

The Raven's Bond: Annual Raven's Challenge EOD, PSBS Interoperability Exercise

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With little exception, every profession has established a unique set of ethos. And yet we find that there can be subsets of a profession whose ethos differ from the larger population.

One profession divided by a separate branch of government has established some slightly different ethos. These are the men and women who risk their lives in the pursuit of protecting society from the effects of an improvised explosive device. They are commonly referred to as the Public Safety Bomb Squad and Explosive Ordnance Disposal profession.

Although from the surface it may appear that these two organizations are defined by a separate set of skills, tools, equipment and ethos; peeling the layers of the onion tells a different story.

Like the Raven, PSBS and EOD teams are a tight-knit family that tends to stay within the walls of their professional communities. Ravens will generally stay in small flocks and protect each other, but they are also opportunists, when another species provides for them they submit to an endearing relationship. This is the goal of the Annual Raven's Challenge Interoperability Exercise!

Raven's Challenge Interoperability Exercise program was stood up to provide an opportunity for PSBS and EOD teams to work together in a no-holds-barred environment that encourages the sharing of equipment, tactics, techniques and procedures, and creates a positive and effective relationship between geographically located EOD and PSBS teams.

The Department of Defense, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives understand the importance of a coordinated response by military and police organizations.

Participants in the Raven's Challenge include ATF, U.S. Department of the Army, U.S. Department of the Air Force, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Transportation and Safety Administration, along with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

Raven's Challenge increases the awareness of evolving threats from terrorists, political factions and lone individuals who use explosives to injure or kill U.S. citizens for political or personal gains. For example, participants learn how to use cutting-edge technologies and interoperability communications tools to safely resolve explosive-related threats

across the nation. As quoted at several Raven's Challenge events, "Hugs! Not introductions!"

The exercise is funded by the Department of the Army, operationally led by the Department of Justice's Bureau of ATF, and involves joint collaboration with other like-minded agencies such as the FBI, the DOD, DHS's Transportation Security Administration and Office of Bombing Prevention, and state and local public safety agencies throughout the country.

The Air Force Civil Engineer Center works closely with the Raven's Challenge staff and manages all Air Force EOD teams participation, said Dr. John Olive, Air Force EOD subject matter expert, which includes active duty, Reserve and Air National Guard. AFCEC ensures equal opportunity for all Air force EOD units, brings synergy with the ATF Raven's Challenge logistics staff and has established a long-term relationship with the ATF and the DOD program manager.

Air Force has been a participant in the Raven's Challenge events since 2010 and in 2021 we had 100% more EOD teams and observer/controllers than previous years -- a total of 40 teams which equated to 120 EOD technicians and 42 observer/controllers from various EOD flights.

"Besides the opportunity to bring collaboration between federal, DOD, state and local PSBS and EOD teams, the events serve as a litmus test for how well AFCEC is supporting our warfighters with the right equipment and training to meet our various mission sets," said Senior Master Sgt. Robert Krumlinde, Air Force EOD force development manager. "We have been able to identify opportunities to enhance training, modernize equipment and identify gaps in operational capabilities. It also lends to requesting feedback about policy and TTPs."



Teams from the 4th EOD, Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, 166th EOD, New Castle Air National Guard Base, Delaware, and the New Jersey State Police PSBS teams conduct hand-entry into an Improvised Explosive Device. (Photo courtesy of Dr. Timothy King)

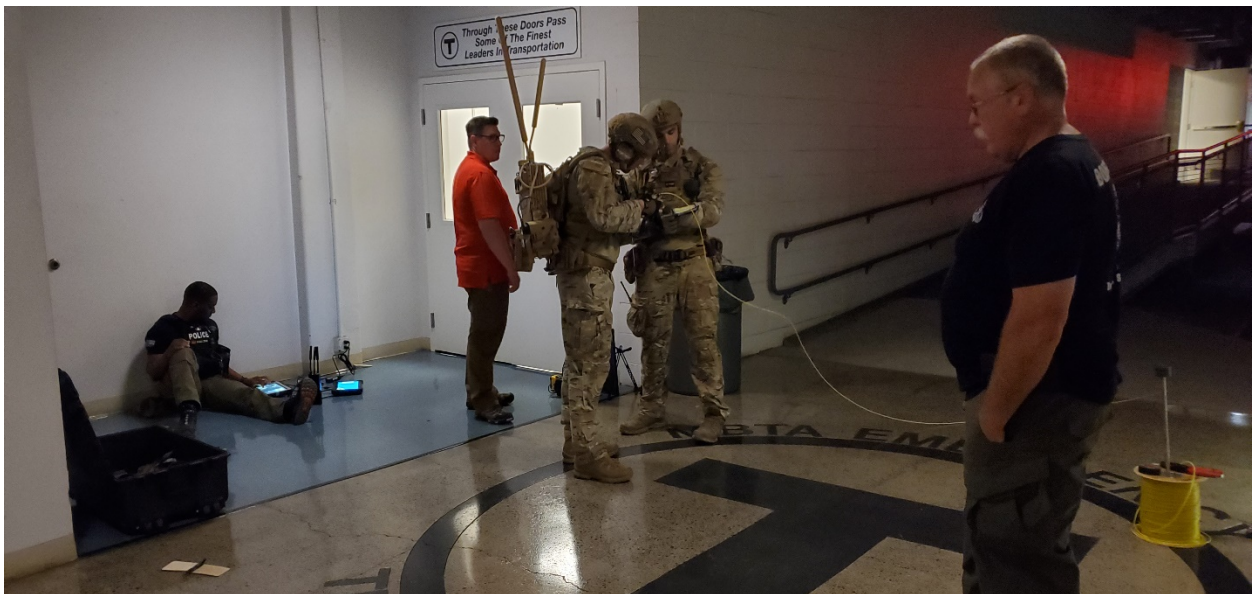


An Air Force Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician with the 30th Civil Engineer Squadron at Vandenberg AFB, California, adjusts his AN/PLT-4 and AN/PLT-5, improvised explosive device jammers, during a training lane at Raven's Challenge, an annual inter-agency, counter IED exercise that incorporates scenarios focused on interoperability capabilities between public safety bomb squads and military explosive ordnance disposal units in

operational environments at Pinal Airpark, Arizona, March 2, 2021. (Photo courtesy of Staff Sgt. Jose Ramirez, 71st Ordnance Group)



Representatives from 1st EOD at Hurlburt Field, Florida, and Boston PSBS investigate a suspect vehicle-borne improvised explosive device. (Photo courtesy of Master Sgt. Andrew Krueger)



Representatives of the 4th EOD, Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina, and the New Jersey Public Safety Bomb Squad, conduct final procedures to defeat an improvised explosive device located on the end of a Subway Station rail car. The event took place at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Emergency Training Center, Boston, Massachusetts. (Photo Courtesy of Master Sgt. Andrew Krueger)