

Raven's Challenge' Bomb Squad Training Returns to New York State

BY JIM TURLEY AND MEGHAN DUDLEY
NYS DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

In April, New York State hosted the world's largest training exercise for bomb squads and military explosive ordnance disposal teams – the Raven's Challenge. The annual exercise trains bomb technicians on how to counter the threat of improvised explosive devices to keep the public safe. The State Preparedness Training Center (SPTC) in Oriskany was one of four locations in the country selected to host this training and it featured bomb squads from around the northeast, Canada and Europe.

The United States' Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Center for Explosives Training and Research held the 2019 Raven's Challenge exercise at four regional locations around the country - Colorado, Florida, Indiana and New York - to maximize participation from bomb technicians.



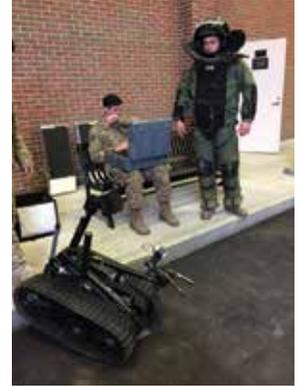
The importance of technology in today's law enforcement.

the bomb technicians based on the latest threat information, and there is no better place in the nation to hold such an exercise than the world-class New York State Preparedness Training Center," said **Patrick A. Murphy, Acting Commissioner of the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services.** "I would like to thank our federal partners and the exercise instructors for sharing their knowledge and best practices on how to combat the threat of improvised explosive devices by those seeking to do harm."

The Raven's Challenge began in 2004 as an ATF-led training exercise for both military explosive ordnance disposal team and public safety bomb squads in Seattle. Over the years, the exercise has matured into what is now the largest training exercise in the world for explosive ordnance disposal teams and bomb squads. The Raven's Challenge is funded by the U.S. Army and coordinated by the ATF and partner agencies including the U.S. Army, United States Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the country.

"The long-standing partnership between the State of New York and the ATF led Raven's Challenge program reunited for the third time in five years and produced fantastic results," said **John Simpson, program manager, Raven's Challenge Interoperability Exercise, ATF.** "The exercise at the State Preparedness Training Center, the second venue of the year, was completely full and was a barometer for the demand for this type of advanced training among bomb technicians."

The Raven's Challenge also marked the first of a series of major training events at the SPTC in 2019. In mid-May, DHSES will host the third annual "Tactical Week" in Oriskany. Eight premier tactical teams from across the state (all accredited by the NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services) will complete in hands-on training scenarios that leverage the entire SPTC grounds. In June, DHSES will conduct the inaugural "Canine Week" at the SPTC. This innovative event will bring together nearly 50 explosive detection canine teams from across New York and surrounding states to test their skills in advanced scenarios driven by the current threat environment. DHSES will also host a new "Drone Skills Day" in mid-August to allow public safety unmanned aircraft system (UAS) pilots to further hone their skills using this emerging technology.

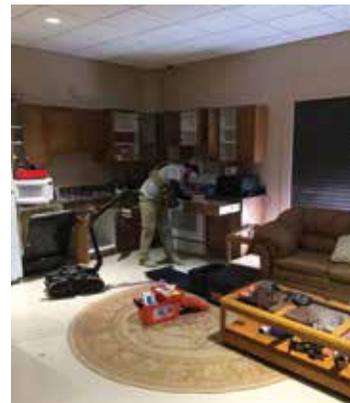


Preparing for a bomb disposal exercise.



ABOUT THE STATE PREPAREDNESS TRAINING CENTER

Operated by the New York State Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES), the State Preparedness Training Center's vast array of training venues give bomb squad and canine teams



an opportunity to train in realistic environments. Located on 1,100 acres, the SPTC's training venues include a 45,000-square foot simulated city, a residential housing complex, collapsed building rubble pile, woodland structures, train cars and other settings. Now in its 13th year, the Center annually trains thousands of New York's first responders including law enforcement, emergency medical services and technical rescue personnel.

The SPTC's goal is to provide cutting-edge, contemporary and configurable training to New York State's first responders. This high-end training prepares these responders to safely, effectively and efficiently handle today's threats.

About the Authors

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