



# JOINT IED DEFEAT ORGANIZATION NEWS STORY



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Command Sgt. Maj. Todd M. Burnett (center) stands with Sergeants Major James Duquette (left) and Lamont Washington (right) following his farewell ceremony, Jun. 30. Burnett, who has been the top-enlisted leader at JIEDDO since 2008, has been selected as the next Command Sergeant Major to lead the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Photo by Tanekwa Bournes, JIEDDO.

## **JIEDDO says farewell to a hero**

*By: Aaron Testa, STRATCOM*

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**WASHINGTON, D.C.** — This past June, the Pentagon's Joint IED Defeat Organization said farewell to one of its top, most-respected leaders.

Command Sgt. Maj. Todd Burnett has transitioned out of his position as Command Sergeant Major of JIEDDO to take on new responsibilities as the Command Sergeant Major of the Corps of Cadets at the Military Academy at West Point.

Burnett has been a leader within the JIEDDO community since 2008. Some say that during his time here, he made the most direct contribution to saving warfighters' lives from the devastating effects of IEDs in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Burnett's success in his role at JIEDDO has been the result of his experience and wisdom, but most importantly, his passion, to protect service members in dangerous locations around the world.

“He brings a genuine passion and caring for our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and civilians who are downrange,” said Lt. Gen. Michael Barbero, JIEDDO’s director. “But he also brings action. He makes things happen. He doesn’t wait to be told... and that’s the mark of a great leader and one who has really made a difference.”

Burnett’s passion for the business of defeating IEDs comes from service members and the love and respect he has for what they do each and every day.

“He is absolutely selfless,” said Barbero. “It is not about Todd Burnett; it is about those folks downrange who we serve and about this institution, which he loves dearly.”

Burnett joined the Army in 1986 as a combat engineer. It is largely due to his career as an engineer that resulted in his extensive experience facing IEDs. As a result, Burnett has been involved in more than 40 IED attacks.

“I’ve ridden in every vehicle; I’ve been blown up in every vehicle. I’ve been blown up on the ground, so, I get it,” said Burnett.

According to the Command Sergeant Major, it was this experience that really prepared him for his role at JIEDDO.

“Living it each and every day, in-country, is what makes you want to work hard to keep service members as safe as possible,” said Burnett.

JIEDDO’s mission is to minimize the effects IEDs have on service members.

“IEDs are going to be a way of life. JIEDDO should never go away because its single focus is the warfighter on the ground,” said Burnett. “I don’t believe we will ever see a time again in my lifetime that there are not IEDs somewhere in the world.”

Burnett added that the current IED threat is a global one.

“People are very focused on Operations Enduring Freedom and New Dawn right now, as they should be, but they overlook that every day there’s an IED going off in some foreign land,” he said.



Well-trained service members are best for identifying and defeating the IED, which has become a global threat. During counter-IED training in Kenya, Command Sgt. Maj. Burnett teaches soldiers to be on alert and attentive to details as they patrol. March 2011. Photo by Robert Larouge, JIEDDO.

Each month, there are 300 to 400 IED events outside of Iraq and Afghanistan.

“JIEDDO has people who are constantly looking at this and the future and what this could evolve into and how we’ll mitigate it when it does happen,” said Burnett.

Aside from constantly monitoring the evolving, world-wide threat of IEDs, another one of JIEDDO’s strengths is its ability to circumvent the normal military fielding process.

JIEDDO is able to rapidly provide the latest counter-IED technology to the warfighter, which results in saving lives.

“No other organization that I have seen in my career has been able to do that,” said Burnett.

Still, with all the new technologies that have been developed to combat IEDs during the past few years, well-trained service members on the ground are the best bet for identifying and defeating the IED. This is why the Command Sergeant Major has made training a top priority during his time at JIEDDO.

“The number-one thing that finds an IED on the battlefield is a well-trained soldier,” said Burnett.

Or Marine, or airman, or sailor. One of the Command Sergeant Major’s highest priorities when first arriving at JIEDDO was to reach out to all services’ senior enlisted and ensure that they were aware of JIEDDO and its role.

“I wanted them to understand what we could provide from a training perspective -- new equipment training and home-station training,” said Burnett. “I wanted them to understand what they have available to them to have their service members best prepared as they go to the fight.”

Burnett also saw a need for more enlisted service members on the JIEDDO staff.

“Enlisted personnel provide a strong foundation,” he said. “Many of them come from an operational background. This helps us understand the realities of the young service members on the ground.”

Prior to his assignment at JIEDDO, Burnett was assigned to Fort Campbell, Ky.; Fort Bragg, N.C.; Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.; Fort Bliss, Texas; and Fort Lewis, Wa.

“He has done everything in the Army, from team leader all the way up to Command Sergeant Major and he has done it superbly at every level, to include Brigade Sergeant Major and then Command Sergeant Major here at JIEDDO,” said Barbero.

Additionally, Burnett has been deployed to Bosnia and Germany twice, as well as Korea, Southwest Asia and in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

With an impressive career already in the rearview mirror, Burnett sets his sights on changing the lives of future military generations as he takes on the role of Command Sergeant Major of the Corps of Cadets at the United States Military Academy at West Point.

As he moves on to the next chapter in his career, he does not miss the opportunity to give credit where credit is due.

“All I’ve accomplished has only been possible through the love and endless support of my wife, Antonette, and my sons Kyle and Brandon. I am truly blessed with a support team that is always there for me, and thank God for them every day,” he said.

Burnett's faith, as well as his love and appreciation for his family, were predominant qualities of his leadership at JIEDDO. His colleagues are well aware of the role his family has played in his service throughout the years.

"He couldn't have done what he did in his career, but especially here in JIEDDO, with all the travel and hard work that he put into it, if he didn't have a tremendous family," said Barbero.

So as JIEDDO says goodbye to a great hero, those in attendance at his farewell ceremony shared a sentiment echoed most appropriately by the director.

"Today is a bittersweet day for me personally and for this organization because we are losing a great soldier, a tremendous leader and a selfless warrior," he said. "But when you think about the future of the Army, it is a great day. He is going to West Point where he will put that Burnett stamp on a whole generation of future leaders and he will have such a powerful impact there."