs are the weapon of choice for terrorists. The threat of secondary or multiple explosive devices is even more dangerous.