Humanitarian IED Disposal Operator Currency and Referral Process

Technical Note

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SECTION ONE - Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The clearance of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in post-conflict environments is an increasing focus for activity within the mine action sector. Although not a new phenomenon, IEDs are most often the weapon of choice for non-state armed groups and this will likely continue as a trend into the foreseeable future. By definition, there are no manufacturing standards for IED construction; additionally those who manufacture IEDs continuously alter their characteristics, their method of functioning or the delivery method of the device. IEDs are employed in a variety of different contexts spanning both rural and urban environments either to deny access to areas and resources, to hinder mobility of security forces and civilians, to protect locations or even to target EOD/IEDD specialists tasked with their removal.

IMAS 09.31 recognizes "the layout and complexity of the operating context has a significant bearing on the skillsets required to safely carry out Humanitarian IED Disposal (HIEDD) as part of a larger mine action intervention. The safe conduct of HIEDD relies upon appropriately trained and qualified operators having a thorough understanding of the area that they are working in, and of the increasing complexity of these types of devices."

HALO introduced its HIEDD course in autumn 2018 and has established comprehensive, externally validated, SOPs for the conduct of IED clearance operations. These SOPs are complementary to HALO's Global EOD SOPs and together they describe the safe practices to be employed by HIEDD operators.

1.2 Scope

The purpose of this TN is twofold; to provide guidance to programmes on the importance of maintaining the operational currency of their HIEDD qualified staff; and to provide guidance on the in-country referral process that assures HIEDD operator safety.

SECTION TWO - IEDD Competency and Currency

2.1 General

It is widely recognized that the safe conduct of IEDD operations require individuals with the appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and experience (KSE). Knowledge and skills are obtained through education and training, and are generally awarded a qualification. Experience is gained through the application of those knowledge and skills, set within specific operational contexts and environments. KSE therefore help to define an individual's **competency**, but by their very nature where these attributes are not routinely employed an individual's **currency** diminishes over time.

2.2 Competency

The baseline competency for HALO HIEDD operator training is IMAS EOD level 3[1] (or equivalent). The experience gained subsequently from conducting EOD operations enables an individual to be considered

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[1] Detailed in IMAS T&EP 09.30

for HIEDD operator training. Successful completion of HALO's HIEDD course earns a qualification which maps to the IMAS IEDD Level 3 competency standards[2], and covers the skills that are routinely required for humanitarian IEDD operators in a permissive environment.

For HALO staff with EOD/IEDD qualifications gained from other military or commercial training/experience should be mapped against the relevant IMAS TE&P. This should be conducted by the Chief Technical Advisor(s) EOD/IEDD and a competency level recommendation made to the Director of Capability- who may then formally approve the individual for HIEDD operations.

2.3 Currency

An HIEDD operator's currency is closely associated with the particular environment and specific threat context in which they will be operating. It is important therefore that PM's ensure that newly arrived HIEDD operators, regardless of their level of experience, are familiarized with the local IED threat and SOPs before being permitted to conduct IEDD operations. This should include an accompanied visit to a task site with an experienced HIEDD operator where possible.

2.4 Currency Guidelines

Given the fluidity of planned and unplanned movements of HIEDD qualified operators between programmes, the following guidance is provided to assist programmes in establishing and maintaining an operator's currency on arrival onto the programme. The below (or similar) should be conducted by an HIEDD operator prior to conducting an RSP without direct supervision:

Time out of IED environment	Local hazard briefing	Task visit and SOP familiarisation with a current HIEDD operator	Shadow a current HIEDD operator for at least three IEDD tasks	Conduct two practice tasks supervised by a current HIEDD operator	Complete three assessed tasks supervised by the Ops M
6 months	X	X			
12 months	X	X	X		
18 months	X	X	X	X	
24 months	X	X	X	X	X

SECTION THREE – Referral Process

3.1 General

No two IEDD scenarios are likely to be the same. As such, HIEDD operators employ their training and knowledge to formulate and execute an RSP that complies with HALO's guiding HIEDD philosophies, principles, mandatory actions, conventions and referrals[3]. For more complex scenarios HIEDD operators are also deliberately restricted in the actions they can perform, and these are controlled by a referral process. The referral process introduces an important level of safety during the conduct of a task.

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[2] Detailed in IMAS T&EP 09.31
[3] Laid out in SOP5 Section 1 – Task Management and SOP 5 - IEDD

3.2 Referrals

Referrals are occasions when an HIEDD operator must discuss their future actions, with an appropriate technical authority, prior to completing any subsequent action. Mandatory referrals are included in IED SOP Part 5 and are repeated here for reference. Communication throughout a task is encouraged but is not considered mandatory. Referrals will be made when:

- An un-planned explosion occurs during the conduct of positive HIEDD action.
- A device incorporating multiple firing switches is positively identified.
- Prior to positive HIEDD action on a suicide device.
- Identification of a new or novel device, whether for technical guidance or to ensure immediate passage of critical information to other HIEDD operators and clearance teams.
- Prior to conducting operations outside an approved HALO task site. Including IED spot tasks.
- If the HIEDD operator believes that deviation from any Principle or Mandatory action is required to complete a task safely.
- If the HIEDD operator requires additional resources, including time, to complete the task safely.
- If the HIEDD operator believes they lack the training, equipment or capabilities to successful complete the task.
- Prior to conducting the following EOD actions: semi-remote cutting of a command wire, semi-remote removal of an internal detonator, the EOD actions specified in Annex G (mechanical).

3.3 Technical Advisers

The role of HIEDD Technical Advisers (TA) is to provide experience, technical guidance and oversight of HIEDD operations in support of the Ops M and PM. They assist programmes in ensuring the safe, reliable and efficient conduct of HIEDD operations. The minimum competency of a TA is IMAS IEDD level 3, with a suitable number of level 3+ competencies (advanced skills) as well as extensive experience across a range of complex IED environments.

3.4 Referral Process

In general, while the Country Operations Manager should be the primary referral authority on the programme, the referral authority can be delegated for periods, tasks or regions where it makes sense to do so. Regardless of which individual is nominated, a clear and reliable means of communication must be established between HIEDD operators at task sites and the referral authority. Where data communication is possible, consideration should also be given to sending photographs to assist with detailed RSP discussions. Considerations include;

- Referral delegations should be recorded clearly in the Clearance Plan and task book
- The delegated referral authority should be a suitable qualified and very experienced in IED clearance operations for the relevant environment. Guidance should be sought from the CTA IEDD.
- A local contingency should be in place in the event that the primary referral authority cannot be reached during clearance operations where a referral is required. An appropriate response would be to suspend any further IEDD action until contact has been made.

- Where programmes are fortunate to have a number of senior IEDD personnel within them, a peer-to-peer referral process should be considered if the referral authority is conducting an RSP themselves.

An example of how referral authority may be delegated is below:

Referral requirement	Example delegation of authority
A device incorporating multiple firing switches is positively identified	Technical Advisor on tasks where this is a common hazard. The task plan should make clear if there are any limitations (e.g. if the second switch is an AL switch)
Prior to conducting operations outside an approved HALO task site. Including IED spot tasks	Project Operations Manager or Location Manager
If the HIEDD operator requires additional resources, including time, to complete the task safely	Project Operations Manager or Location Manager
If the HIEDD operator believes they lack the training, equipment or capabilities to successful complete the task	Always Country Operations Manager *Less manual neutralisation which always requires authority from the CTA IEDD and HoR.
Identification of a new or novel device	
Prior to positive HIEDD action on a suicide device	
An un-planned explosion occurs during the conduct of positive HIEDD action	
If the HIEDD operator believes that deviation from any Principle or Mandatory action is required to complete a task safely	
Prior to conducting the following EOD actions: Semi-remote cutting of a command wire Semi-remote removal of an internal detonator The EOD actions specified in Annex G	Project Operations Manager or Location Manager *Less occasions where a device has been mechanically lifted but where no mechanical separation of components has been possible. This should remain a COM referral.