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INSURGENT LEARNING

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Abstract

A vast literature in international relations studies the onset and evolution of armed conflict. Over the past decade the United States has invested substantial economic resources in protecting its troops against improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Yet we know little about the impact of these investments on combat tactics and soldier safety. Using newly declassified military records on individual IED explosions in Afghanistan from 2006-2014, we show that detonation and casualty rates did not decline during this period. Consistent with historical evidence from other substate conflicts, evidence from the Afghan conflict suggests that insurgents adapted quickly to neutralize military investments.