



**ISIS Attack in Egypt Leaves 23 Soldiers Dead** – An attack by Islamic State in a remote area of the Sinai Peninsula killed at least 23 Egyptian soldiers, and wounded 33, in the [worst attack](#) in the region in two years. ISIS claimed credit for the massacre, as part of a larger campaign against positions near Gaza and Israel. In the now familiar one-two punch, a suicide bomber rammed his vehicle into a military checkpoint near the border town of Rafah, which was quickly followed by a swift-moving firearms attack, including mounted machine guns, from SUVs filled with “dozens” of assailants. It appears the attack was part of [coordinated attacks](#) in the area, and authorities said 40 militants were killed overall in the fighting.



**Assessment:** The initial blast knocked out communications at the compound, forcing a soldier to summon for help via a WhatsApp audio message to a colleague from his personal phone. With official communications down, the quick-thinking soldier used an alternate means to alert his fellow soldiers and call for help, including an air strike. Though not as quick or seamless as established communications, the message got through. For responders, any essential function should have a redundancy. Equipment breakdowns or operations in wireless dead zones are but two examples of the unpleasant (or even dangerous) surprises that someone could face in the field. When members are proficient in first-choice procedures, add scenarios in training that require Plan-B thinking.

**Rejected Former Airman Sets off Explosive at Recruiting Office** – A 28-year-old former senior airman, who had resigned after being disciplined, is being charged on federal crimes after setting off an explosive at the front entrance of an Air Force recruitment center outside of Tulsa, Oklahoma at about 10:30 on Monday. No one was injured. The FBI made the arrest after anonymous letters containing copies of the man’s Facebook which implied that he had broken windows and slashed tires of a recruiter’s (government) car at the same center one day earlier. A search of the man’s residence turned up pipe bombs and bomb making materials, a loaded handgun, an AR-15 rifle, \$4,000 cash and an application for a German national visa.

**Assessment:** Investigators believe that the bomber not only held a grudge against the Air Force for failing him at a bid to become an electrician, but were also blocking his attempt to join the U.S. Marines. The incident is not being viewed as domestic terrorism, but as a disgruntled former employee “turned to hate.” He had also previously sent “rambling, profanity-laced letters” to former superiors blaming the federal government for using “special warfare tactics” for driving underperformers like him from the service. All branches of civil service and military are potentially subjected to such strong feelings of disdain from rejected individuals, and threats should be taken seriously.

**CO Leaks in Vehicles Suspected in Police Officer Illnesses** – In the past few weeks, at least seven police officers from the Austin Police Department have fallen ill [while driving](#) their police cruisers, and the cause appears to be carbon monoxide leaking into the cab. Also, in Newport Beach, Calif., a police officer became disoriented and drove off the highway, across lanes of opposing traffic, before crashing into a tree. As in Texas, the cause was attributed to dangerous levels of CO in the vehicle (Louisiana has at least one other case). One common factor is the make and model of the vehicle—Ford Explorers. CBS News has reported that there were a total of 450 complaints (not just police drivers) involving 2011-2017 Explorers, and the number is growing.

**Assessment:** Some departments have pulled Explorers from their fleet for now, but others are [installing](#) CO meters in their vehicles. Responders are usually vigilant about high CO levels at fires and responses to underground parking garages, but having the deadly gas in their vehicles is surprising to say the least. As most readers are well aware, CO is odorless, colorless and tasteless, and human senses offer no defense. Symptoms can include headache, dizziness, nausea, and progress to vomiting, confusion and loss consciousness at high doses. Even though CO is slightly lighter than air, below-grade areas can pool the gas, especially in the late stages of a fire when gasses are cooled by hose streams.



**Military Plane Crashes in Mississippi** – A KC-130 military plane carrying 15 Marines and one sailor, traveling from North Carolina to California, [crashed](#) in rural Mississippi, killing all aboard. The crash caused a debris field at least three miles long, and local fire crews required 9,000 of foam to extinguish the fires. At one point, firefighters attempting to extinguish the blaze were [pushed back](#) by an explosion. Eyewitness described a series of explosions (a “rumble”) as the plane came down. The cause of crash is still unknown.

**Assessment:** Responders in any community or municipality must constantly ask themselves if their department is ready to surge during a large-scale event. For plane crashes, access to foam concentrate that can translate into thousands of gallons of foam is essential. Scene security will also be a challenge, as debris fields can extend for miles. Sadly, in this incident, medical care was not a factor, but in other mass-causality events (train derailments, etc.), access and removal of patients (and delivering the necessary tools) can be very difficult, especially in mountainous or isolated regions.

**‘Alexa, Call 911’** – Amazon’s voice-assistant, Alexa, built into its Echo multi-media service devices, apparently called emergency dispatchers during a domestic violence incident, leading to a law enforcement response near Albuquerque, New Mexico, when officers saw a woman with bruises on her face (she was pistol whipped) and in obvious duress. The woman and her young child are now safe, according to authorities, because Alexa called 911 after the woman prompted the virtual assistant.

**Assessment:** What is odd about this notification is that the company said there is currently no capability for the Alexa program to call 911; how the call was made is still a mystery. Barring supernatural influence in the virtual world, the explanation may continue the dialogue on the benefits, limits and appropriateness of computer assistance. Most automobile makers, as well as large tech companies, are devoting a great deal of research at computer-controlled vehicle systems. Today’s models [have](#) automatic collision braking, automatic parking, lane changing assistance and adaptive cruise control, but tomorrow’s models (and today’s prototypes) can self-drive. Responders must constantly adjust to new technologies used by themselves and the public.

**Remembering the ‘77 Blackout** – Today marks the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1977 NYC blackout, punctuating a period of great turmoil in the Big Apple that included a financial crisis and a roving serial killer (Son of Sam). A series of lightning strikes on area substations on the evening of July 13, eventually led to 25 hours of power loss during an intense heat wave. There were some positive effects, as well, including a baby boom nine months later ([35 percent](#) more births than normal), and [much improved](#) power monitoring and better procedures.

**Assessment:** The 25-hours of the NYC blackout marked the most intense 1-2 days of urban firefighting for any one city in the 20<sup>th</sup> century outside of actual warfare. FDNY responded to over 1,000 fires during the blackout, taxing its resources (firefighters, dispatchers, etc.) to the limit. Twenty-six years later, the 2003 East Coast blackout also caused a surge in fires (at least 60 serious, all-hands fires), but the city was very different a quarter of a century later. A drastically more vertical city required many more rescues of stuck occupants in immobile elevators, for example. Power failures can come from natural causes (tree limbs, lighting, etc.), or increasingly from physical or cyber attacks. Russia has been systematically [sabotaging](#) essential services in Ukraine since 2014, and in late May, a substation in Nottinghamshire (U.K.) was shot at, [causing](#) 8,000 homes to lose power.



[Watchline@fdny.nyc.gov](mailto:Watchline@fdny.nyc.gov) - (718) 281-8399