



JOINT IED DEFEAT ORGANIZATION NEWS STORY



ATTACK THE NETWORK — DEFEAT THE DEVICE — TRAIN THE FORCE

JIEDDO and Colombian delegation form Counter-IED partnership

By Staci George

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WASHINGTON — Members of the Joint IED Defeat Organization and a delegation of Colombian military officials recently discussed challenges each country faces in their daily efforts to defeat improvised explosive devices — the weapon of choice for insurgents.

Lt. Gen. Michael D. Barbero, JIEDDO director, and Brig. Gen. Leonardo Pinto Morales, chief of the Counter IED and Mines National Center in Bogota, met Sept. 11. Both the Americans and the Colombians face similar challenges — use of fertilizer in homemade explosive devices and a need for enhanced training to better enable security forces to detect and defeat IEDs.

“We talked about a way forward — a partnership, a cooperation,” Barbero said. “I would challenge our two staffs to figure out a way we can share resources. Our challenges are the same and our commitment to a partnership is strong.”

Pinto, along with Lt. Cols. Gustavo Bermudez Castaneda and Miguel Antonio Gonzalez, both officers at the Counter IED and Mines National Center, traveled to the United States to learn more about JIEDDO’s mission, organizational structure and counter-IED tools and tactics. Their visit was the result of U.S. Southern Command’s request for JIEDDO to help with Colombia’s IED problem.

As a result of the Colombian government’s increased action against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, the Marxist insurgency is turning more to the use of IEDs to offset their substantial losses.

In response, the government established the center because Colombia’s IED problem is growing so quickly, said Alex Gutierrez, a JIEDDO intelligence analyst with 20 years of expertise in Colombian and Latin American intelligence.

“It will take 30 years to clear the whole country of all the IEDs they have,” he said. The center is a new organization and is “the equivalent of standing up the Department of Homeland Security in the United States in a very short time, in spite of the typical bureaucratic hurdles.”

Barbero and Pinto spoke of the severity of the IED threat—Afghanistan and Colombia have the highest number of IED incidents in the world—and said their goal for this meeting was to come up with a roadmap for future collaboration between the two organizations.

Pinto said 75 percent of the events affecting Colombian troops are caused by artefactos explosivos improvisados — which is Spanish for improvised explosive devices. This is a statistic that he and his colleagues, along with JIEDDO’s help, want to reduce.

JIEDDO leaders provided the Colombian officers with an overview of IED challenges coalition forces are facing and shared a recent Afghanistan study on protective undergarments and protective outer garments. The study showed that severe groin injuries were reduced by 40 percent when troops wore

these garments—providing the Colombian military with one way to reduce the injuries sustained by their IED threat.

The Colombians were given the opportunity to examine the various materials used by the bomb makers and learn about some of the counter-IED capabilities and devices JIEDDO has fielded.

The visitors also had the chance to talk with representatives from JIEDDO's Counter-IED Operations/Intelligence Integration Center to learn more about the role that intelligence and data analysis can play in defeating IED networks. In addition they toured the Terrorist Explosive Device Analytical Center in Quantico, Va., and the Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technology Division in Indian Head, Md. At both sites, the Colombians learned more about the daily operations and missions of these organizations and the contributions they make in JIEDDO's counter-IED fight.

Dr. Kathleen List, lead coordinator for the visit from JIEDDO's J5 Coalition/International Branch, said it was a very productive and important engagement.

She said the delegation received greater insight into U.S. counter-IED capabilities and the holistic approach the United States is taking to deter and defeat the IED and JIEDDO personnel gained a greater understanding of the nature and complexity of the Colombian IED threat.

“Good progress was made during the meeting, including the agreement by the two leaders to further explore entering into a roadmap for cooperation,” she said.