

The Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) community is going through a tough time right now. After nearly 20 years of being at the tip of the spear, we are currently fighting for relevancy in an Army that is focused on the shift to Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) in a Multi-Domain Operational (MDO) environment. The EOD community must adapt and change over the next 10 years in order to be poised to protect personnel and property from explosive hazards across all domains and against any threat.

Historical Perspective

Initially developed in 1940 after the Battle of Britain, the Army EOD community was extremely small prior to the attacks of September 11, 2001. Roughly 800 Soldiers, focused on range clearance of UXO, federal support to the President (VIPPSA), and working with State and local law enforcement to mitigate explosive hazards and threats. The Department of Homeland Security did not exist, and every few municipalities had a bomb squad capability. Support across the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) spectrum was limited in scope and not viewed as a critical threat to the homeland.

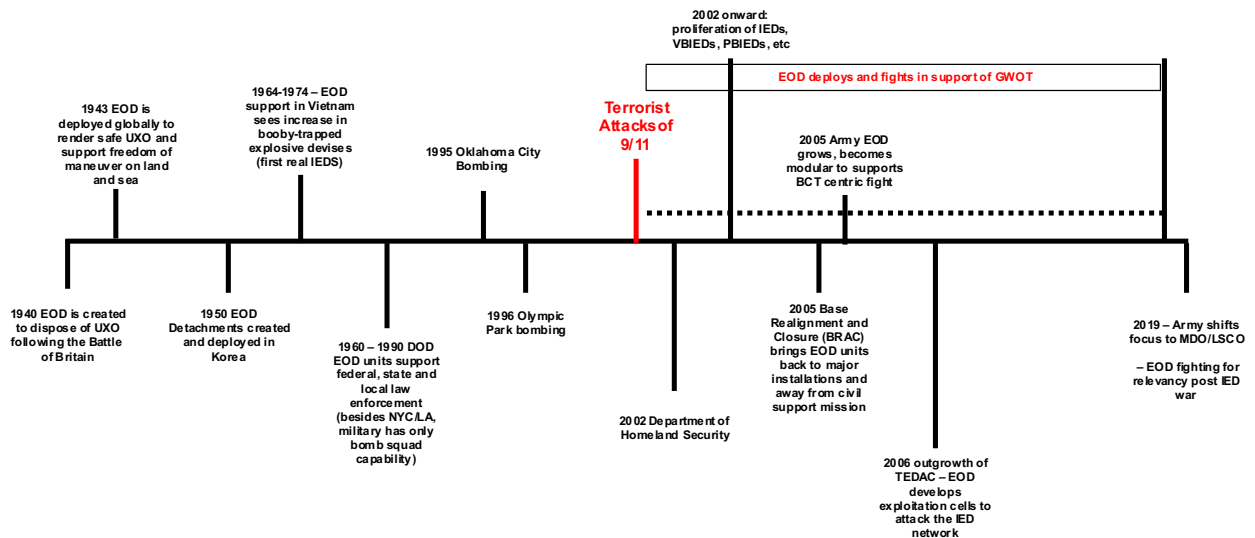
EOD had several 18-man detachments across the Army focused on their geographic area and not aligned to divisions or Corps. They had one brigade, the 52nd OD Group, which was a direct reporting unit (DRU) to FORSCOM. Technology was minimal, but training was readily accessible, we were not yet deployed across the globe. Soldiers had the time and ability to hone their craft and become explosive experts in a permissive training environment.

Following the attacks of 9-11, the Army deployed in support of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and were faced with the growing use of improvised explosive devices (IED). This weapon was cheap to make, easy to employ, and had devastating effects on troops. EOD Soldiers quickly evolved to combat this threat, and set up a force structure that could both support the warfighter and attack the IED centric networks that were killing Soldiers.

Operational needs, coupled with Congress's BRAC (base realignment and closure) in 2005, brought EOD units onto larger installations under traditional structure, and aligned them with Brigade Combat Teams (BCT). This made sense from a support perspective - BCTs were land owners during GWOT.

The Army has recently shifted focus to Large Scale Combat Operations (LSCO) in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO). EOD forces must figure out how to spread their phenomenal capability across the battlefield to support the geographic combatant commanders (GCC) and reduce explosive hazards to allow for freedom of maneuver and prevent threats in new domains of cyber and space.

EOD PAST - PRESENT TIMELINE



The Future

In ten years, the Army EOD community will be structured and equipped to defend against all explosive threats across the CBRNE spectrum in support of military operations in any domain. To get there, we must embrace the future technology, redesign EOD force structure, and develop a growth mindset to grow holistically as a force. A few highlights include:

- Force Structure updates that redesign the way we support – no more one-size-fits-all solution
- Advanced Radiography – mounted x-rays where Soldiers will not have to exit the vehicle
- Laser technology – able to heat UXO/IEDs to detonate without harm to personnel or property
- Enhanced bomb suits – lighter, more maneuverability, more resilient to blast waves
- Incorporation of drone technology – linked to AI to support or make decisions

- AI integration into Attack-the-Network. Trend analysis, forensics, data analytics, etc.
- Incorporation of Dogs through advanced neurobiology – dogs can speak to you and support detection through different signals
- Advanced robotics – fully articulating arms, capable of acting as the hands and minds of the technician
- Full utilization of 3-D printing capability to replicate scenarios for training and advance robot repair systems

DOTMLPF-P Bridging Solution

Doctrine – We will conduct a full rewrite of EOD Joint and Army doctrine focused holistically on EOD capability at echelon, force integration and command support relationships, and how future advances in technology will continue to reshape our support to the warfighter.

Organization – Army EOD will completely reshape our force structure. Battalions will be redesigned to support light and heavy divisions, as well as support through Futures Command to the cyber and space domains. EOD will stand up Special Operations Support (SOF) units to integrate and provide mission specific, tailorable force packages anywhere on the globe.

Training – We will integrate with warfighting exercises and increase our partnered training with joint, multi-national, and host nation partners. The EOD community will focus on regional alignment to become experts on the existing and emerging threats in that AO, and focus on conventional and unconventional unit integration.

Material – EOD will invest in industry and technology, working through Futures Command and Materiel Command to implement the most advanced capability possible to support the Geographic Combatant Commander. (see bulletized points)

Leadership and Education – EOD leaders will integrate at every echelon throughout the Army and Joint force to advocate for holistic EOD support in strategic and operational planning.

Personnel – The EOD community will move away from a tracked style career and use real talent management to take advantage of skills and attributes existing throughout the force. The right people for the right positions will rise to the top.

Facilities – Facilities will be upgraded and outfitted with the IT infrastructure needed to stay connected throughout the world and involved in the intelligence war-fighting function.

Policy – The EOD community will advocate for policy to best attack the network, protect personnel and property, maintain peak readiness, and validate EOD teams and units to accomplish their assigned mission.