



Improvised Explosive Device (IED) events involving UK personnel on Op HERRICK in Helmand Province, Afghanistan 1 April 2009 to 30 November 2014

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This one-off release provides summary statistics on Improvised Explosive Device (IED) events in Helmand Province, Afghanistan involving UK personnel¹ during Op HERRICK. This report covers the time period 1 April 2009 to 30 November 2014 (end of Op HERRICK). Comparable data on IED events prior to 1 April 2009 is not currently available.

In this publication, the count of IED events amounts to all events involving UK personnel in Afghanistan, in which the IEDs were emplaced. This includes Finds, Explosions, IED Strikes and Mine Strikes. The count of IED events does not include non-emplaced IEDs, namely: Caches, Hoaxes and Tip-offs/turn-ins. An event may include one or multiple IEDs. More detail is provided in the Methodology section of this report.

The numbers presented within this release should be treated as a minimum (please see methodology section for more details)

Key Points and Trends

Between 1 April 2009 and 30 November 2014 there were a minimum of **5,313** IED events involving UK personnel¹ in Helmand Province, Afghanistan during Op HERRICK.

- Financial year 2009/10 recorded the highest number of IED events involving UK personnel¹.
- Q4, 2009/10 recorded the highest number of IED events involving UK personnel¹.

Operational Tempo was high during 2009/10, which also coincides with the peak of IED events involving UK personnel¹. The number of IED events involving UK personnel¹ fell in the following years which coincides with a reduction in Operational Tempo for UK Armed Forces as responsibility for security transitioned to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF).

Figure 1: Troops carry detectors to enable them to discover possible improvised explosive devices (IEDs) that lay hidden by the enemy.



Source: Royal Navy
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¹ The data does not specify whether personnel are UK Armed Forces or UK Civilians, however the majority would have been UK Armed Forces personnel.

Responsible statistician: Dep Head of Health Tel: 030 67984467 Email: DefStrat-Stat-Health-DepHd@mod.uk

Further information/mailling list: DefStrat-Stat-Health-PQ-FOI@mod.uk

Press office: 020 721 83253

Background quality report: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/defence-personnel-nhs-commissioning-quarterly-statistics-financial-year-201516>

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Supplementary tables containing all data presented in this publication can be found at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-national-and-official-statistics-by-topic/mod-national-and-official-statistics-by-topic>

Introduction

This one-off report has been provided in response to a number of requests for information from the media and general public about IED events involving UK Armed Forces on operations in Afghanistan. The MOD are committed to making information on operations public but have to draw a line between how much information is provided regularly in the public domain and information which compromises operational security of UK Armed Forces personnel or which risks breaching an individual's right to medical confidentiality.

This report has been published to support the MOD's commitment to release information wherever possible.

Operation HERRICK: The name for UK operations in Afghanistan which started 1 April 2006 and ended on 30 November 2014. UK Forces were deployed to Afghanistan in support of the UN authorised, NATO led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission.

Improvised Explosive Device (IED): The NATO Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.15(B) definition of an IED is "A device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass or distract. It may incorporate military stores, but is normally devised from non-military components." They can be initiated either by the victim or remotely by enemy forces. IEDs can also be delivered by suicide bombers where they are self-initiated or remotely initiated by an observer. In Afghanistan, low-technology victim operated pressure-plated IEDs, command-wire IEDs, radio-controlled IEDs and suicide IEDs collectively posed a significant threat.

This report focuses on Helmand Province as this was the main area of responsibility. It would be at disproportionate cost to collate numbers for the whole of Afghanistan.

Comparable data on IED events prior to 1 April 2009 is not currently available.

Defence Statistics has also published a one-off Official Statistic on the types and mechanism of injuries sustained by UK Service personnel in Afghanistan. This report covers the period from when the field hospital opened, 1 April 2006, to the closure of Op HERRICK, 30 November 2014. This report can be found here:

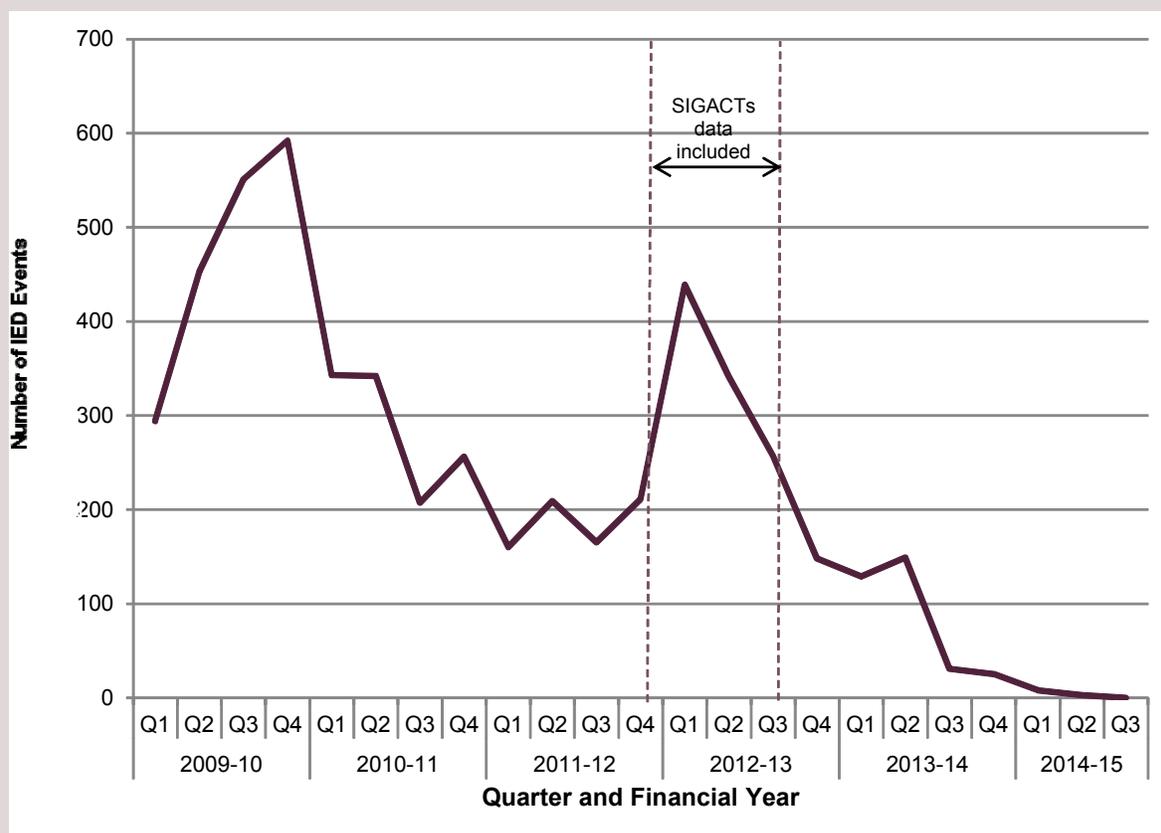
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/types-of-injuries-sustained-by-uk-service-personnel-on-operations-in-afghanistan-op-herrick-1-april-2006-to-30-november-2014>

Due to the nature of operational reporting it is likely that a number of incidents were not reported, therefore the numbers presented in this report should be treated as the minimum.

IED Events

Between 1 April 2009 and 30 November 2014 there were a minimum of **5,313** IED events involving UK personnel² in Helmand Province, Afghanistan during Op HERRICK.

Figure 2: IED events involving UK personnel in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Numbers^{1, 2, 3, 4}
1 April 2009 to 30 November 2014



Source: Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD)

1. Includes Find, Explosion, IED Strike and Mine Strike events.
2. The number of IED events presented here should be treated as the minimum. See Methodology for further explanation.
3. Data ends 30 November 2014.
4. Between 1 March 2012 and 31 August 2013 the UK Significant Actions (SIGACTs) data is included in the LORD

- Financial year 2009/10 recorded the highest number of IED events involving UK personnel.
- Q4, 2009/10 recorded the highest number of IED events involving UK personnel.

“2009 saw a step change in the threat posed by IEDs in Afghanistan, with an unprecedented increase in their number, in response the MoD has invested significant resource and effort into countering IEDs”³

Operational Tempo was high during 2009/10, which also coincides with the peak of IED events involving UK personnel. In Q1 Operation PANTHER’S CLAW was launched in Helmand province, a British led offensive involving over 3,000 troops. In Q3 an extra 500 British troops were deployed to Afghanistan. During Q4, Operation MOSHTARAK commenced. This was a large joint offensive

² The data does not specify whether personnel are UK Armed Forces or UK Civilians, however the majority would have been UK Armed Forces personnel.

³ House of Commons Defence Committee, Operations in Afghanistan, 4th Report of Session 2010-2012, page 256, cited: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/554.pdf> – accessed 18 August 2016

involving 15,000 British, American and Afghan troops, to eliminate the Taliban from their strongholds in central Helmand.

The peak in IED events in 2012-13 may have been a result of the validation process of integrating the UK Significant Actions (SIGACTS) database into the Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD). This was done for the period 1 March 2012 to 31 August 2013, and increased the coverage of reported IED events involving UK personnel in Afghanistan. This process was initiated in order to produce a single, comprehensive Op HERRICK event data set.

The aspiration was to fully incorporate the SIGACTs data into the LORD but this task was very resource intensive as it required examination of individual event records and could not be completed within resource constraints. Therefore, some SIGACTs data was incorporated throughout the LORD but the only comprehensive integration of SIGACTs data into the LORD took place for events between 1 March 2012 and 31 August 2013. As a result the statistics presented should be treated as a minimum.

There could be many additional explanations for the rise during 2012-13, such as: changing tactics, techniques and procedures of either insurgents or UK Armed Forces; changes in UK counter-IED capabilities; availability of components that could be used to make an IED within Helmand.

A decrease of IED events was seen from 2013, likely due to the UK Force drawdown and reduced UK patrolling, as well as the increased Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) patrolling, producing lower levels of reporting.

Table 1: IED events involving UK personnel in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Numbers^{1, 2, 3, 4}

1 April 2009 to 30 November 2014

Date of IED Event	All	Financial Year					
		2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15 ²
All	5,313	1,890	1,148	745	1,185	334	11
1 April - 30 June (Q1)	1,373	294	343	160	439	129	8
1 July - 30 September (Q2)	1,497	453	342	209	341	149	3
1 October - 31 December (Q3)	1,211	551	207	165	257	31	0
1 January - 31 March (Q4)	1,232	592	256	211	148	25	

Source: Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD)

1. Includes Find, Explosion, IED Strike and Mine Strike events.
2. The number of IED events presented here should be treated as the minimum. See Methodology for further explanation.
3. Data ends 30 November 2014.
4. Between 1 March 2012 and 31 August 2013 the UK Significant Actions (SIGACTs) data is included in the LORD



Figure 3: Dogs perform a vital role in the fight against terrorism by seeking out IEDs and hidden weapons

Source: Army
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Methodology

This section provides a brief summary of the methodology and data sources; more detailed information is available in the background quality report for this bulletin.

IED events:

The figures for the number of IED events involving UK personnel⁴ are compiled from the Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD).

The Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD) is managed by Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and commenced on 1 April 2009. The database is populated with data sourced from Weapon Intelligence Specialist Reports (WISREPS), Significant Incident Reports (SINCREPS) and a number of other sources.

The UK Significant Actions (SIGACTs) database is the UK database produced by the Operational Analysis team within the UKAO (UK Area of Operations⁵). The database is populated with data sourced from 9-liners⁶ and the watch-keepers logs. SIGACTs data was collected from April 2006 and was the sole integrated source of IED data for the period April 2006 to 31 March 2009 when the LORD was initiated. The data on IED events prior to 1 April 2009 is not comparable with later data available in the LORD.

In this publication, the count of IED events amounts to all events involving UK personnel⁷ in Afghanistan, in which the IEDs were emplaced. This includes:

- Finds: Devices which have been emplaced but are discovered by coalition forces before they are able to function.
- Explosions: Devices which successfully detonate – this includes those devices which detonate but fail to strike their intended target.
- IED Strikes: Devices which successfully detonate and cause damage or casualties.
- Mine Strikes: Devices which successfully detonate and cause damage or casualties – note that the term ‘mine’ is often used when referring to a victim operated IED. This term also includes conventional, industrially produced mines used in an unconventional manner.

An event may include one or multiple IEDs.

The count of IED events does not include non-emplaced IEDs, namely:

- Caches: Complete devices or device components in a non-deployed scenario.
- Hoaxes: Devices which have been emplaced or left such that they will be discovered by and require effort on the part of coalition forces but are deliberately non-viable – i.e. are missing critical components such as explosive charge or connecting wires.
- Tip-offs/turn-ins: Devices which have been identified or recovered by the civilian population.

The numbers presented should be treated as a minimum for the following reasons:

1. Due to the nature of operational reporting it is likely a number of events may not have been reported.

⁴ The data does not specify whether personnel are UK Armed Forces or UK Civilians, however the majority would have been UK Armed Forces personnel.

⁵ The UKAO comprises the command formerly known as Task Force Helmand (responsibility handed over to Regional Command South West from 1 April 2014) and Task Force Belleau Wood. The UKAO has changed over time and is the area over which the UK has responsibility for conducting/coordinating operations. It is an area that is constantly evolving, although since the end of 2009, it has become smaller – it once included the Sangin valley, Kajaki and Musa Qal'eh.

⁶ Military description of the radio message received for a MEDEVAC (Medical Evacuation).

⁷ The data does not specify whether personnel are UK Armed Forces or UK Civilians, however the majority would have been UK Armed Forces personnel.

2. The task to fully incorporate all of the SIGACTs data into the LORD was time consuming and was very resource intensive as it required examination of individual event records and could not be completed within resource constraints. As a result may have led to under reporting of the number of events.
3. The LORD has not been fully validated to ensure accuracy of the data held. There are known data inconsistencies over time and missing data. This source of data is the most reliable held by the Department for reporting on IED events involving UK personnel.

Glossary

IED	Improvised Explosive Device	The NATO Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-3.15(B) definition of an IED is “A device placed or fabricated in an improvised manner incorporating destructive, lethal, noxious, pyrotechnic or incendiary chemicals and designed to destroy, incapacitate, harass or distract. It may incorporate military stores, but is normally devised from non-military components.” They can be initiated either by the victim or remotely by enemy forces. IEDs can also be delivered by suicide bombers where they are self-initiated or remotely initiated by an observer. In Afghanistan, low-technology victim operated pressure-plated IEDs, command-wire IEDs, radio-controlled IEDs and suicide IEDs collectively posed a significant threat.
LORD	Land Operational Reporting Database	The Land Operational Reporting Database (LORD) is managed by Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and commenced on 1 April 2009. The database is populated with data sourced from Weapon Intelligence Specialist Reports (WISREPS), Significant Incident Reports (SINCREPS) and a number of other sources.
SIGACTs	Significant Actions Database	The UK Significant Actions (SIGACTs) database is the UK database produced by the Operational Analysis team within the UKAO (UK Area of Operations). The database is populated with data sourced from 9-liners and the watch keepers logs. SIGACTs data was collected from April 2006 and was the sole integrated source of IED data for the period April 2006 to 31 March 2009 when the LORD database was initiated.
DSTL	Defence Science and Technology Laboratory	The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) ensures that innovative science and technology contribute to the defence and security of the UK. DSTL is an executive agency, sponsored by the Ministry of Defence.
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO’s essential purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.
	Helmand Province	Helmand Province is an area in Afghanistan that the majority of UK Service personnel were deployed to. Please see link for a map of the region: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28687/5865_ed7_helmand_province.pdf

**OPERATION
PANTHER'S CLAW**

Operation PANTHER'S CLAW was preceded by several other operations carried out by British and Afghan government forces with the purpose of "taking and holding ground" in Helmand Province prior to the Afghanistan elections in 2009.

**OPERATION
MOSHTARAK**

Operation MOSHTARAK was the Afghan-led initiative to assert government authority in the centre of Helmand province and was launched in February 2010 with the backing of troops from the UK, the US and other nations in the ISAF coalition.

The operation was broadly intended to expand security and Afghan Government influence to the areas of Chah-e Anjir, western Babaji, Trikh Nawar, and Marjah.

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Significant Incident Report

WISREP

**Weapon Intelligence Specialist
Report**

SEFIT

**Serious Equipment Failure
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Defence Statistics (Health) Telephone: 030 6798 4467
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<https://www.gov.uk/make-a-freedom-of-information-request/the-freedom-of-information-act>

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Defence Expenditure Analysis	030 6793 4531	DefStrat-Econ-ESES-DEA-Hd@mod.uk
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Civilian Manpower	020 7218 1359	DefStrat-Stat-Civ-Hd@mod.uk

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If you wish to correspond by mail, our postal address is:

Defence Statistics (Branch)
Ministry of Defence, Main Building
Floor 3 Zone K
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

For general MOD enquiries, please call: 020 7218 9000