



Issue Paper



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Collins Center Senior Symposium “DOD, NORTHCOM, and the Department of Homeland Security”

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Homeland security (HLS) gained an inescapable urgency as an aspect of the National Security Strategy on 11 September 2001. Since then, numerous fora, workshops, studies and symposia have been devoted to closing the gap between vulnerability to terrorism and domestic readiness in this country. Legislative directives and executive guidance have combined to reconfigure the face of federal, state, and local governments in order to respond to the first great crisis of the 21st Century.

On 11 April, the United States Army War College brought together six flag and general officers who retired at the highest levels of their respective Services to discuss selected issues surrounding three new and vital organizations for addressing the challenge of homeland security: the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense (ASD-HD), and the United States Northern Command (NORTHCOM). Through discussions framed by questions specially prepared for the forum, these flag and general officers (who have each become actively engaged in some aspect of Homeland Security since retirement) provided insight surrounding the evolving role of these agencies and the interrelationships that will have to develop to achieve their potential as the key triumvirate for Homeland Defense.

Questions addressed by the forum highlighted roles and missions of the military in responding to homeland security requirements; plans, training and education for those requirements; and competing requirements and risk analysis surrounding the military's responsibilities in homeland security matters. During the course of the day's discussion, the respondents pointed to challenges in culture, process, and technology that would face the three agencies in shoring up the country against existing and evolving threats. Among the observations and insights from the discussions were the following:

- The philosophical obstacle that DoD supports state and local requirements only in an *extremis* situation was viewed as a major concern. There is currently a perception that DoD has re-cast itself as the *Department of Foreign Wars*. The recent declaration that DHS and NORTHCOM will have “no formal [direct] relationship” has state and local governments wondering about *their* relationship to military support. NORTHCOM, rather than being restricted, needs to be encouraged – indeed required – to

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develop a Theater Engagement Plan with state and local governments.

- Participants called for taking a hard look at the skill sets required for both HLS and “traditional” warfighting. For example, the states’ Adjutants General have a schizophrenic condition over the CONUS/OCONUS defense issue. On the one hand, they retain a deeply held commitment to be a part of the national defense structure for combat operations. This commitment currently involves a lot heavy mechanized force, which some panelists argued we can no longer afford to modernize. On the other hand, the Adjutants General (TAGs) recognize vital requirements in domestic security involving specialized capabilities contained in the military police, engineers, in transportation, aviation and the like that they must address. This convergence of commitments carries some significant resource challenges for the National Guard. The truth is that we are facing a new reality in which the threat has become both foreign and domestic.
- There is inescapable wisdom in identifying portions of the National Guard to “specialize” in the homeland security mission, but the Guard should not be considered solely responsible for the homeland security (HLS) mission. The active component, as well as the individual service reserve elements, should all have an identified, and occasionally exercised potential for responding to domestic emergencies. Training and equipping (resource implications will have to be addressed) National Guard units will be essential for providing the Federal solution to state, local, and regional capability shortfalls in times of crises. The Guard may be uniquely positioned not only to provide these specialized capabilities, but also to establish well-hewn “partnerships” with city/state/regions, their governments, and their first responders.
- The military’s role in HLS will remain 99% of the time a support function. In working to provide for that support, NORTHCOM should establish Regional Coordination Centers responsible for intelligence, resource identification, and standards for response and responders. While regional in nature, when responding to an actual event the involved forces should find themselves working for the Governor of the affected state, through his TAG. FEMA’s ten-region response design, the various Emergency Management Assistance Compacts (EMACs) between the states, and even a regional configuration of the 54 State Area Coordinators (STARCs) all suggest themselves as viable entry points for an expanded NORTHCOM command structure. Similarly, the personnel, equipment, and experience base of the 1st and 5th Continental United States Armies may recommend those units for portions of command and control of the NORTHCOM mission. What we may eventually find to be the best structure for domestic support is four regionally oriented Joint Task Forces for Civil Support (JTF-CS’s), conceivably funded within National Guard divisions.
- In training with state and local organizations, we need to avoid first-responder “tactical myopia.” We need to train the first responders themselves to see beyond “first glance tactical sets” to recognize 2nd and 3rd order threat indications that may lie beneath those sets. Even more important, we need to train the executive level leadership of those first responders in the importance of continuity of command, in understanding the nature of the threat, in planning for regional/sub-regional responses, and in developing conceptual training for their respective first responders.



- In DoD, joining the “varsity league” has traditionally been achieved by having apportioned forces; but until requirements are more rigorously determined, the degree to which NORTHCOM needs apportioned forces remains uncertain. Strong indications are that the majority of support required to respond to state and local requirements is specialized, technical, or equipment oriented (transportation, aviation, etc). Other than in some *extremis* situations (e.g., quarantine, civil unrest, potential border security issues) there may not be a routine “boots-on-the-ground” requirement for NORTHCOM. In this environment, having Standing Joint Force Headquarters with a significant intelligence focus makes more sense than maintaining Standing Joint Task Forces. When something happens that requires force commitment, structure and procedures will be available to take control and employ it.
- The initial responsibility for planning domestic response must rest at state and local levels, with the military perhaps providing planning training based upon its experience in producing OPLANS and CONPLANS. State, regional, and local plans should envision and describe options for drawing upon assets beyond their means – especially those requiring specialized capabilities. The Department of Homeland Security should be a repository of State/Regional Plans, perhaps through the Office of Domestic Preparedness. Many of the capability shortfalls identified in those plans will need to be addressed by NORTHCOM.
- The application of forces and resources should be driven by the threat. An imminent threat must drive a response. However, one of the lessons that came out of *Silent Vector*¹ was that there is a danger in *over* reacting to a postulated threat. Even voicing a threat can carry significant and severe repercussions; mobilizing forces will accentuate any response.
- The National Missile Defense System, once established, will result in a heavy manning requirement that should not be heaped exclusively upon an already taxed active component. A hybrid, active and reserve component mix, including the Guard, should be investigated for fulfilling this requirement. In addition to the benefits derived from the generally more “stable” environment enjoyed by the Guard, this manning could allow for soldiers to transition between components in the course of a career, with benefits for both the soldiers and the institutions.
- Since the end of the Cold War, there has been insufficient “Marshall-like” thinking to address the domestic and international challenges facing the country. Even the establishment of NORTHCOM could be viewed as a “reaction,” born of an urgency to “do something” to dissuade the American public from a perception that homeland security was anything but “job 1.” Now that there has been some time for things to evolve since 9-11, it may be appropriate to undertake a deeper exploration of the emerging environment and its requirements, followed by a re-examination of our organizations.

¹ *Silent Vector* was a two-day national security simulation that focused on the pre-attack phase of a major terrorist incident on the American homeland. Led by the Center for Strategic and International Studies and with support from the Anser Institute for Homeland Security and the Oklahoma City Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, this simulation involved former senior policymakers, working-level experts, and representatives from the private sector. The exercise dealt with decision-making given a very credible, but non-specific, threat against the energy sector in the northeastern U.S.

In summary, the panel's consensus was that homeland security is not a National Guard mission (though the National Guard must play a significant role); it is a joint all-component mission. Homeland Security is not a military mission (though DOD may have to commit significant intellectual and material resources); it is an integrated interagency mission. Homeland Security is not a Federal mission (though the Federal government must provide capabilities localities don't possess and cannot afford); it is a national mission, spread over the cognizant range of federal, regional, state, and local authorities. Moreover, the panel held that while Homeland Security will require Federal support and Federal resources – it will not inherently or automatically require Federal control.



The participants concluded that lines of communication must be opened between the Department of Defense (especially NORTHCOM) and the Department of Homeland Security; between federal, state and local levels of government; and between the government and private sectors. The Homeland Security threat is real and poses a daunting, but not insurmountable challenge. In meeting that challenge, we will have to apply rigorous analytical mission-planning processes, coordinating and cooperating across all levels and functions of government. In that cooperation, DoD may be rightly concerned over inheriting the lion's share of the resource requirement; but it cannot by any means convey the notion that homeland security is someone else's business.

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