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Assessment of Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) Training Activity

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Summary

Introduction

In reaction to the growing threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) deployed by the Iraqi insurgency in 2003, GEN John Abizaid, Commander of U.S. Central Command at the time, asked the Department of Defense (DoD) to initiate a “Manhattan like-Project” to glean the expertise of all Services involved directly with countering IEDs. Ultimately, this led to the founding of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), on February 14, 2006. As specified in its foundational document,¹ JIEDDO’s mission is to focus (i.e., lead, advocate, and coordinate) all DoD actions in support of the Combatant Commanders’ (CCDRs’) and their respective Joint Task Forces’ efforts to defeat IEDs as weapons of strategic influence.

To execute this mission, JIEDDO was given broad authority to identify threats, generate and validate requirements, develop solutions, and apply resources along three lines of operation (LOOs): Attack the Network (AtN), Defeat the Device (DtD), and Train the Force (TtF). While TtF directly involves training, all the LOOs involve training to some degree. The goal is speed and relevance. Speed allows rapid adaptation to a threat that is also evolving quickly. It allows solutions to be fielded when needed, not when slower development processes finally generate them. Although some longer process might be needed for enduring capability, JIEDDO’s charter is to provide solutions that Services can then decide whether to sustain or substitute with their own solutions once developed. Inherent in this charter is the natural tension between speed and oversight. Oversight is necessary to avoid waste or misdirection but it also adds steps and time to the process, which could result in ceding the speed advantage to the enemy.

This study examined training programs to see if there was evidence of duplication with Service initiatives and training functions to assess whether they are duplicative with Service or other agency functions. Training programs are discrete initiatives that are identified through a requirements process, are developed as a capability, and have a definite point of termination. Training functions are ongoing activities inherent to the organization, such as developing intelligence for inclusion in training or performing assessments.

The RAND team was asked to study whether there is duplication in training programs and functions and, if so, whether such duplication provides value. To examine training programs, the team first developed a list of attributes associated with training activities (e.g., the training objective, training audience, location), which were organized as a taxonomy. The team then

¹ See Department of Defense Directive Number 2000.19E, *Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization* (JIEDDO), February 2006

identified all the training programs being carried out by JIEDDO. It then provided the list of programs, along with the set of attributes, to subject-matter experts (SMEs) from Services and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). These SMEs were asked to assess whether these programs were duplicative—shared key attributes—with programs they sponsored. The RAND study team then took these inputs and performed its own assessments. For programs, the RAND team compared the attributes of the JIEDDO initiative with the identified Service program. In cases where enough program attributes were identified as common to constitute complete or near duplication, the RAND team assessed whether the duplication was limited in scope and duration—and likely to terminate in accordance with existing processes—and whether the duplication, even if sustained, might have value. Value was assessed by the simple metric of use. If some Service or agency requested and/or used the JIEDDO product, it was evidence of value.

Since training functions may have similar attributes but result in different outcomes, the RAND team used a different methodology for assessing duplication, similarity, and value among training functions. Rather than focusing on attributes, the team focused on the processes and activities within the broad functions, assessing whether these led to a duplication of output. Based on a review of JIEDDO’s mission statement and foundational documents and in conjunction with JIEDDO and the Services, the RAND team identified the following three broad functions:

- Advise and assist the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Services on all matters related the IED threat and its defeat
- Provide support to Service and Combatant Command (CCMD) training activities
- Identify; develop; implement; and, as appropriate, transfer, transition, terminate, or continue (T3C) counter-IED (C-IED) training programs and initiatives.

We then gave the Services and USSOCOM the opportunity to comment on whether they believed that JIEDDO training functions were duplicative of those performed by their organizations. We specified that an attribute-matching methodology would not be as appropriate for functions as for programs and so allowed a wider opportunity for identifying duplication. After receiving these inputs, we examined the functions JIEDDO performs for other agencies, specifically using fused intelligence to provide training products, providing support at centers of excellence, and responding to specific Combatant Command (CCMD) requests. We separately assessed the JIEDDO training functions that allow it to identify requirements, develop capabilities, and implement and assess these capabilities. These were assessed not in terms of their similarity to comparable Service processes, but in terms of their ability to prevent program duplication and add value.

Key Findings

In terms of the analysis of training programs, the Services initially identified 20 program initiatives and Joint Asymmetric Threat Awareness Center (JATAC) courses as potentially duplicative, out of a total of 248 programs reviewed. This number was reduced to 13 after stakeholder meetings. USSOCOM and the Navy found no duplication, while the Army found four duplicative programs, the Air Force found two, and the Marine Corps found seven. RAND researchers then considered potential duplicative programs and concluded that while the programs did appear similar, they actually were not duplicative. Thus, the main conclusion of the analysis of duplicative programs is that there is little evidence of duplication among training programs or courses. Even in similarly named courses or activities, the RAND team's assessment shows that these are aimed at different training audiences and/or have different objectives. In cases where a JIEDDO-initiated training program is beginning and a Service effort is developed to take its place, the resulting overlap is temporary and serves to add needed capacity rather than to wastefully duplicate. Moreover, JIEDDO training initiatives were used by Services and USSOCOM, indicating some level of value. This is not the same as saying that Services might not have developed a similar capability had they received the same amount of money and the authority to use it for any account. But, the assessment shows that JIEDDO's training initiatives were used and did something different than what the Services and USSOCOM were doing. We did find that JIEDDO had only recently begun development of a comprehensive list of available products and initiatives, and that it lacks a taxonomy to describe these. In effect, RAND developed such a taxonomy to perform the current assessment. Developing this taxonomy more completely can greatly aid the assessment of what future training programs should address.

The assessment of training functions began with identification of the three broad JIEDDO functions described above. When the Services were asked to assess training functions they identified no duplication between the first and second functions and their own. JIEDDO is singularly focused on the C-IED mission—to a degree the Services generally are not—and exists to provide specialized advice and training. Whether this focus and support will continue to be appropriate is a policy decision, but neither the Services nor the RAND team found evidence that these functions were duplicative.

JIEDDO also performs a number of broader functions that are related to capability development. To a degree, these are similar to processes performed by the Services. Like the Services, JIEDDO assesses, plans, develops requirements, submits proposals to budget processes, and develops and fields training solutions. All these have elements that are intended to minimize chances of program duplication and to ensure added value. Our analysis indicates that JIEDDO's organizational capability and its processes are successful in doing this. Processes may look similar—and may even have many of the same steps—but they are more focused on C-IED outputs and result in different programs. The overall conclusion is that while many Service

organizations are developing and fielding C-IED training capabilities using functions and processes similar to JIEDDO, the processes in place provide effective coordination and integration and mitigate the risk of inefficiency. JIEDDO's success in this respect may also be a function of its ability to perform all the elements of capability development within a single organization, rather than spreading functions across several organizations, as is the case with the Service models. However, we did find that JIEDDO lacks a rigorous end-end assessment process for fielded capability and that, while assessments were performed, they could be improved by a more formal process.

Concluding Thoughts

Whether JIEDDO should be continued and, if so, in what form, are questions beyond the scope of this report. Yet JIEDDO has developed organizational capabilities and a set of processes that allow responsive development of capability, minimize duplication, and provide benefit. As the future of JIEDDO is debated, now would be a good time to assess the lessons learned from the JIEDDO experience for the next stopgap organization that is created to address an asymmetric threat.