

Combat the Use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDS) and the Trade in Materials to Manufacture them

Cosign a Letter to President Obama on IEDs

Deadline to sign is April 30, 2012

Dear Colleague:

I ask you to join in signing a letter to President Obama requesting he take the necessary steps to develop a comprehensive strategy to combat the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and the trade in materials to manufacture them. Representative Elton Gallegly (R-CA) has agreed to be a signatory on the letter and his office will be the lead and point of contact for the House of Representatives to collect the signatures.

IEDs are indiscriminate weapons that are becoming the tool of choice for armed groups who seek to achieve their goals through violence. If you exclude the 233 IED incidents per month during 2010 in Iraq and Afghanistan, there are on average, an estimated 3 IED incidents per day, every day, in the remainder of the world. According to the National Counterterrorism Center's Worldwide Incident Tracking System, this represents a doubling of monthly IED incidents in just five years.

In addition to being the main cause of casualties for our military forces, IEDs on a global level are now responsible for more civilian than military casualties. Based on data from 2010, compiled by Partners International Foundation, a United States non-government organization for the Global Campaign against IEDs, IEDs killed 268 U.S. service members and over seven times that many civilians (1,898); when combined with those wounded, the total of civilian casualties reaches almost 8,000. Ammonium nitrate, long used to manufacture IEDs in the Near East and South Asia, is emerging as the explosive of choice in Africa; it may be only a matter of time before IEDs are used by gangs in the United States. Taken together this amounts to a global epidemic of IED use.

IEDs are the number one cause of casualties for American service members and will be for the foreseeable future. According to the Blinded Veterans Association, vision loss is the fourth most prevalent injury caused by IEDs behind hearing loss, traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder for which IEDs are also the major cause. Approximately 34% of those injured by IED blasts suffer dual sensory loss of vision and hearing. This is in addition to the well documented physical wounds such as loss of limbs and other permanent physical disabilities. Similar injury statistics are likely much higher for the civilian populations effected by IED attacks.

These trends underscore the seriousness of the IED problem where innocent civilians, most often women and children, bear the brunt of the suffering. Those in affected areas live in fear of additional attacks that disrupt everything from daily routines, to health care to elections. When

displacement, destruction, and loss of personal assets are added to this mix sustainable livelihoods are severely degraded.

We have all lost constituents to IEDs not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but domestically during the September 11th attacks, the Oklahoma City Bombing, and other IED events. This is truly a unifying issue that has direct impact on Foreign Affairs, Homeland Security, Veterans Affairs, and Defense.

The Departments of Defense, Homeland Security, Justice, and State have supported inter-agency and multi-national engagements on this issue. Through their efforts, the United States is playing a vital and important role against IEDs; unfortunately, however, these efforts are not enough. As we learned from the successful international effort over a decade ago to address the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, confronting the global problem of IEDs requires a focused, holistic, and coordinated global response. This letter respectfully requests President Obama take prudent steps to intensify those efforts by engaging the international community as part of the solution to IEDs.

It is both a unifying and truly non-partisan issue to condemn the use of IEDs; call on the global community to accept responsibility and work to eliminate the root causes of IED networks and help control the proliferation of IED production materials and techniques; and develop a strategy to care for veterans who were IED victims. We have a unique opportunity to speak with one voice on this issue.

For these many reasons, I respectfully ask that you join in signing the attached letter to President Obama.

If you would like to sign this letter or have any questions please contact Kenneth Steinhardt, in my office (Kenneth.Steinhardt@mail.house.gov). Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
/s
ELTON GALLEGLY
Member of Congress