

CHAPTER 7

Improving The Effectiveness Of First Responders In Homeland Security

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Introduction

The horrendous events of September 11, 2001, firmly focused the nation's attention on homeland security. Since then, many actions occurred and continue to be taken at the federal, state, and local levels to deter another terrorist incident and to effectively deal with the aftermath of an attack. At the forefront of many of these efforts have been first responders, those police, firemen, medical, and other personnel who are first on the scene. While their courage and dedication are impressive, recent reports indicate that many are not properly trained or equipped to effectively handle a terrorist attack, especially one involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

The U.S. must greatly accelerate its efforts to train and equip its first responders; to do otherwise would be to risk certain disaster, especially with the proliferation of WMD and the increasing likelihood that terrorists will use these on U.S. soil. We will first review the role and crucial importance of first responders by examining the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and discuss specific problems with the state of first responders based upon the recent release of two major reports. Then, we will analyze the challenge of dealing with so many local governments and how the concept of federalism makes improving first responders a daunting task. We will conclude by recommending two solutions: significantly increasing funding for equipment and training and directing U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM) to assist in establishing Homeland Security Training Centers for each state.

First Responders and Homeland Security

The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* was released in July 2002 and unequivocally states, “The U.S. Government has no more important mission than protecting the homeland from future terrorist attacks.”¹ It explains further that homeland security is an “exceedingly complex mission that requires coordinated and focused effort from our entire society—the federal government, state and local governments, the private sector, and the American people.”² This strategy states: “America’s first line of defense in the aftermath of any terrorist attack is its first responder community—police officers, firefighters, emergency medical providers, public works personnel, and emergency management officials.”³ These first responders number over eleven million spread over 87,500 counties, cities, towns, villages, boroughs, parishes, and other governments.⁴

The homeland security strategy places great responsibility and importance on state and local governments. It says that states and localities “have primary responsibility for funding, preparing, and operating the emergency services that would respond in the event of a terrorist attack.”⁵ This strategy also emphasizes the importance of planning, equipping, training, and exercising first responders in order to minimize damage from an attack. But it frankly admits that there are multiple plans that dictate the federal government’s support of first responders, there are too many seams in current plans and capabilities, and many geographic areas have little or no capability to respond to a terrorist attack, especially one involving WMD.⁶

But the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* offers a solution to this frightening state of affairs: the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is taking the lead in improving the effectiveness of first responders. *[Editor’s note: Due to the evolving nature of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), some of the procedures and organizational structures discussed in this essay may have been overcome by events; however, the overall thesis of this article is still relevant. As of the publication date of this document, FEMA is no longer a separate agency and has been incorporated in the DHS Preparedness and Response Directorate. It will retain its “brand” name FEMA since it is widely recognized.]* Specifically, FEMA’s

Office of National Preparedness, which was established four months before 9/11, is the nation's central coordination point for all federal programs dealing with terrorism preparedness.⁷ Its three main focuses include first responders, providing a central point for all federal preparedness programs, and Citizen Corps.⁸ Preparation for terrorist attacks is divided into the following areas: planning, equipment, training, and exercises. Since the FEMA Office of National Preparedness was established, their efforts have had minimal impact in improving first responders' effectiveness. Two recent reports, discussed below, clearly show this and underscore the need to accelerate training efforts.

First Responder Preparedness: Enormous Problems Remain

While the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* and Congressional testimony by the director of the Office of National Preparedness, Mr. Bruce Baughman, admit there are problems in quickly getting first responders proficient in handling terrorist attacks, especially catastrophic terrorism, two reports issued by private groups are much more critical and foreboding. A task force sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and chaired by former senators Gary Hart and Warren Rudman said that despite the terrorist threat being as grave now as it was just before September 11, 2001, the country is, "dangerously unprepared to prevent and respond to a catastrophic terrorist attack on U.S. soil."⁹ In an eerie warning reminiscent of its earlier report released prior to 9/11 predicting a major terrorist incident, the report says, "In all likelihood, the next attack will result in even greater casualties and widespread disruption to our lives and economy."¹⁰

The Council's report highlights specific problems including the lack of intelligence sharing of terrorism watch lists among the 650,000 local and state police officials, inability of first responders to communicate because their radios cannot talk to each other, and lack of training and equipment to deal with chemical and biological attacks.¹¹ Its key recommendation is for the federal government to immediately increase funding for equipment and training, especially training involving WMD.¹²

Throughout this task force report one senses the urgency of fast-tracking these recommendations, given the ongoing Global War on Terrorism.

The Council on Foreign Relations report is one of several indicators of the urgent need to train first responders immediately. On October 21, 2002, the University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security released a report stating, “Our nation’s public health infrastructure remains woefully ill-prepared to properly manage a similar [9/11] crisis.”¹³ This report criticized the “obsession” with the organizational structure of the Department of Homeland Security, which is causing the neglect of first responders. It points out that, “Once a terror attack occurs, it is the first responders who will be prominent again.”¹⁴ In his Congressional testimony, Chief Ray Alfred of the International Association of Fire Chiefs said that his peers are concerned about the lack of coordinated federal effort, “both in terms of the preparedness of support programs...and the seemingly endless federal response capabilities that appear duplicative and continue to grow.”¹⁵

Additional chilling statistics were released by the White House, further painting a bleak picture of the capability of first responders. It said, “fewer than 10 percent of counties surveyed by the National Association of Counties said they are prepared to respond to a bioterrorist attack.”¹⁶ It also said that many areas have little or no capability to respond to any WMD attacks and that many local communities rely on volunteer firefighters with very scarce resources for equipment, training, and other requirements.¹⁷ And it appears that nationwide, the momentum and sense of urgency to improve first responder effectiveness is lapsing as a sense of complacency has reasserted itself.¹⁸

Attorney General John Ashcroft summarized the various readiness problems of first responders and the challenges in correcting these when he told Congress, “Long before the attacks of September 11th, you recognized the importance of inter-agency coordination and planning, information sharing with state and local law enforcement, and training and equipping first responders.”¹⁹ Highlighting the enormity of this problem, he said that countering terrorism in the homeland requires unprecedented cooperation and coordination, and that “no single individual, agency, department or government can succeed alone.”²⁰

All these reports, Congressional testimony, and other sources clearly show that the main needs of first responders in the Global War on

Terrorism include adequate equipment to deal with catastrophic terrorism, effective training that is timely and standardized nationally, compatible radios, better command and control of on-scene terrorist events, greater interagency cooperation especially in intelligence sharing, and adequate funding to quickly correct all these shortfalls. New York City's valiant response to the most destructive attack on the U.S. highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of first responders.

In the minutes after the first World Trade Center tower was attacked, the police and fire departments set up separate command posts several blocks apart, without any communications between them.²¹ After the first World Trade Center tower collapsed, police directed their personnel to evacuate the remaining tower on the recommendation of one of their helicopter crews, but this information never got to the firemen in that tower because of this lack of interagency cooperation and interoperable communication. Most of the police in the second tower escaped, but 120 of the 343 firemen who died that day did not.²² This lack of coordination between the New York Police and Fire Departments existed for years, and had tragic consequences on 9/11. In after action reports, this disconnect between two key first responder organizations was labeled "tribalism, us-versus-them, and the Battle of the Badges."²³ If the needless death of so many heroic emergency workers on 9/11 was not tragic enough, brawls erupted at the World Trade Center disaster site weeks later between police and firemen, highlighting the cultural differences between them, and further overshadowing their heroism. The truly sobering aspect of this catastrophe is that New York City had one of the best first responder programs in the nation and the world prior to 9/11, with an advanced emergency operations center, a robust training program, and good equipment.

The Challenges of Improving First Responder Preparedness

The shortcomings in New York City's response to the World Trade Center attacks points out the challenges facing the Office of National Preparedness in its efforts to get first responders nationwide up to par. There first has to be a cultural change in terms of interagency cooperation and coordination. Fortunately, there appears to be a national consensus for this and headway is already being made. For example, Paul Karis, the

chair of emergency medicine at Saint Vincent Catholic Medical Centers in New York City, says that since 9/11, disaster plans have been updated and practiced much more often, and there is finally an understanding that hospitals have to network with the entire city infrastructure.²⁴ However, while there appears to be a national consensus for seamless interagency and intergovernmental cooperation, old habits die hard, and only through extensive education and training will old habits be broken.

The magnitude of this task is enormous, especially when one considers the scope of educating and training eleven million first responders in over 87,500 state and local governments. There are over 3,000 counties alone in the U.S., and many of these counties conduct centralized training for police and firemen from numerous cities and municipalities.²⁵ As the *National Strategy for Homeland Security* states, “The challenge is to develop interconnected and complementary systems that are reinforcing rather than duplicative and that ensure essential requirements are met.”²⁶ Based upon the immediate threat of catastrophic terrorism involving WMD and the technical training required to meet these diverse threats, attempting to get these local governments adequately trained and standardized is even more daunting.

The concept of federalism in which the federal government shares some power with the states has helped create these numerous local governments. Many Americans often criticize democracy for moving too slow. But our government was designed this way on purpose. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis said in 1926: “The doctrine of the separation of powers was adopted by the Convention of 1787, not to promote efficiency but to preclude the exercise of arbitrary power.”²⁷ In the Global War on Terrorism, however, the country must find a way to efficiently train first responders in over 87,500 local governments while at the same time respecting the concept of federalism. The key question is how to accomplish these with the threat of catastrophic terrorism in the homeland growing by the day.

Proposed Solutions

This chapter proposes two solutions. First, the federal government needs to increase funding for first responders’ training and equipment.

Washington only awarded \$170 million to 2,756 fire departments under the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program in FY 2002, and an additional \$190 million will be awarded by the end of calendar year 2002.²⁸ The administration has requested \$3.5 billion for grants for first responders for FY 2003, but \$2.6 billion requested for training and equipment for 18,000 local fire departments remained unfilled.²⁹ Also, funding for other critical areas of homeland security is seriously lacking, including port security, which has only received \$92 million in funding in FY 2002 although needs exceed \$2 billion.³⁰ With the nation spending over \$100 billion a year for homeland security, and the needs of first responders so great, the proposed \$3.5 billion for FY 2003, and \$4.0 billion for FY 2004 is too small.³¹

However, much more than money is needed to prepare first responders to effectively deal with catastrophic threats. There has to be a crash program to educate, train, and exercise first responders. The *National Strategy for Homeland Security* lists this need as a major initiative. It says, "The Department of Homeland Security will under the President's proposal launch a consolidated and expanded training and evaluation system to meet the increasing demand."³² The director of FEMA's Office of National Preparedness has identified this in more detail by stating how the Office of National Preparedness will establish an annual, nation-wide exercise program, with specific objectives and a corrective action program.³³ He also states how the Office of National Preparedness will establish national standards for compatible, interoperable equipment, a national mutual aid system, up-to-date personal protective equipment, and efforts at planning and coordinating all these initiatives.³⁴

But while the need to educate, train, and equip first responders was identified in the first homeland security strategy, no one has proposed how this can be accomplished quickly and effectively. There is currently only one federally chartered center that trains first responders to cope with WMD events.³⁵ Called the Center for Domestic Preparedness and located in Anniston, Alabama, it was created in 1998 and trains only 15,000 first responders annually.³⁶ Again, time is of the utmost essence given terrorists' autonomy to strike at their time and place of choosing. Indicators and warnings continue to point towards further terrorist attacks. CIA Director George Tenet has repeatedly warned Congress, as he did in

October 2002, that the terrorist threat is as grave now as it was just before the September 11, 2001, attacks.³⁷

So this leads us to the second proposed fix to the plight of first responders: the federal government needs to utilize the leadership, organizational, and operational expertise of the U.S. military to assist FEMA’s Office of National Preparedness in establishing Red Flag, Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC), and National Training Center (NTC)-style training centers in all fifty states. These could be called “Homeland Security Training Centers.” Using the technical expertise of the Center for Domestic Preparedness and the command and control, teamwork, and leadership training provided by Red Flag and its sister service equivalents, the Homeland Security Training Centers could be an enormous asset in homeland security. We will first look at why the U.S. military should be involved in this effort and the possible role of the newest unified command, NORTHCOM.

Why the U.S. military?

President Bush has used the term “Global War on Terrorism” to characterize the post 9/11 security environment. Clearly, it is a two-front war, with one front the homeland and the other overseas, whether it is Afghanistan, one of the axis of evil countries, or the fifty plus nations where Al Qaeda and other terrorists are active. In the latest *National Security Strategy*, the president says that to defeat terrorists, “we must make use of every tool in our arsenal—military power, better homeland defenses, law enforcement, intelligence, and vigorous efforts to cut off terrorist financing.”³⁸

The U.S. military has extensive experience dealing with many of the same problems first responders find themselves grappling with today. The chart below highlights this and shows how the U.S. military is at least a generation ahead of first responders dealing with these issues:

Table 7.1 U.S. Military – Civilian First Responder Comparison

<i>(As of Nov 2002)</i>	U.S. Military	Civilian First Responders
Organization-changing events	Vietnam; Desert One	Oklahoma City Bombing 9/11; anthrax attacks
Organizational Constructs	Goldwater-Nichols Act Unified Command Plan	Homeland Security Strategy; Department of Homeland Security

Coordination concepts	Jointness; multinational & interagency/total force ops	Interagency, inter-governmental operations; federalism
Cultural mindset for cooperation	Teamwork—jointness	“Tribalism” ³⁹ Interagency competition
Interoperable communications	Good	Poor ⁴⁰
Command and Control	9 Unified Commands; Combatant commands	87,500 governments; Federalism; emergency scene unified C2--poor ⁴¹
Personnel	1.4 million active duty; 1.3 million Guard and Reserve	11 million police, fire, medical, and emergency preparedness workers ⁴²
Education and Training	Extensive; advanced degrees, technical training; frequent professional military education	Varies greatly across the country. Infrequent; lack of standardization. WMD training poor.
Planning	Crisis Action Planning; Deliberate Planning	Uncoordinated Federal Response plans; Prior to 9/11, only 4 states had plans ⁴³
“Warfighting” Training & Exercises	Red Flag, National Training Center, Joint Readiness Training Center; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff exercise program	County level technical training by career—police, fire, etc. Interagency training? Center for Domestic Preparedness; few other specialized schools. Few large scale exercises ⁴⁴
Result	Desert Storm, Allied Force, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom successes	Next attack?

Source: Table developed by author

As this chart portrays, the world’s most professional, experienced, successful, and powerful military has grappled with many of the problems first responders are grappling with today. With the urgency of improving first responders’ preparedness, why should they reinvent a wheel the U.S. military has made for the last twenty-five years? As any veteran who has served on a civilian school board can attest, the leadership, teamwork,

organization abilities, and follow-through abilities of military personnel are often far superior to those of many civilians. As Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld said:

When an event occurs in the United States, however, while everyone knows that the Pentagon is not in the business of providing an armed force for the United States, but when an event occurs, we get the phone call. And why do we get the phone call? Well, because the Department of Defense is considered the Department of Defense. They know that they've got troops, they've got people who respond, they're organized, and they can be of assistance."⁴⁵

This is not in any way to denigrate civilians in general, but to underscore the impact of extensive education and training. The military has proven time and again in the last twenty years that it can quickly meet many challenges, especially those to national security. With the snail-like pace of training of first responders since 9/11, it is time for FEMA's Office of National Preparedness to get assistance from the U.S. military. Mayor Martin O'Malley of Baltimore summarized this situation when he said:

For the first time in nearly 200 years, the front is right here at home. And to date, it's where we've seen the greatest loss of life. Yet we have insufficient equipment, too little training, and a lack of intelligence sharing with federal authorities.⁴⁶

In fact, the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force recommends that the National Guard get actively involved in training civilian first responders, triple their number of WMD-Civil support teams, and get additional funding for more capabilities to assist local authorities in the event of a catastrophic terrorist event.⁴⁷ However, these recommendations are unrealistic in light of the incredible high optempo of active duty, guard, and reserve forces in their current commitments overseas and because of the magnitude of the needs among civilian first responders. The U.S. abandoned the two theater war strategy prior to 9/11 because of shortfalls in personnel and equipment, yet we find ourselves fighting a dual war now! The report also does not mention the possible role of

NORTHCOM, but the Homeland Security Strategy and the National Security Strategy do.

NORTHCOM and its Role in training First Responders

The mission of NORTHCOM, which stood up on October 1, 2002, is to plan, organize, and execute homeland defense and civil support missions.⁴⁸ Its area of operations includes air, land and sea approaches and includes the continental U.S., Alaska, Canada, Mexico, and the surrounding oceans out to 500 miles and parts of the Caribbean.⁴⁹ This is the first time a unified command is assigned the entire U.S, and it relieves Joint Forces Command of its responsibilities for homeland defense.⁵⁰ NORTHCOM's web site says, "If and when local and federal agencies need additional support—in the form of equipment, expertise, plans, organization, communication, and training—the men and women in uniform are prepared and ready to lend a helping hand."⁵¹ Additional information on its web site indicates NORTHCOM is currently planning, "interconnected and complementary relationships and plans to support first responders."⁵² But it does not go into any detail about these plans.

NORTHCOM and the DOD have been very careful in explaining the command's role, primarily because of the sensitivity of civil-military relations, especially when it comes to employing troops on U.S. soil, and because of the *Posse Comitatus* Act. This act prohibits U.S. military personnel from interdicting vehicles and aircraft; conducting surveillance, searches, pursuit and seizures; or making arrests for civilian law enforcement authorities.⁵³ And NORTHCOM is very clear about the chain of command—it does not liaison directly with the Department of Homeland Security; DOD conducts interagency liaison on behalf of the command.

These sensitivities and the potential assistance that NORTHCOM can provide in helping train first responders were illustrated at a DOD press conference announcing the new Unified Command Plan on April 17, 2002. Secretary Rumsfeld said NORTHCOM will, "provide for a more coordinated military support to civil authorities such as the FBI, FEMA, and state and local governments."⁵⁴ When asked what NORTHCOM would be in charge of, he firmly replied, "No, it's not in charge of anything. It is a supporting activity, as any activity that the Pentagon does today is a supporting activity."⁵⁵

But indicative of the many possibilities that NORTHCOM can provide to civilian first responders, General Myers said that NORTHCOM is much more than an organizational reshuffling, and that all the support the Department of Defense provides to civil authorities will now be under one command.⁵⁶ As an example he used Joint Task Force-Civil Support that is responsible to civil authorities for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and major conventional explosives events. General Myers said that many of these WMD units are in the Guard and Reserve, the implementation plan for NORTHCOM is not completed, and that training will have to be looked at.⁵⁷

As of this writing, NORTHCOM does not have an active role with the Office of National Preparedness except for working with them on securing FEMA participation in NORTHCOM exercises.⁵⁸ It is the recommendation of this chapter that NORTHCOM immediately begin discussions with the Office of National Preparedness via the Department of Defense on the feasibility of the FEMA creating Homeland Security Training Centers in each state. Active duty, Guard, and Reserve personnel can provide assistance in creating curriculum training material, especially regarding leadership, command and control, interoperability, communications, and jointness, but above all in organizing these facilities to train the maximum numbers in the minimum time. However, civilian contractors and veterans should operate these centers, not the U.S. military because they simply do not have the personnel to do so.

Why Red Flag, Joint Readiness Training Center, National Training Center-style training?

One does not need to be a first responder to realize that specialized training is required to deal with catastrophic terrorism. The Center for Domestic Preparedness with its emphasis on WMD training clearly shows this, but it has its limitations. First, Center for Domestic Preparedness training does not involve a major accident response scenario, which is typical of catastrophic terrorism.⁵⁹ Second, only 15,000 students are scheduled to be trained in FY 2003.⁶⁰ And third, a greater emphasis on command and control needs to be added in order to effectively manage a large disaster. This new era of WMD, with the potential of thousands, even tens of thousands of casualties—or worse—requires thorough and frequent training taught by experts. Dr. Joseph Waeckerle, chairman of

the American College of Emergency Physicians' Task Force on Domestic Preparedness Against Weapons of Mass Destruction, emphasizes four points for first responders: educate, train, test, and sustain.⁶¹ In addition to technical training, there is a need for first responders to learn command and control, communications, interagency coordination, crisis decision-making, teamwork, planning, and other skills that can best be taught not just by sitting passively in a classroom, but by practicing. Most state and local governments simply don't have the expertise or capability to teach these vital skills, much less to teach them to tens of thousands in a realistic environment.⁶²

While some are advocating for greater involvement of the Guard and Reserve forces, their resources are limited, especially with record numbers of mobilizations fighting the Global War on Terrorism. Simply relying on the Reserve Component to deal with catastrophic terrorism would be a major mistake because they are stretched too thin.

The solution would be to use existing training schools such as Red Flag, Joint Readiness Training Center, and National Training Center, as models for the Office of National Preparedness to establish, with NORTHCOM's guidance, Homeland Security Training Centers. These would be larger and more team-integrated versions of the Center for Domestic Preparedness. This training could consist of several days of classroom instruction followed by "live fire" exercises. A cross section of first responders from the same city or municipality representing police, fire, emergency preparedness, medical, public affairs, utility, and others would practice terrorist scenarios involving chemical, biological, radiological, high explosive, and even nuclear weapons. The added benefit of this training would be to help standardize procedures nationwide, allowing even greater interagency coordination.

The success of the U.S. military in the Gulf War and every contingency since has been partially attributed to realistic training accomplished on a frequent basis. As one analyst said, "To a great extent, the massive tank and air-to-surface battles of the desert war [Desert Storm] were won at the Army's National Training Center in the Mojave Desert."⁶³ The Joint Readiness Training Center is another example of live training that has had a huge impact on effectiveness. Created in the late 1980s, all infantry brigades in the U.S. Army must participate in this three week exercise every two years to be certified combat ready. As you read

this chapter, there is a brigade at the Joint Readiness Training Center practicing urban warfare in a simulated chemical-biological warfare environment.

Another example of the value of this type of training was during ENDURING FREEDOM. The author of this chapter led a 95-person Tanker Airlift Control Element at the Joint Readiness Training Center in April 2001. This Tanker Airlift Control Element worked with Canadians and the 1st Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, and seven months later we worked with some of the same Canadians at Kandahar and the 10th Mountain at Bagram Air Base near Kabul. The success of our missions to Afghanistan was attributed in part to our annual training at the Joint Readiness Training Center.

Summary

The immediate establishment of Homeland Security Training Centers in each state is vital for the following reasons:

- Current first responder training is severely inadequate despite the growing threats.
- Only 15,000 can be trained a year at the Center for Domestic Preparedness; 50 Homeland Security Training Centers could train approximately 750,000 annually, still far short of the eleven million first responders nationwide, but a big improvement.
- Training could be standardized nationwide, and the latest information could be disseminated from these locations to the 87,500 local governments.
- The enormous expertise and experience of the U.S. military could be leveraged quickly to its civilian counterparts, especially in areas where civilians are lacking. These include command and control, teamwork, leadership, and mass casualties.
- The U.S. military would be relieved of some, but not all, of the homeland security mission, freeing it to fight the Global War on Terrorism overseas.

- Federalism would be reinforced by building one Homeland Security Training Center for each state and by directing each state to organize and operate its own center.
- Politically, this would be very astute, since the President, members of Congress, state governors, and local officials could all claim credit.
- State Homeland Security Training Centers could become a focal point for coordinating equipment, additional training, and funding for homeland security, helping state and local officials sort through the maze of homeland security requirements. Also, these could become logical extensions of the new Department of Homeland Security.
- Homeland Security Training Centers would fit logically into the current state structures for homeland security. Each state has a homeland security director, and the Council on Foreign Relations report recommends each state establish a 24-hour command center.⁶⁴
- These training centers could be quickly created from existing state and local facilities, standardized by the feds, and would be an early “win” for the newly created Department of Homeland Security.

Conclusion

The Global War on Terrorism is ongoing, and we’ve been told by our national leaders that it will take years more to fight. A key part of this war involves well-trained and equipped first responders to effectively handle terrorist attacks. In this age of WMD proliferation, the question is not if these weapons will be used on the homeland but when. To effectively deal with the unthinkable, the eleven million first responders must be trained adequately and very quickly.

The two solutions to this problem include greatly increasing funding for state and local governments, and establishing Homeland Security Training Centers in each state based upon the very successful models in the U.S. military. NORTHCOM should provide the Office of National

Preparedness technical assistance and advice in establishing these schools to accelerate their implementation because time is of the essence. The homeland security challenge facing the Nation requires innovative training and the ability to rapidly train and equip the country's first responders to handle a terrorist event, especially one involving WMD. This need was aptly summarized by the Council on Foreign Relations task force report:

America's own ill-prepared response could hurt its people to a much greater extent than any single attack by a terrorist. America is a powerful and great nation, and terrorists are not supermen. But the risk of self-inflicted harm on America's liberties and way of life is greatest during and immediately after a national trauma.⁶⁵

The clock is ticking. Action is needed. And eleven million first responders are waiting.

Notes

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