



CADRE Quick-Look

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Homeland Security—NORTHCOM's Coalition War

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Issue. The United States has entered into a new phase in its military history, passing quickly through “joint” warfare into the realm of “coalition” warfare. Indeed, it is postulated that coalition warfare will be the only way we will conduct future fights. Coalition warfare has many facets: it involves the blending of different cultures, multiple languages, dialects, and disparate weapon systems, as well as differing perceptions of end states and how to achieve them. In the wake of 9/11, HQ Northern Command (HQ NORTHCOM) was created to accomplish two goals: to provide the military response to attacks within the United States at the request of the newly formed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and to perform the National Security mission of air defense of the North American continent through HQ NORAD.

As Steve Flynn from the Council on Foreign Relations has observed: “We do National Security very well and Homeland Security very badly.”

NORTHCOM's National Security role is, for the most part, a continuation of NORAD's successful alliance with Canada; a 50 year relationship that has transcended the Cold War and has moved toward the new air defense realities *i.e.*, defense within the borders as well as outside them, post 9/11.

In its Homeland Security role however, NORTHCOM is part of a “coalition of the willing,” much like the one CENTCOM fulfills. But unlike CENTCOM's dozen or so international coalition partners, NORTHCOM's are the numerous federal, state and local agencies, bureaus and organizations involved in Homeland Security; many more partners than any international coalition would ever envision. For example, just within the law enforcement community, there are 600,000 police in 18,000 police departments, and 31,000 separate sheriff's departments.

Background. The creation of the DHS was the largest reorganization of the government since the National Security Act of 1947. Overnight, agencies changed hands, functions were removed from their traditional management chains, and an entire new government agency was created. Twenty-two government services were moved into five directorates under the newly minted DHS. This is still a work in progress. A telling milestone is that within DHS there are still three separate pay systems, down from over a half dozen two years after its creation.

In the same time frame, NORTHCOM was created as a new Unified Command, taking resources from US Space Command and Strategic Command, as well from the Army's US Forces Command (USFORCECOM). However, unlike DHS, NORTHCOM has relatively few organic resources.

The real challenge is executing NORTHCOM's role as DOD's force provider for all natural or man-made *i.e.*, terrorist, disasters within the United States. It must understand whom it works for, who works for it, what it can do, what it cannot do, and when it can do all of these things.

The Way Ahead. NORTHCOM must approach the war on terrorism as a coalition war *e.g.*, a war of disparate partners with a common goal. To be effective, it must learn the language, customs, and goals of its domestic coalition partners just like CENTCOM must do with its international partners.

Establishing common terminology is a first step. For example, the term “first responder” has different connotations for different agencies. Local, municipal and state emergency personnel would be “first responders,” with the military called in if these resources were overwhelmed. However, many fire and rescue elements from Tinker AFB immediately responded to the explosion at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building in downtown Oklahoma City. Presidential authority for federal aid was given within three hours of the blast. Who then, is really a “first responder?”

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Communications is another issue. On 9/11, the New York City Police and Fire Departments could not communicate with each other because their radios were preset to different frequencies. At Oklahoma City, a similar situation occurred. Given the number of potential agencies and departments responding to any domestic Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) scenario, frequency management could be a major problem. Frequency allocation and discipline will be keys to success.

Another concern will be the Common Operating Picture: what is the real tactical situation? “Ground truth” must be available to NORTHCOM so that reliance on the media won’t be necessary to obtain an accurate picture of ongoing operations. Given the high probability that convoys, airlift sorties, and significant personnel movements will comprise the DOD response, clear and continuing understanding of what is happening will be of paramount importance to NORTHCOM decision makers.

All of these challenges to success—and more—will stem from a coalition of disparate partners who will want to achieve the same goals, but who literally speak different languages.

To understand how to successfully traverse this rocky ground, NORTHCOM planners should become familiar with the planning principles used by the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) in the Pacific Rim. MPAT currently has 31 participating nations whose goal is to minimize “spin-up” time in an emergency by agreeing to create a series of common starting points e.g., decision making process, organizational structure, C2 architecture, etc. Understanding how to adapt MPAT for Homeland Security response planning is an important first step. It will not replace headquarters elements, but will provide the framework for a rapid start.

Waiting to be invited to the coalition—even of the willing—is too late to effect changes.