



Implementing a New Vision: Unity of Effort in Preparing for and Responding to Catastrophic Events

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In an understandable concern over the division of requirements and responsibilities surrounding domestic security, the public and private partnership that must characterize our preparedness, response and recovery capabilities is frequently disjointed. Within the federal interagency effort, and proceeding through essential intergovernmental coordination activities before and after an incident, this discontinuity increases with the severity of the event. From civil-military interaction across federal, state and local efforts, to the coordination of private sector and community response, more must be done to achieve efficacies and efficiencies through unity of effort across the homeland security enterprise. This paper will highlight initiatives and point to new directions that must be taken to prepare our citizenry and respond to their needs in time of severe crises.

From 17-18 November 2010, the Consortium for Homeland Defense and Security in America – consisting of the United States Army War College’s Center for Strategic Leadership, George Washington University’s Homeland Security Policy Institute, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, and the Heritage Foundation – held its annual symposium to examine pressing issues of shared concern regarding the domestic security of the United States and its allies. Conducted at Carlisle Barracks, the event was constructed around four panels, each devoted to a topic of interest specifically selected by the consortium partners. The first of these panels addressed the challenges of achieving Unity of Effort in preparing for and responding to catastrophic events.

The scene for the panel’s discussion on the 18th was actually set the evening before by the keynote speaker, the Honorable Paul N. Stockton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas’ Security Affairs. In the course of his remarks, the Secretary noted that his tenure in office began on rocky ground with the nation’s governors. One of the Secretary’s first objectives was to expedite the means of applying the Armed Forces’ Reserve components in response and recovery operations following a major disaster. Currently, laws will allow for the immediate activation and commitment of those capabilities in response to terrorist attack, but not so in response to natural disasters. Accordingly, the Secretary’s office began looking into venues for removing the obstacles to the same – and learned that the biggest obstacle was the states’ governors.

Importantly, to quote Dr. Stockton, “They were right.” The Secretary had run headlong into a Constitutional dilemma casting the rights and responsibilities of state officials against those of the federal government. In this instance, the governors, as the Commanders-in-Chief of their constituencies’ National Guard, wanted to ensure that they retained control of response and recovery operations, to include military operations, following a catastrophic natural event. Retention of this control for the state’s National Guard – or even other states’ Guard forces sent as Emergency Management Assistance Compact¹ response – belonged steadfastly with each governor, or Adjutants General as executive agent. But control of federal military forces, whether active component or Service reserve, has been part of an

1. Emergency Management Assistance Compact is a national interstate mutual aid agreement that enables states to share resources during times of disaster. This agreement has been adopted by all 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

open debate that found its origins in the Constitution. From the perspective of the governors, the legitimacy of their stance is found in the last amendment of the Bill of Rights, by which all powers not granted specifically to the federal government nor prohibited to the states by the Constitution were “reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” However, from the federal government’s perspective, especially that of the Executive Branch, retention of control of the federal component of the military, and the responsibility for its application in support of the citizenry, rests with the *other* Commander-in-Chief.

The question of utilization of the reserve components housed within a state, therefore, was only one manifestation of the larger federalist issue. Philosophically, it would seem that both sides of the beltway support the governors’ position. The active component military (as delineated and administered under Title 10 of the United States Code) makes no secret of the fact that its mantra will remain “last ones in; first ones out.” This does not imply an attempted abrogation of responsibility; the active component is ready, willing and significantly able to supplement the capabilities and capacity of states under duress in times of disaster. Rather, it reflects a deliberate intent to remain focused on the Department of Defense’s (DoD) “day job” of “fighting and winning the nation’s wars.” The governors’ philosophy, on the other hand, is to remain not only nominally, but visibly in charge of response and recovery operations, because their constituencies are their charge. Moreover, when the federal component of disaster response “goes home,” the preponderance of responsibility for long-term recovery remains at the State House. Accordingly, retaining the “trust and confidence” of their citizens must remain in the forefront of the thinking of both state and local authorities, as opposed to fostering an ill-advised dependence on Washington.

Ironically, the deliberate reticence exhibited by the DoD has led it to common ground with state and local officials with regard to the question of “command and control.” Counter-intuitively to many, the Department is firmly committed to remain cast in the role of “support” when it comes to Defense Support of Civil Authorities. Dr. Stockton’s message in this regard was continued in the next day’s panel presentation by one of his deputies, Brigadier General Michael McDaniels. General McDaniels, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Strategy, Prevention and Mission Assurance, began his remarks by emphasizing the importance of the military developing working relationships and partnerships with civil authorities, both within the states and the federal interagency. He confided that these partnerships were off to a rocky-start with the states at the beginning of the Administration; that is, until the President established the Council of Governors² to confer with and advise the Secretary of Defense on matters of homeland security, homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities.

The first major accomplishment of the new partnership between the DoD and the Council may be what is being referred to as the “Joint Action Plan for Developing Unity of Effort.” Originally developed in a workshop at the National Guard Association of the United States headquarters in Washington, DC, the Joint Action Plan is a conceptual cooperative agreement between the Council of Governors, their respective Adjutants General, and the DoD. As described by Secretary McDaniels, the plan focuses on undertakings in five key areas.

The first area mentioned by the Secretary, and foremost in his thinking, was planning. The states, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the DoD will commit to improving integrated planning at every level of government (local, state, territorial, tribal, regional and federal) and establish links and forums to socialize plans and promote integrated planning throughout the “whole of community.” It is important to note here that the U.S. Northern Command has made six of their support plans available to civil authorities in support of these endeavors. In return, U.S. Northern Command has requested that the states also make their emergency management plans available in order to provide the Combatant Command greater vision in planning support. In strengthening both ends of the integrated planning process, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will work to develop a follow-on initiative to the former Task Force for Emergency Readiness pilot program, developed by the DoD and DHS in the last Administration. The proposal resulted in planning programs between state emergency management agencies and their National Guard in the states of Washington, Hawaii, South Carolina, West Virginia, and Massachusetts.

2. The Council of Governors was appointed in January of 2010, a deliberately bipartisan assembly of five Republican and five Democrat governors charged in the Executive Order with “reviewing such matters as involving the National Guard of the various States; homeland defense; civil support; synchronization and integration of State and Federal military activities in the United States; and other matters of mutual interest pertaining to National Guard, homeland defense, and civil support activities.”

Another area of concern addressed in the Joint Action Plan was the question of areas or bases to support the military's logistic and manpower flow in responding to disaster. Commonly known in the military as Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration, this warfighting concept has immediate application in large scale Defense Support to Civil Authorities operations. The consensus at the Joint Action Plan development session was that the states and the federal government will work with nongovernmental organizations and the private sector to identify and seek consensus on preliminary areas/bases that may be used in each State for reception, staging, and follow-on movement to employment. The inclusion of the private sector in these plans is considered vital, in as much as the private sector's daily activities may make it far more practiced and better positioned to promote these operations than well-intentioned, albeit unfamiliar public resources. This reality was reinforced by the next panelist, Mr. Michael Byrne, of FEMA's National Incident Management Assistance Team-East.

Close akin to considerations surrounding reception, staging, and follow-on movement were calls for Shared Situational Awareness highlighted in the Joint Action Plan. In progression, planners called for the establishment of a "common operating picture" and "common reporting system" between State and Federal military forces to provide an overview of an incident, threat information, logistics, and "open source" information pertinent to planning for or responding to catastrophic events. Subsequent to those links being established, planners called for expanding the "common systems" to other federal, state and local responders.

One of the lessons that came out of Hurricane Katrina, reflected in preparations and discussions surrounding the Joint Action Plan, was the importance of Pre-scripted Mission Assignments. Early in response and recovery efforts, it became clear to the Pentagon that the traditional steps toward developing, receiving and responding to Requests for Assistance were too ponderous. In short order, authorizations from the Pentagon were being delivered by Verbal Orders of the Commander. Personnel on watch at the Pentagon were literally producing their own "requests" in anticipation of requirements, and the Department was doing everything they could to expedite its support. The same desire to "get ahead of the requirement" has been developed and institutionalized between FEMA and stakeholders within the federal interagency community. Currently, FEMA has developed 237 Pre-scripted Mission Assignments, 27 of which will address DoD support. Building upon this effort, the DoD, through the National Guard Bureau, will ask that each of the states/territories' National Guard Joint Force Headquarters identify the Pre-scripted Mission Assignments that are applicable to their states, and determine the extent to which their National Guard is capable of providing the support envisioned.

The last element of the conceptual agreement contained in the Joint Action Plan was the Dual Status Command concept. No other element of the plan addressed more directly the concerns held by the governors regarding control over military forces employed in their states. The need for the introduction of combined elements of the active component and the National Guard, for both planned and "no-notice" events, has been documented, and in fact, accomplished. Since the G8 Economic summit held on Sea Island, Georgia, in June of 2004, "Dual Hat" arrangements bringing together Title 10 and Title 32 forces under a single command have taken place seven times in executing National Special Security Events³ across the United States.⁴ Statutorily authorized,⁵ the designation of Dual Status Commander has come about on the strength of an agreement between the President⁶ and the governor of the state where forces will be deployed. Since July 2010, U.S. Northern Command, working closely with the National Guard Bureau and the Adjutants General of California, Florida, Georgia, Ohio, Texas and Washington has sought to institutionalize the lessons and strength of the concept demonstrated thus far, by establishing prototype programs in those states. The initiative has resulted in the initiation of special Joint Task Force Commander training, developed and conducted by U.S. Northern Command in cooperation with the National Guard Bureau. Attendees at this training include appointees from the states' National Guard, selected by their governors to provide a pool of leadership to draw upon when a dual task force is required; and active component officers assigned to U.S. Northern Command, training to be

3. See Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7, *Critical Infrastructure Identification, Prioritization and Protection*

4. Operation Winter Freeze in 2005; the Republican and Democratic National Conventions of 2004 and 2008; the G20 Summit in 2009; and the National Scout Jamboree in 2010.

5. 32 United States Code §325(a)(2)

6. This designation authority may be delegated to the Secretary of Defense if desired by the President

Title-10 deputies to those commanders. Beyond the initial training, measures to exercise the concept have been put in place, along with a proposed process for rapid appointment of a Dual Status Command in meeting crises.

This portrayal rose above previous concerns that, while proven in events with significant lead-in time, trusting the concept for responding to no-notice events was questionable. The ability to plan, exercise and, thereby, cement essential relationships within and beyond military components would fulfill the requirements for interaction between state entities and federal counterparts. A remaining concern, however, and one that Secretary McDaniel confessed must still be addressed, has to do with the potential of a major disaster or catastrophic incident⁷ that spreads across several states' territories. The Secretary acknowledged that in those conditions questions over authorities and responsibilities remain, but will be addressed as progress in these issues of collaboration and coordination continue.

"Collaboration and coordination" were precisely the terms used by Michael Byrne in his presentation. He was quoting Lieutenant General Ken Keen, Deputy Commander of the U.S. Southern Command, with respect to the country's response following the earthquake in Haiti, illustrating for the audience that any *preconceived* notions of "command and control" in the complex interactions associated with civil and military response were also *ill-conceived*. This was only a part of Mr. Byrne's focus on what FEMA is referring to as "whole of community" framework for catastrophic preparedness, planning and response. Among the underlying principles of this framework is the need to engage "all of our societal capacity:" government and nongovernmental organizations; faith based organizations; the private sector; social and fraternal organizations; and, above all, communities and individuals. Mr. Byrne reminded the assembly that community response mechanisms were "force multipliers," and the most critical response and recovery assets during the critical initial hours following an event. He reflected that FEMA's new dedication to including these "whole of community" representatives into both planning processes and preparatory activities for events we hope will never come.

In framing discussions on potentially catastrophic events, FEMA has adapted a "meta-scenario" mindset, designed to anticipate requirements through modeling "the maximum of maximum challenges across a range of scenarios." Horrific figures are used to characterize these scenarios: 190,000 deaths in the initial hours; 265,000 citizens requiring emergency medical attention; severe damage to critical infrastructure and essential transportation assets; and so on. What is more, the scenarios are spread out over 25,000 square miles, across several states and the FEMA regions – an interesting factor given the current limitations of the Dual Status Command concept.

In approaching the meta-scenarios, FEMA envisions two sets of essential functions – "Centers of Gravity" – that will be necessary for saving and sustaining lives, and stabilizing conditions within 72 hours of a catastrophic incident. The first sets of functions, classified under the heading of "Enables Response," are those things which will be required for the community of responders to do their job. Included in these functions are: Situational Assessment; Public Messaging; Command, Control and Coordination; Critical Communications; Environmental Health and Safety; and Critical Transportation. The second set of functions fall under the heading of "Survivors Needs," and include: On-Scene Security and Protection, Mass Search and Rescue Operations, Health and Medical Treatment, Mass Care Services, Public and Private Services and Resources, Stabilizing and Repairing Essential Infrastructure, and Fatality Management Services.

Mr. Byrne emphasized that to begin to meet the horrendous demands of the meta-scenarios, the government and the rest of the stakeholders in the "whole of the community" would have to anticipate, identify, and close the gaps between requirements and capabilities. To illustrate, he offered the set of concentric circles shown in Figure 1.

Traditional partnerships, even in crises, remain predictable for our purposes. Established federal, state and local partnerships and volunteer organizations that assist in disasters are among these. Non-traditional partnerships are

7. A catastrophic incident, as defined by the National Response Framework, is any natural or manmade incident, including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage, or disruption severely affecting the population, infrastructure, environment, economy, national morale, and/or government functions. A catastrophic incident could result in sustained nationwide impacts over a prolonged period of time; almost immediately exceeds resources normally available to State, tribal, local, and private-sector authorities in the impacted area; and significantly interrupts governmental operations and emergency services to such an extent that national security could be threatened.

not always as predictable, and will require nurturing – to include opening access between them and central government agencies framing the response. These will include the private sector, trade associations, and faith-based organizations. Mr. Byrne pointedly emphasized that they will also include assistance from other nations, coordination for which was cited repeatedly as lacking in after action reports on Hurricane Katrina. Legal considerations in his presentation focused chiefly on indemnifications and waivers, highlighting the necessity of addressing obstacles to urgent requirements before the event.

On the subject of the medical requirements, Mr. Byrne suggested much of the challenge may be encountered in simply managing expectations. For meta-scenarios, the first 72 hours must be devoted to a “crisis standard of care,” that will force the government and the people it serves “to examine and accept the difference between safe, and comfortable.” Comfort may be an attainable goal after the first 72 hours; initially, however, the focus should be on saving lives and preventing further suffering. Preparing for these realities will be a part of a long-term goal that will transition our people “from a dependent society to an empowered society that is a part of the solution.”

Dr. Christopher Bellavita, the Director of Academic Programs at the Naval Postgraduate School’s Center for Homeland Defense and Security, suggested that Secretary Stockton, General McDaniels, and Mr. Byrne were all building on a flawed paradigm. He offered three hypotheses:

1. If we have a “meta-disaster” the structure and process required for Unity of Effort in response will no longer be present.
2. Rather than focusing immediately on how to achieve Unity of Effort in responding to these events, it might be equally productive to ask what is required to reduce the time it takes for order to emerge out of the chaos that would accompany these meta-disasters.
3. “You play the way you practice”; and it doesn’t take a meta-disaster to instruct as to how we will/should respond to a meta-disaster.

Expanding on his hypotheses, Dr. Bellavita suggested that the structures put in place for disaster mitigation, response and recovery may be gone following a catastrophic event. The people who are expected to respond to disasters may be gone; help from neighboring communities may not be available as they, too, are victims. Most, if not all of the community will be altered, if not destroyed, and the survivors’ future direction will have been “fundamentally altered.” “And,” Dr. Bellavita suggested, “if the structures and processes of Unity of Effort are still present...maybe you’re not really talking about a catastrophe.”

Accordingly, he opined that in addition to grand designs for preparation (which are still essential), we also need to get better at learning how order emerges from catastrophe. Dr. Bellavita postulated that our best means of caring for our people in the face of challenges envisioned in Mr. Byrne’s meta-scenarios will be in seeking ways to *manage* complexity/catastrophe, as opposed to attempting to control it. In the end, he advocated retaining the kind of procedural approaches suggested by the first two panelists, but add to them the notion of emerging from chaos. We should, he suggested, “attend as much to sense-making as decision-making.”

Finally, Dr. Bellavita reminded the audience that in “practicing the way we intend to play,” we must recall (as Mr. Byrne had suggested) that regular citizens – outside of the formal response and recovery institutions and processes – will likely be among the most essential of our players. Quoting Admiral Thad Allen, Bellavita declared, “People are

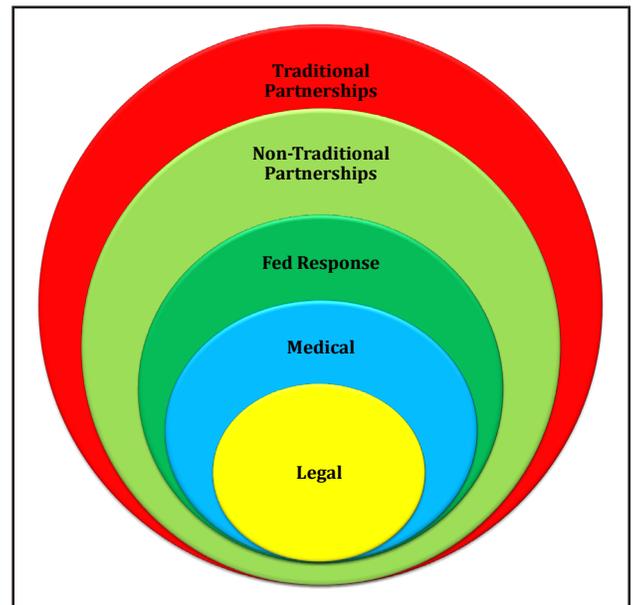


Figure 1: Identifying and Closing the Deltas

always going to be a part of response; the bigger the incident, the more the people.” Hence, in the preparations leading up to and through our exercises, organizers should “make room for the people.” Anticipate their desire to help; plan for their capabilities; harness and channel their energies. This call for inclusion as a part of the solutions that will be required in preparing for and responding to catastrophic events was one that had already been raised, and would be a recurring theme throughout the symposium.

The panel’s presentations set the tone for what continued to be an excellent forum. A more detailed synopsis of all of the panelists’ presentations is being prepared and will be available in the near future. In the interim, recordings of the presentations are available from the U.S. Army War College via their You Tube connection at: <http://www.youtube.com/user/USArmyWarCollege#p/u/7/-g6ROtOWijk>.

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