

reZOOM Atlanta

Feb 20, 2007

The Boomin' Boomer

By Pam Baker
ReZoom Contributor



Steven Duffey simulates the obstacles soldiers may face while training them to detect IEDs

When Steven Duffey decided to make a life change, he did it with a bang. Dressed in his Iraqi keffiyeh, the traditional headdress of Arab men, he hunkers over an improvised explosive device, the infamous IED that kills people in Iraq and Afghanistan seemingly every day. Arming the device takes an incredibly steady and knowledgeable hand.

The IED could kill him if it goes off while he's kneeling over it. Soldiers-in-training, however, are perfectly safe from the simulated explosion, even within three feet of the noisy contraption. Duffey's ultimate goal is to keep American troops safe from the real things.

Duffey trains soldiers to detect the IEDs before they explode. He arms the simulated IEDs so that the soldiers clearly get the message, scripted in noise and smoke, of the serious nature of missing even one of these devices. As American and coalition troops become better at avoiding or disarming these threats, fewer lives are lost.





Duffey and his role-players also simulate an Iraqi community of both “friendlies” and terrorist insurgents, hence the keffiyeh and other foreign attire. The trainees learn how to tell the difference between innocents and combatants, what to look for among them and how to react in a number of scenarios ranging from typical street scenes to angry mobs. This training also saves innocent Iraqi lives that might otherwise be lost due to miscommunication in complex nightmarish situations.

The arid, dusty U.S. military training fields of China Lake, CA, where he finds himself on this particular day, are a long way from Duffey’s former post as vice president of operations at an advertising and public relations firm in Columbus, Georgia. It is one of many sites as he travels the globe, desert-hopping, sleeping in tents and crawling on sand with the various scorpions of the world.

Today, Duffey is vice president of Business Development for Locust Grove, Georgia-based [Joint Military Development Services](#) (JMDS), a privately-held business specializing in IED Recognition Training, Weapons Familiarization Training and Cultural Awareness Training. When once he oversaw creative professionals, media buyers and number crunchers, now he creates simulations to train all branches of the U.S. military and allied forces and law enforcement agencies.

The son of First Sergeant Wade Duffey, retired combat engineer for the U.S. Army and veteran of the Vietnam War, Steven had always wanted to serve his country through military service. An old sports injury made him ineligible for service, however, and left him to carve out a career elsewhere.

“My father and both brothers served in the army,” he says. “I was very disappointed that I couldn’t serve as well.” But when his advertising and PR firm was sold to new owners, Steven knew he was at a crossroads: He could either continue in his current field or look for opportunities to fulfill his dream again.

“It was incredibly good timing,” Duffey says. “The new owners were planning to cut redundant positions from the merger, and JMDS was expanding in leaps and bounds and actively recruiting. It was almost destiny calling.”

Steven was originally hired as a project manager by JMDS due to his management, organizational, creative and sales skills. Before he actually

stepped out on the field, JMDS sent him through a battery of specialized classes, practical exercises and testing prior to certifying him on weapons, explosives and foreign cultures.

“JMDS has a full staff of retired military personnel who train and certify JMDS personnel up to expert status,” Duffey says. “I took advantage of the training and signed up for everything JMDS had to offer. It was hard work but worth every moment.”

He quickly rose through the ranks. Now as vice president of business development, he could easily remain in the safety of a conference room, working directly with many of America’s most powerful generals. But he goes to work in the field, he says, to guarantee everything promised by the company is “delivered in spades.”

“There are real lives at stake, American, coalition, Iraqi. I have to give it my all because there is nothing more important than saving human lives,” Duffey says. “This is real, it’s dangerous and you don’t get any do-overs.”

Duffey wraps the tail of his keffiyeh around his lower face to block the blowing sand, calls his troop of role-players to action and turns back to blow another IED.

[Home](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Member Services](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)
[ReZoom Radio](#) | [ReZooming America](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Login](#)