



SPEECH

MR ANDREW NIKOLIC AM, CSC, MP
MEMBER FOR BASS

The International Counter Improvised Explosive Device Leaders' Forum

Representing the Minister for Defence

**Great Hall – Parliament House of Australia
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INTERPOL Secretary-General, Mr Jürgen Stock; Forum Delegates:

It's a great honour for me, on behalf of the Australian Government, to extend a very warm and sincere welcome to our nation's capital city, Canberra.

The Australian Government is privileged to host this inaugural Counter Improvised Explosive Device and Counter-Terrorism Leaders' Forum on behalf of INTERPOL.

This Parliament makes decisions on whether to use the military dimension of Australia's national power in support of our interests. The troops that respond to those decisions are all too often exposed to risk – and increasingly in recent years, the risk from improvised explosive devices or IED's. As you consider responses to this threat over the next three days, this Parliament is very pleased to host your discussions.

As a former 31-year veteran of the Australian Regular Army, with service in places like Israel, Syria, South Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq, addressing the appalling and indiscriminate consequences of IED's, is a matter that's very close to my heart.

I know my friend, Defence Minister Kevin Andrews, and all of our colleagues are focussed on doing everything they can to support the force protection of our troops and those of our friends and allies. We therefore warmly welcome this inaugural Forum, the theme of which is, "*The Counter Improvised Explosive Device/Counter-Terrorism Nexus*".

That link between the terrorist and the weapons they use is an important and increasingly dangerous one.

IEDs are present in approximately 80 per cent of terrorist activities around the globe. They are now a fundamental component of terrorist attacks.

Unfortunately, threat actors are employing IEDs in ever-growing numbers around the world and threats from these weapons are constantly evolving.

They are being used to threaten the legitimacy, authority and the rule of law of nations, particularly in those developing or post-conflict fragile states.

This trend is expected to continue, because IEDs are a low cost, high return weapon system that is readily available.

It is anticipated that future warfare (including terrorism) will continue to place importance on the use of IEDs and therefore an even greater proliferation of IED techniques and knowledge will continue – including in our region of the world.

A number of our regional neighbours are facing internal threats from IEDs on a daily basis. I can recall in 2009, leading a project under our Defence Cooperation Program, to donate bomb suits to the Royal Thai Armed Forces. The bomb threat then was linked to the insurgency in Southern Thailand. But as we saw from the explosive attack in Bangkok on 17 August, IEDs now threaten Thailand's biggest city.

Australia, as with almost every nation, has been seriously impacted by the use of IEDs – or even the threat of IED's.

A single individual with a firearm and the threat of a bomb in a backpack was enough to shut down a Sydney city block last December.

Terrorist attacks in Australia, in Bali, in London and elsewhere, have seen the intentional targeting of our nations' innocent civilians who have been killed, physically maimed and emotionally scarred with these hideous weapons; as have the citizens of many other nations as well.

Australian security and law enforcement agencies have been able to intercept and prevent a number of imminent terrorist-related attacks on Australian soil that included potential use of IEDs.

This response has been enabled through our overarching National Security Strategy, which provides a framework of national security objectives to combat the terrorists and their indiscriminate use of such weapons.

The recent success in thwarting attack plans in Australia, demonstrates the value of strong institutional structures and investment in strengthening our diplomacy, defence, border protection, law enforcement and intelligence.

Through these connections **within** Australia's interagency environment, and with like-minded friends and allies, a more effective whole-of-government response to this threat is possible - particularly through information and capability-sharing with international partners.

The IED threat has been, and continues to be, part of the Australian Defence Force operational environment, and is likely to be part of the operational environment for the foreseeable future.

Over recent military operations, 54 per cent of Australian Defence Force injuries and fatalities have been as a direct result of IEDs.

To ensure that we protect our personnel appropriately, we must continue to invest in this area.

Australia, as with many nations, has increased its efforts to counter terrorism and specifically, the threat of IEDs.

Accordingly, our Defence Force is constantly evolving its approach to this threat.

One of the most significant changes has been the permanent establishment of the Counter-IED Task Force as a unit in the Australian Defence Force.

With an expanded and broad mission including the development of responses to meet emerging and future improvised threats, this Task Force is an integral component of Australia's Counter-IED strategy.

The Task Force has enabled a focal point for collaboration with industry, allies and regional partners in developing Counter-IED capability, through information exchange, the provision of advice, co-development of technology and training.

This has resulted in an improved capability for our partners, our regional neighbours and ourselves.

Australia continues to be on the cutting edge of the development of defence science and technology needed to address this global threat.

An example of this approach is the development of an IED detector by the Australian Defence Science and Technology Group, in consultation with industry.

The detector combines world-leading Australian detection technology with cutting-edge ground penetrating radar, to locate and identify low signature content IEDs in challenging soil conditions.

Moreover, under Defence's REDWING Program, Australia has developed low cost, robust and lightweight force protection systems. The equipment has particular application for use in austere operating environments by military and police units as it requires minimal operator training and limited logistic support.

Through this project, the Australian Government has invested up to \$50 million in the Australian defence manufacturing industry. This investment demonstrates Defence's ability to leverage domestically-developed, Counter-IED technology into jobs for Australians.

This project is an example of Australian industry and Defence collaboration, entrepreneurship and innovation, to deliver unique solutions that can help address a persistent threat in almost every conflict zone.

With defence industry partners supporting an accelerated production schedule, delivery of this vital equipment to Afghanistan commenced in January. The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces are now deploying this equipment in the current fighting season, their first without significant coalition support.

Furthermore, the Australian Defence Force conducts considerable Counter-IED training with our regional and international partners to enhance our collective capability.

We stand shoulder-to-shoulder with worldwide military and law enforcement agencies, in the fight against IED proliferation and the disruption of networks that use them.

That's why the initiative to partner with INTERPOL and the Australian Federal Police, to organise and deliver this forum, stands as testament to our resolve.

In addition to our own IED experience, and that of other militaries, Australia has observed a global trend with increasing attacks on humanitarian and emergency aid workers; emergency first responders, such as medics and ambulances; UN Mission members; and innocent civilians who often are bearing the brunt of the casualties resulting from IED's.

These direct attacks are on the people and organisations that are often the least prepared and protected.

That said, the use of IEDs and their connection with terrorism is certainly not new.

What is apparent however, are the global connections enabled through the internet that is now available to terrorist organisations and those disenchanted individuals that we identify as lone wolves.

The ability of these terrorist organisations to share information through social media and the internet, promotes the use and construction of IEDs anywhere, at any time.

The ease and speed of this information-sharing is unprecedented, as they can share technology.

Moreover, they can and do assist in building the capacity of other like-minded groups and individuals, by sharing information and by arranging or managing international supply chains, which include the facilitation of national and transnational movements of precursors, materials and components.

Terrorist organisations also operate as regional and global communities of interest.

Some have far-reaching global networks, while others operate under a franchise model.

It is apparent that the very things that enable globalisation for the good of mankind can also be the very things that enable global, transnational threats to mankind.

Just as there is a growing demand for internationalism to meet other global threats, such as pandemics and global warming, an international approach to countering the

pandemic of the IEDs is similarly required to effect a tangible reduction in the number of IED incidents around the world.

To effectively combat this threat, Australia believes that a global network or a global alliance is required to coordinate efforts and share information on Counter-IED technologies, on precursor materials, and on those who construct and use these weapons.

As all nations are now under threat from IEDs, all nations are welcome to contribute their experiences and ideas to develop potential solutions through a global alliance and partnership.

While it is clear that a campaign of internationalism is required, which may need to include deliberate unilateral military action against terrorist cells; it is a response that must have the military effort nested in a legitimate response.

This involves a sustained partnership with law enforcement and across a broad range of political and economic pursuits if it is to succeed.

Australia acknowledges that global threats can't be prevented just through border controls or efforts within a single nation's border, nor can they be prevented by one nation, organisation or a multitude of disconnected alliances and effort.

Global threats demand a global response to get to the problem's roots.

It must target what drives the bombers; their recruits, their money, the support of other states, as well as the things that motivate them to use these indiscriminate tactics.

This global response also requires a coordinated effort to: build collective capacity – to use the strong institutional structures in many of the countries here today, to strengthen the institutional responses of those countries that need it most.

We must also develop a universal narrative to counter the lure of the dissidents and extremists – to stop them responding to the siren song of terrorism and transnational

ideologies. We must affect the terrorist's freedom of action at every opportunity – including by disrupting their established global supply chains.

A fundamental objective underpinning this response is to establish and maintain the mechanisms to share information, so that the international community can collaborate to counter this threat on equal terms.

This includes imparting 'shareable' information so that each nation can be informed about the safest and most effective way, to defeat both ongoing and emerging threats.

It is appreciated that there is a high level of sensitivity about IED information and historically, there has been universal apprehension to share information.

This represents an issue of trust and perhaps the single greatest challenge facing any global effort. But it is a challenge that must be discussed and resolved if we are to defeat this threat.

By creating a global community who can draw on each other's experience, the global Counter-IED community is agreeing to tackle the threat together and assume that no one party has more need of the information than another.

In this regard, there is a necessity to create the very thing that terrorists networks have relied on – the reluctance of nation states (outside of established organisations such as NATO and INTERPOL), to share information.

Our weakness has become their strength and this must be reversed.

Australia acknowledges that other nations, organisations and alliances are already working hard on this issue – as we are.

To name a few: NATO, through its alliance and the Counter-IED Centre of Excellence in Spain; the United Nations, with its effort to address IEDs under the Protocol II of Convention of Certain Conventional Weapons; and UN Resolution 2178, which has recognised INTERPOL in its global role against foreign terrorist fighters.

Additionally, the African Union has developed programmes for peace and stability and within Australia, the efforts of the Australian Federal Police through its sponsorship of the South East Asia Bomb Data Working Group, international Bomb Data Centre affiliations and its own regional training efforts; has contributed to addressing Improvised Explosive Devices within our region.

It would be remiss of me not to make special mention of INTERPOL.

As the world's largest Police organisation, its 190 member nations, represented here today by the Secretary-General and by the representatives from many of its member nations, play a vital role.

INTERPOL has a unique ability to facilitate international Police cooperation where diplomatic relations don't exist.

Policemen, like soldiers can develop relationships across borders, which often endure when other aspects of our bilateral and multilateral relationships may be tested. Our uniformed diplomacy and the comradeship on which is based, can be particularly valuable in strengthening C-IED cooperation.

As already mentioned, UN Resolution 2178 acknowledges tools provided by INTERPOL to prevent the international travel of foreign fighters, including the use of INTERPOL's Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, as well as I-Checkit.

As a screening measure, I-Checkit has enabled companies in the transport, banking and tourism industries to submit passport information for screening against the Stolen and Lost Travel Documents database, which contains more than 43 million records from 167 countries.

It is also noteworthy that INTERPOL, through the National Central Bureau, has formed a dedicated Foreign Terrorist Fighter programme, in partnership with the US National Security Council, Department of Justice, and Department of Homeland Security.

These exemplars demonstrate that where there is willingness to address this global issue, a coalition of the willing can be formed.

Following the lead of work already established across the many nations and organisations represented here today, there is an opportunity to examine the current global effort.

This is primarily to identify all current communities of action, identify mechanisms to promote collaboration between them, and where possible to establish alliances beyond those that are traditional or already established, in order to develop greater unity of purpose to defeat this scourge.

This Leaders Forum presents a unique opportunity through the concentration of key leaders from government, law enforcement and the military to enhance Counter-IED relationships between nations and institutions.

It provides the platform to enable ideas from which action plans can be developed that can bridge those information gaps currently existing between military and law enforcement.

The Forum offers the opportunity to explore and ultimately develop those programs that will enhance communication and cooperation between the various Counter-IED and counter-terrorism agencies and organisations around the world, in order to bring these communities closer together and coordinate effort.

This, together with efforts to bring together international capacity-building, public awareness and the critical component of information-sharing; will enable the development of global responses across all fields of effort.

By participating in this Forum, we are all commencing a journey that will seek to support international policies and identify the way forward for establishing and enhancing international cooperation.

It is anticipated that the Forum will agree to the establishment of ongoing programs of work designed to enable the military, government and law enforcement agencies to more effectively and efficiently combat the IED threat.

It will also provide the Government of Australia insights on how we may further develop our Counter-IED and overarching national security objectives.

In particular, these objectives will include enhanced regional engagement and the prioritisation of effective partnerships, to combat the transnational, multi-actor or technologically-advanced security threats.

This will identify where Australia can further contribute in a whole-of-nations effort to direct those instruments of national power; encompassing information, diplomacy, economics, border control, law enforcement and the military, to contribute to a truly global Counter-IED effort.

The Australian Government seeks to ensure that this Forum is the first step towards establishing a focussed and enduring global Counter-IED network, one that is designed to increase awareness, share information and promote cooperation to enhance public safety both here and overseas.

Australia looks forward to participating fully over the next three days as collectively, we examine how to arrest and close the rapidly-expanding gap between threat actors who employ IEDs and the international community who wants to stop them.

To ignore the global IED problem today, is to consign future generations to the threat of more sophisticated, globally-active IED networks tomorrow.

That's why, in a busy and demanding world, I thank you again for taking the time to attend this Forum and helping us to develop an effective response to this terrible threat that kills and maims so many of our people.

Thank you.