

UPDATE OF IED THREAT IN TUNISIA



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1. IED NETWORKS OPERATING IN TUNISIA

1. Introduction:

The terrorist threat in Tunisia is currently low. However, it is necessary to consider two important aspects, which affect the security situation: the still instability of the neighbouring country, Libya, from where the main terrorist attacks in Tunisia have gone, as well as the non-perfect security of the common border. Secondly, although the situation of terrorist groups in Tunisia is precarious, they nonetheless have the capacity to inspire and / or even execute attacks in Tunis or other relevant enclaves, distinct from the mountainous spaces in which they operate usually.



2. Security situation:

It can be said that the present security situation has **its origin in the outbreak** of the revolution of 2011.

Prior to the overthrow of President Ben Ali there was already a **pre-revolutionary situation of violence**. A few Tunisian elements were linked to the Salafist Group of Preaching and Combat (SGPC), which would later evolve towards AQIM.

There was also a radical jihadist group called Ansar al Sharia, finally banned in 2013. That year, elements of Ansar al Sharia were responsible for two singular murders, which affected left politicians opposed to the government of the Islamist Ehnada party. The killers and some radical members of Ansar al Sharia fled to Libya, where they installed next to the border (Sabrata). They evolved later towards DAESH, in coincidence with the birth of this terrorist group, already in 2014 and 2015, doing of Sabrata the main terrorist training camp in Wester Libya, from where the main attacks on Tunisia were projected.

The primitive explosion of jubilation, as a result of the triumph of the political revolution in Tunisia, was also evolving towards a situation of **generalized disenchantment** due to the lack of expectations and future prospects. The political, economic and social instability in Tunisia, joined to the radical expectations that Daesh caused in many young people at the time of its birth. Libya and disenchantment were a lethal mixture. Terrorist groups increased their recruitment and Tunisia was also a very important contributor to Daesh in its different scenarios of war.

2015, the peak of Daesh in Syria, and also in Libya, coincided with the deadliest period in Tunisia. Only two attacks took sixty-one fatalities. They affected to the National Bardo Museum in Tunis, as well as a tourist resort on the coast, called Sousse. They proved the tremendous damage that was possible to cause with only minimal resources Both attacks had in common:

The attackers were Tunisians, but organized by Daesh from Libya (Sabrata)

They were perpetrated against foreigners

They were soft targets and did not require sophisticated resources

They had a tremendous social impact and on the national economy

They had very broad media coverage

In October 2015, a suicide bomber committed a **third attack**. This time, it affected a bus with a contingent of members of the National Guard serving in the capital, Tunis. The suicide bomber who blew himself caused twelve fatalities.

Already in March 2016, a **fourth big attack** was once again organized from Libya. It was very different to the previous ones. It took place in the bordering town of **Ben Guerdane (Tunisia)**, opposite to Sabrata, on the other side of the common border. Several military and security installations were attacked at the same time. This time it was a hard target: a synchronized and forceful attack carried out by dozens of Islamic fighters. The terrorist casualties rose to fifty-four, which gives an idea of the extent of the attack. The fatalities among security forces raised twelve.

However, even the big dimension of this attack in Ben Guerdane, it was **the last big attack coming from Libya**. Just before Ben Guerdane attack, in January, DAESH had been defeated in its bastion of Surt and began to scatter in smaller groups across large areas of the Libyan geography. In February, US Air Force also bombarded Sabrata, destroying the logistic and training area of DAESH in the border of Tunisia. Even the central core of DAESH was fading at that moment in Syria and Iraq.

Tunisia has seen how its security situation has improved markedly since Ben Guerdane. The important protection effort developed by Tunisian security has improved remarkably from then. The operational capability of Tunisian forces is much better nowadays. The very important economic and technological support made by America and some European countries have strengthened also the border security. Nevertheless, some terrorist are arrested from time to time trying to cross de border from Libya, what put in evidence the efficacy of the security system, although remarks at the same time that the Libyan threat is going active.

The panorama of terrorism in Tunisia today is configured by the existence of two terrorist groups:

UKBA IBN NAFIL (UBN): It is the subsidiary of AQIM in Tunisia. It is the most consolidated terrorist group in this country. However, its current capability is very precarious. Only a few dozen fighters that evolve in mountainous areas supported on the border with Algeria. His primitive feud in the natural park of Mount Chambi has moved further Norther; towards the provinces of El Kaf and Jendouba. Its usual objectives are the army and security forces that evolve in their area of implementation. His main recent attack was in July 2018, when he ambushed a patrol of the National Gendarmerie, killing six of their components.

JUND AL-KHILAFI (JAK): The subsidiary of Daesh in Tunisia has never been recognized by the central nucleus. His current situation is very precarious, also. It is composed by a few dozen fighters in the mountains of Kasserine, bordering Algeria. Its usual objectives are the security forces that evolve in the region. They have also attacked in 2018, albeit with slight damage, the pipeline that conducts oil production to the coast. Some of them are scattered in the metropolitan area of Tunis and its surroundings, as well as in the Ben Guerdane area.

They maintain active some capability in social networks, trying to recruit people and inspiring attacks. It was the case of the suicidal attack that a woman perpetrated in Tunis in October of 2018.

3. Conclusion and assesment:

The terrorist threat in Tunisia is currently **low**: not only as a consequence of the precariousness of the terrorist groups, but also caused by the increasing effectiveness of the security forces. Security forces are currently highly supported internationally in their preparation and equipment, as well as operationally. A sand wall with electronic devices reduces also the border permeability with Libya, which does not guarantee, however, the sealing of the border. Nor full protection against suicide attacks perpetrated by local terrorists can be guaranteed.

Tunisia's political, economic and social stability has also improved, reducing the risk of radicalization in the most vulnerable sectors of the population. Nevertheless, Tunisia should undertake political and economic reforms, which would avoid the disenchantment that still exists in sectors of the population.

The sealing of its border with de instable Libya, the suicide attacks that could be executed or inspired by locals, as well as the political and social instability in their own country, are **the main challenges that Tunisia must face** to improve its present security circumstances. Even increasingly improving its security situation, Tunisian recent experience shows the important damage that terrorist can cause with limited resources.

2. IED Threats

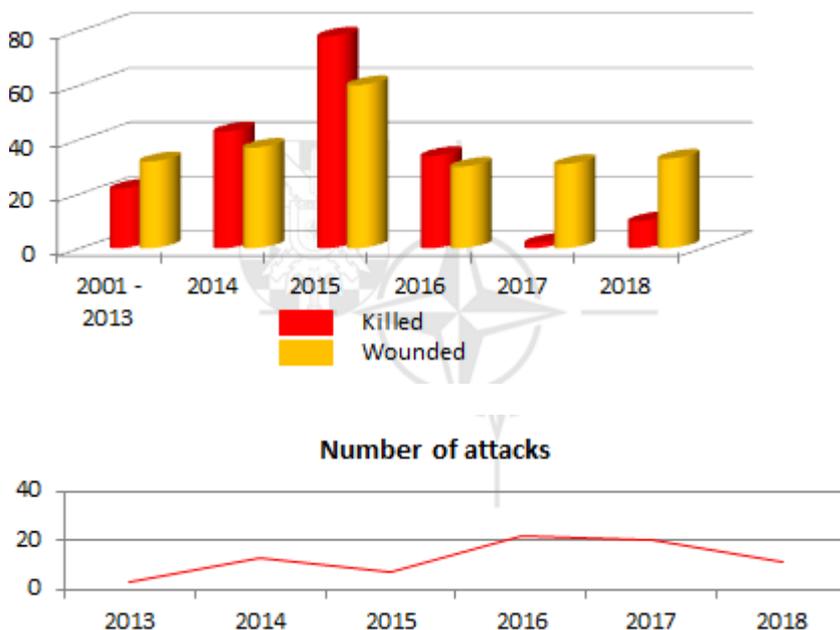
1. General description of the IED threat in the last period of time

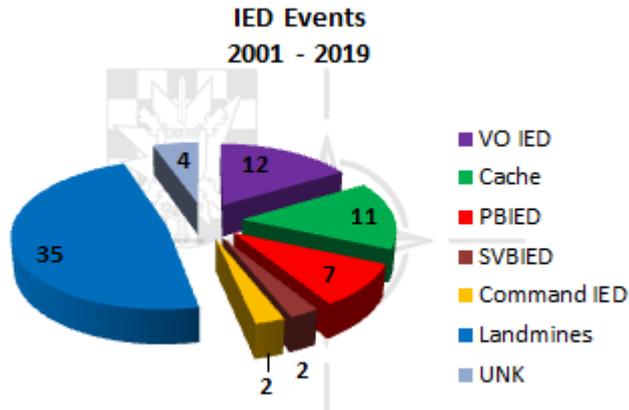
Tunisia is presenting 4 main areas as hot spot: the capital and the touristic coast, the south-east part (close to the border with Libya), Kasserine district and Kef district. In terms of operational assessment, we were able to understand that the touristic coast and the capital are attractive for the terrorist organizations, due to the high number of foreign tourists visiting the resorts. Since the fall of the Moammar Al Ghadafi fall, and the rising of the ISIS threat in the area, the border between Tunisia and Libya has always been tested and forced by the terrorist factions affiliated to ISIS. The Kasserine and Kef districts are closed to the Algerian border, and are well known to offer safe haven for the AQ affiliated terrorist organizations. These are the areas of intensive terrorist activity, and as major terrorist events which took place in the last 3-4 years we can mention:

- The marauding attack from Tunis (Bardo Museum)
- The marauding attack from Sousse
- The PBIED against the presidential guards
- Offensive operations carried out by IS terrorists to conquer Ben Guardane
- IED explosion against gas pipeline from Sfax

2. Statistics:

The methodology used by our analysts was to investigate the opens sources, trying to separate the incidents, not to have redundant or duplicate information, and then collecting the data. Of course we identified different figures in terms of people or soldiers being injured or killed, or in terms of what unit was attacked, but we tried to compare multiple sources.





3. TTPs used by terrorist groups

- Offensive:
 - Single device attack
 - Ambushes
 - Complex attacks
 - PBIED / SVBIED
 - IDF
 - Setting up of fake check points
 - Marauding attacks
 - Assassinations
- Defensive:
 - Booby trapping of caches, staging areas, egress routes
 - PBIED

Examples of the previously mentioned TTPs:

- **Marauding attacks:** On **18 March 2015**, two terrorists attacked the **Bardo museum**, killing 21 foreign tourists and a Tunisian security official, and injuring more than 40 civilians. The perpetrators and a member of Tunisia's Antiterrorism Brigade (BAT) died in the response operations. ISIL-inspired attackers claimed responsibility for the attack. The perpetrators had been trained in Libya. **On June 26, 2015**, a lone terrorist opened fire on tourists at two **resort hotels** in Sousse. Thirty-nine tourists, mostly British, died in the attack. Tunisian security forces killed the terrorist, who was trained in Libya. ISIL-inspired individuals claimed responsibility for the attack.
- **Complex attacks:** On March 2, 2016, a ten-man IS attack team crossed the Libyan border into Tunisia in SUVs and engaged Tunisian National Guard units in a firefight on the road to Ben Guerdane. Five IS operatives were killed and the others escaped, leaving behind a large quantity of firearms and ammunition, **PBIEDs**, two AK-47 magazines, 7.62mm bullets, grenades, a flare gun, a laptop, two modems, six foreign passports and LYD 2,750 in cash. 5 days later. On March 7, Tunisia's security forces successfully repulsed a large-scale attack by ISIS-affiliated terrorists on the Tunisian border town of Ben Guerdan. The MOI reported that (36/49) suspected terrorists were killed and (9/16) detained during the attack and subsequent operations by security services. Thirteen security forces members and seven civilians were killed in the course of events. The attackers were Tunisian nationals who had trained in Libya.
- On 25 July 2013, **Mohammed Brahmi** was fatally shot in Tunis outside his home in front of his wife and children by two men on a motorcycle. He received 11 bullets and died later that day in a hospital in Ariana district of Tunis. Brahmi's death followed the assassination of opposition leader **Chokri Belaid**, killed on 6 February 2013. The two were members of the same left-wing

coalition. The suspect in both murders was identified in a Salafist being sought on suspicion of smuggling weapons from Libya.

- **PBIED** - A bomb has exploded on a bus transporting Tunisia's presidential guard in central Tunis, killing at least 12 people and injuring 16. We assess that it was a PBIED, but the circumstances under the attack were carried out are not clear.
- **Ambushes and SAF** – this TTP's is largely used especially in the east part, where the military is conducting counter-terrorism operations. It has been documented that the paths and the leading trails to the terrorists firing positions or hideouts are protected with landmines and IEDs.

4. Characteristics of the IEDs

- **Switches:** As we were able to understand from the information collected, the preferred type of switch is the VOIED. The well-known pressure plate made up of 2 wooden plates with metallic contacts, a power source and the main charge. Additionally, an interesting type of pressure plate switch is represented by the middle pictures: basically, it is a plastic bottle filled with explosive. The switch is represented by a syringe which when is pushed is initiating the detonator. We have documented 2 types of pressure plate: one with metallic contacts and a power supply, and the second one instead of metallic contacts, the pressed tube is stressing a piezoelectric element which will discharge into a detonator. This last one example is no metal content IED. Even though we have not seen too many RC IEDs, within one of the Mobius reports from the end of 2015, it was documented a cache, in which are visible different types of mobile phones, including some already built devices. Additionally, in the reports are shown timers and even PIRs, for possible initiating switches for VOIED.
- **Main charges:** The main charges are either manufactured (HME) or military grade ordnance or explosives. The most HME found is nitrate based. We have not encountered any peroxide or perchlorate based HME, but as it was explained previously, the open sources have lack of such technical information. The military grade explosives could be extracted from the landmines and aerial bombs, as it will be shown in the next slide. As initiators, we assess that they are both improvised (broken bulbs) or standardized.
- **Main types of ordnance** documented are:

Antipersonnel mines: VALMARA 69 (Italy), NR 413 (Belgium), NR 442 (Belgium), POM Z 2 (ex URSS).

Anti-armored mines: TM 46 (ex URSS), TM 57 (ex URSS), PT MI-BA 3 (ex Tchécoslovaquie), TC 6 (Italy), TMA 5 (Serbie – Ex Yougoslavie), type 72 SP (China), PRB M3 (Belgium), PRB M3 A1 (Belgium).

Aerial bombs: OFAB-250-270 (ex URSS).

5. Assessment of future evolving of the IED threat / attacks:

- Increase the use of RC devices
- Continue to use of HME and military ordnance as Main Charge
- Military, Law Enforcement personal will continue to be targeted (all types of IED)
- Future use of drones
- Poss. use of poisonous gas
- Touristic objectives will remain a high profile target - PBIED/marauding attacks

3. C-IED training

1. Overview of countries and organizations contributing to training, courses and manning.

USA, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Spain are the biggest contributors to Tunisia regarding CIED issues. They support with training, courses and equipment in order to institutionalize CIED as a permanent part of the army with the proper knowledge. In the beginning there were at least three (3) non-military organizations supporting Tunisia with basic training and courses. (Pre 2016)

2. TUN AF (Tunisian Armed Forces) training facilities and collective training.

The main facilities for CIED business are the CEET (Centre d'Excellence EOD Tunisien) and the EACTUN (Exploitation Analysis Center Tunisia), the CEET is managed by a Steering Group which consists of the military attaché's from the abovementioned nations. CEET is organized in the TUN AF, belonging to the army and is the only ETF (Education and Training Facility) in the Military Engineering discipline. CEET's vision is clear and they are striving to be the leading entity in North Africa in the preparation of IEDD and EOD personnel, supporting both the homeland and international missions. They aim to develop CEET into a joint, inter-agency, inter-governmental and multi-national Centre of Excellence EOD.

EACTUN is well equipped and the setup includes all sub-domains of Technical Exploitation, for example, MEDEX (Media Exploitation), CELLEX (Cellular Exploitation), LFP (Latent Fingerprint) processing and post blast analysis.

The TUN AF, including the special guards have participated in the exercise "AFRICAN LION" where they exercised parts of the CIED trained units

3. Current C-IED Training in TUN AF

TUN C-IED Education & Training:

1. TUN Army Officers School (new officer training incl. ½ day C-IED training).
2. Readiness Forces Training Facility 1 day training (1/2 day theory/1/2 day praxis).

Training TUN AF:

3. concentration on C-IED training EOD level 1 (independent training TUN AF);
4. no explosive ordnance disposal training in place;
5. no training in AtN (Attack the Network);
6. no Exploitation training in ;

4. Training Support from NATO countries in TUN CEET

1. USA:

- support to TUN includes a Level-2 laboratory that is used as a training facility too (1 x US Sergeant);
- USARAF delivered an AtN MTT (Mobile Training Team) and several MTTs focused on Search training;
- continuously present.

2. GERMANY:

- supported TUN AF with implementation, structure and equipment of the new TUN Army Officers School (new officer training incl. ½ day C-IED training);
- support to TUN AF with doctrine development;
- in general support to general staff education as well as CBRN training;
- Continuously present.

3. FRANCE:

- training on handling of manipulators after delivering of equipment to TUN AF;
- The FRA training teams included training in maintenance & support of all FRA equipment;
- 2015/2016/2017: 1 or 2 MTTs in military search;
- NOT continuously present.

4. SPAIN:

- 6 MTTs per year (between 1 to 3 weeks courses);
- no support with material/equipment or other support;
- focus/level: C-IED search; EOD Lev .1;
- MilAtt coordinating MTTs;
- NOT continuously present.

5. UNITED KINGDOM:

- UK's CEET Advisory Team includes 1 x SO at the CEET (up to 30MAR2019) as Training / Quality Manager; planning and training coordinator;
- no instructors;
- after 30MAR2019 UK will focus on MTTs [2 x NCOs (1xC-IED Search; 1xEOD Operator)];
- focus is on Mol (Ministry of Interior)-support (all urban scenarios are trained with Mol personnel; Garde Nationale Tunisia);
- NOT continuously present.

5. Main challenges

There is a lack of coordination of all tasks, planned and executed, to support the capacity building of CIED in TUN AF, JFC (Joint Force Command) Naples is responsible for this and has started to understand the need of coordination and control regarding the support to TUN AF. During the staff assessment visit in 2016 one main challenge was identified that seems to still be valid. That is the fact that CEET and the CIED umbrella includes representatives from both armed forces and law enforcement which complicates command and control when this needs to be coordinated and synchronized between the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defense.

6. The future

Many of the abovementioned nations that have contributed in different ways to the capacity building are now in the phase of decreasing their effort, transitioning from a direct training role into more of a mentorship role. USARAF's visions for 2020-2023 are very clear and support this. Same goes for other nations that are manning the CEET planning to withdraw their permanent presence.

7. USARAF C-IED Branch: “CIED Build Partner Capacity program in TUN” (author: Bob Kaiser)

USA RAF will continue to focus on the TUN Army Engineer’s CoE for EOD-Tunisia (CEET), which is the central institution responsible for training all TUN Army EOD/CIED specialists.

To develop the CEET as a regional CoE, a multi-national CEET Steering Group was formed to coordinate and de-conflict CIED SFA programs of the USA, DEU, the UK, FRA, and ESP. USARAF CIED continually partners with EOD specialists of these countries by participating in steering group meeting to ensure US training and equipping efforts are nested and complimentary to the other countries.

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- a) By 2020, USARAF enables the CEET to be capable of producing and sustaining sufficient counter improvised explosive device (C-IED) capability to protect its force from IED threats during operations independent of US mentors. C-IED concepts are integrated within all echelons of the force to include general purpose force IED awareness, employment of specialized IED Defeat units, and the practice of Attack the Network processes.
- b) By 2023, the senior cadre at CEET are functional peers of their US and European counterparts. CEET is capable of serving as a regional center of excellence and training partner army soldiers from North Africa and the Sahel.

PREVIOUS TRAINING (FY16-17)

- a) Humanitarian Mine Action. Training enabled Tunisian Soldiers to train other Soldiers to safely identify and reduce explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnance. 1x iteration was completed by a US EOD RAF team; OCT-DEC 2015,
- b) IED Defeat Phase 1. Training to enable Tunisian CIED specialists to locate, identify, and reduce IEDs to protect their force and civilians. 3x iterations were completed by US EOD RAF teams; JAN-MAR 2016, AUG-SEP 2016, FEB-MAR 2017;
- c) Site Exploitation. Enables CIED specialists to collect/preserve IED material for forensic processing to feed intelligence processes. 2x iterations were completed by US EOD RAF teams; JAN 2016, SEP 2016;
- d) Attack the Network. Training that provide basic, intermediate, and advanced techniques of network analysis to facilitate operational targeting. 4x iterations were completed by USARAF G2 ICD personnel; NOV 2015, FEB 2016, MAR 2016, MAY 2016;
- e) Secure Electronic Enrollment Kit (SEEK). Training provided instruction on how to operate and utilize the SEEK biometric enrollment device, and how biometrics supports other exploitation and intelligence efforts. 1x iteration conducted by USARAF G2X personnel; JUL 2016.
- f) FY18. IED Defeat Phase 1/2; 30 July-31 August 2018-. Training includes advanced IED defeat techniques and use of advanced tools such as x-ray system, bomb suits, etc.. Event is training only, utilizing existing tools and equipment.

CURRENT TRAINING (FY18).

- a) FY19. Basic and advanced IED defeat techniques; train the trainer instruction to improve CEET instructors; enables Tunisian instructors during Exercise African Lion 19; 3x events in 1st, 2nd, and 4th QTRs of FY19.

FUTURE TRAINING

- a. FY20. Proposed 333 case transitions efforts from a direct training role to a mentorship role of Tunisian cadre to assume full responsibility for training their EOD specialists.

- b. FY21-23. The emphasis will shift from developing the CEET institution to conducting peer to peer tactical exchanges with US EOD teams to keep the Tunisian cadre up to date on evolving enemy IED TTPs, as well as changes in friendly identification, mitigation and defeat TTPs.

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