

Military, government personnel train in IA exercise

In early August, Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) technicians and federal, state, and local bomb squads participated in the Raven's Challenge exercise. The Raven's Challenge is an annual, interagency, counter IED exercise that incorporates scenarios focused on interoperability capabilities between public safety bomb squads and military EOD units in operational domestic type IED environments.

The exercise included scenarios that prepared the military and non-military participants for future collaboration and provided opportunities to pick up new skills. According to John Simpson, Raven's Challenge exercise program manager, exercises like Raven's Challenge increase the interoperability between the military and law enforcement agencies to meet domestic threats like the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Don Robinson, special agent in charge with the Department of Justice's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) National Center for Explosives Training and Research, echoed Simpson's thoughts, saying "This is the perfect exercise to have the military and public safety bomb squads training together and working together before another Boston occurs."

Participants shared their reasons for choosing EOD, many saying that they chose the field because they wanted to make a difference and protect others, be it their brothers and sisters at arms or civilians at home and across the globe. "Training like this is how we keep people alive. This is what gets service members back home alive," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Cole Carroll, an EOD technician assigned to Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany.

Raven's Challenge is funded by the Department of the Army. The exercise is led by ATF, and is supported through partnerships with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of the Defense, the Department of Homeland Security's Transportation Security Administration, and state and local public safety agencies.

- Department of Defense

WHINSEC commandant discusses interagency focus

In a July interview with Diálogo, U.S. Army Colonel Keith Anthony spoke about the mission and curriculum of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), and institute's place within U.S Southern Command. Col. Anthony has been the commandant of WHINSEC for over two years.

During the interview, Anthony discussed WHINSEC's mission to train and educate military, law enforcement, and civilian personnel within the context of the Charter of the Organization of American States, including several courses focused on interagency and whole-of-government operations. Anthony also touched on some of the challenges facing WHINSEC, saying "the biggest challenge is having good communication and understanding of the joint, interagency, and multinational operating environment."

- Diálogo

Dunford speaks on State's role with Defense

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Marine Corps General Joe Dunford spoke at the Aspen Security Forum in Aspen, Colorado on July 22. In his remarks Dunford spoke about his evolving view of the State Department and State's importance to U.S. defense.

While speaking to NBC News Chief Foreign Affairs Correspondent Andrea Mitchell, Dunford admitted he didn't appreciate the work of the State Department and their Foreign Service officers

when he was a young Marine. As his career progressed and he gained experience, that changed. “I sit here now with a great deal of humility, because there is not actually not one challenge that we confront in the U.S. military that can be solved militarily,” said Dunford, who went on to talk about the importance of foreign policy and closing the civil-military gap in politics.

Dunford also spoke about threats facing the nation, including Russia, North Korea, and ISIS..”

- **Department of Defense**

State releases 2016 country report on terrorism

On July 19, the State Department released the 2016 Country Reports on Terrorism. The annual Country Reports on Terrorism provide policy-related assessments and country-by-country breakdowns of foreign government counterterrorism cooperation, and contain information on state sponsors of terrorism, terrorist safe havens, foreign terrorist organizations, and the global challenge of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear terrorism.

The 2016 report names the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) a top terrorist threat, as well as terrorist groups backed by Iran. According to the report, while ISIS attacks increased in 2016, there were fewer terrorist attacks and fewer fatalities overall worldwide.

While the 2015 Country Report on Terrorism was critical of interagency cooperation in many of the countries’ reports, the 2016 report notes that terrorist attacks on soft targets lead to “increased focus on the need for greater coordination and interoperability between intelligence agencies and law enforcement at the national level, increased information sharing, and expanded public-private partnerships.”

The report also pointed to an increased awareness of what drives violent extremism in 2016, with the GCTF endorsing terrorism prevention training and implementing international platforms for information sharing and cooperation among counter-radicalization experts.

- **Department of State**