

MILITARY DISASTER RESPONSE: STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP, AND ACTIONS – CLOSING THE GAP

BY

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USAWC CLASS OF 2008

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Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 15 MAR 2008		2. REPORT TYPE Strategy Research Project		3. DATES COVERED 00-00-2007 to 00-00-2008	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Military Disaster Response: Strategy, Leadership, and Actions- Closing the Gap				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Kenneth Ring, Jr.				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College ,122 Forbes Ave.,Carlisle,PA,17013-5220				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT See attached					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 32	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Colonel Kenneth E. Ring, Jr.

TITLE: Military Disaster Response: Strategy, Leadership, and Actions – Closing the Gap

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 22 February 2008 **WORD COUNT:** 6,708 **PAGES:** 32

KEY TERMS: Homeland Defense, Support to Civilians, Interagency Relations and Operations

CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

The United States Military represents America's most capable organization for massive short-notice response to natural and manmade disasters, yet an effective and coordinated military response remains elusive. Primary responsibility for disaster response rests with civilian agencies at the local, state and federal level; however, they do not possess the military's manpower, equipment, training, and organization necessary to amass the relief effort required for a catastrophic incident. Hurricane Katrina proved that all levels of government were inadequately prepared for major disasters, which precipitated hundreds of policy, strategy, planning, and organizational changes. The military establishment also made many changes in the wake of Katrina to improve its ability to perform Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations; however, it still lacks a clear, effective, and coordinated military response capability. This paper will demonstrate that America needs a clear military strategy for civil support operations that utilizes a total force (Active, Guard and Reserve) solution focused on supporting responsible civilian agencies where and when they need it. It will build this

solution on a National Guard (NG) foundation and offer recommendations for improvement at critical nodes of coordination.

MILITARY DISASTER RESPONSE: STRATEGY, LEADERSHIP, AND ACTIONS – CLOSING THE GAP

Given the certainty of catastrophes on our soil – no matter how unprecedented or extraordinary – it is our collective duty to provide the best response possible.

—The National Strategy for Home Homeland Security, October 2007

Protection and security of the homeland is America's most vital interest. This interest was more abstract than real to most Americans before September 11, 2001. However, subsequent natural disasters and security threats highlight America's continuing vulnerability. Compounding America's sobering threat awareness was the government's response to Hurricane Katrina – four full years after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Massive government reorganization, rewritten national strategic documents, and billions of invested homeland security dollars failed to prevent an uncoordinated local, state, and federal response to Hurricane Katrina. This failure precipitated hundreds of additional policy, strategy, planning, and organizational changes at all levels of government to increase disaster response effectiveness. Yet the question of America's preparedness still remains.

The surprise nature and devastating effects of catastrophic incidents call for a massive coordinated response on short notice. While the primary responsibility for disaster response rests with civilian agencies at the local, state, and federal levels, only the military has the manpower, equipment, training, and organization necessary to amass the relief effort required during catastrophic incident recovery. The military made many improvements in its ability to perform Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations after Katrina, but it still lacks a clear, effective, and coordinated response

capability. This paper addresses what must be done to ensure DSCA success and protection of America's most vital interest – security of the homeland.

This paper will focus on the military element of catastrophic incident response. While similar challenges and issues remain for lead civilian organizations and agencies, it is imperative that the military plan, organize, train, and equip to provide critical disaster support to responsible civilian agencies. This study will seek to determine what the military must do by:

- First, understanding the legal and political environments affecting DSCA within the United States and how these environments impact the agencies and entities leading the response
- Second, conducting an analysis of key U.S. strategies and guiding documents relating to DSCA operations to ensure proper focus and alignment
- Third, identifying a military component to provide the strategic lead for DSCA operations based on its capabilities and responsibilities, and
- Fourth, offering recommendations for improvement at critical federal, regional, and state nodes of coordination to build on the positive organizational changes of the past six years.

Understanding the Environment – All Solutions Must be Viewed Through This Lens

A coordinated governmental response system must start with a clear and agreed upon understanding of authority and responsibility across all levels of disaster from local to catastrophic. Catastrophic incidents represent the most complex level of response due to their size and scope -- as highlighted by local, state, and federal failures during the Hurricane Katrina response. The National Response Plan (NRP) defines a

catastrophic incident as “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.”¹

Some people may argue that these catastrophic incidents require the federal government to take control of the situation over the states, utilizing a separate response procedure. This argument is based on the question, “What happens if local and state responders become victims and the state government cannot mount an immediate response?” This paper will argue that the massive changes made since 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina in our lead national strategies and response documents, have laid the foundation for successful catastrophic incident response. In effect, the current system laid out in the National Response Framework does account for catastrophic incidents. However, some critical leadership and structural changes must be made to ensure effective response to catastrophic incidents. One of the central themes of updated incident response policies and strategies is the acknowledgement of a state’s responsibility to take the lead role in all disaster planning and response.

The recently published National Strategy for Homeland Security (NSHS) clearly acknowledges that “America’s constitutional foundations of federalism and limited government place significant trust and responsibility in the capabilities of the State and local governments to help protect the American people.”² It later states that “Federal response efforts are designed to complement and supplement, rather than supplant, the State and local response.”³ The National Response Framework (NRF) – replacement for the National Response Plan – explains that the “response doctrine is rooted in

America's federal system and our Constitution's division of responsibilities between Federal and State governments."⁴ Even during special circumstances such as

...catastrophic incidents when local and State governments require significant support and incidents where Federal interests are directly implicated...the Federal government will...coordinate related activities with State and local partners, as appropriate.⁵

Certainly, states' rights and responsibilities outlined in the new strategies are not new concepts. However, what is new is how clearly and forcefully these concepts are outlined. After Katrina, there was much debate about the need for the federal government to take the lead in catastrophic incident relief. Now, after significant debate, analysis and feedback, it is clear that a flexible, tiered, and responsive system is the best solution for effective disaster response of any scale. This understanding of state authority and responsibility should apply across all support relationships, including military DSCA operations, where both Federal and State military forces are called upon to respond.

Certainly, there is potential for a catastrophic incident to occur where the local and state governments no longer have the ability to assess, decide or respond to their citizens' needs. More realistically, even in a massive catastrophic incident, the state government would continue to function at some level and have control over response assets not directly in the affected area. The planning solutions, therefore, must acknowledge the reality that a state government will retain some or total control, even in catastrophic incidents. The requirement calls for a flexible response system applicable to both military and civilian government agencies that builds on a state-focused concept and provides coordinated layers of support around and above the state.

Immediately following the analysis of the Hurricane Katrina response, some could argue that the federal government should take control of the overall response to include the state military response. This led to the passage of Section 1076 of the Warner Defense Act (WDA) which allowed the President to federalize the National Guard for natural disasters and other incidents without the consent of the state governors.⁶ Section 1076 amended the original Insurrection Act of 1807 that limited the federalization of the militia to situations involving insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combination, or conspiracy.⁷ This authority was implemented without the direct consultation or knowledge of the governors or the Adjutants General and was widely viewed as undermining the authority and responsibility of the governors to protect their citizens. Decisions like these are counterproductive and oversimplify the complexity that would go into handling a wide-spread catastrophic incident within the United States. Additionally, not a single report by Congress, the White House, or the Government Accountability Office recommended expanding the President's power over the National Guard as a remedy to the military's uncoordinated response to Hurricane Katrina.⁸ The governors quickly mounted a successful campaign to repeal that provision of the WDA which is included in the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act recently signed by the President.⁹ This legislative reversal reinforces the federal government's acknowledgement of state responsibilities in catastrophic incident response.

All disasters occur at the local level, even those with widespread multi-state and national effects. It is the state's responsibility to coordinate and direct relief within its borders. Certainly, there are areas within a catastrophic incident site where only outside-the-state assets can respond; however, barring complete state response

annihilation, the remaining state and local assets will actively respond in the areas immediately surrounding the catastrophic incident site. These remaining and functioning state and local assets will ultimately be in the best position to request and employ supporting military capabilities. The new NRF has the correct elements for success – a flexible, layered response plan that builds on our system of federalism. This system can work for a disaster of any size, as long as our various levels of government acknowledge their representative responsibilities and plan and exercise accordingly to either offer direct support or direct effort at the point of need. All future solutions must be viewed through this state-focused, layered response lens, to include the military response. To ensure success, America needs clear strategic guidance and focused cooperative leadership, particularly for our nation’s military disaster response forces.

National Strategy and Guiding Document Analysis

An analysis of key U.S. strategies and guiding documents relating to DSCA operations is necessary to ensure proper national focus and alignment. The most current Department of Defense (DoD) Strategy for Homeland Defense and Civil Support (SHDCS) is dated June 2005 – two months before Hurricane Katrina revealed coordination, communication and integration flaws in how the military responds to catastrophic events.¹⁰ While the SHDCS represents a significant acknowledgement of DoD’s responsibility for DSCA operations, it does not reflect the changes of current national strategic and response documents. Additionally, it should reflect the changes in both DSCA practice within the military, as well as theory, regarding the role of the National Guard. Further analysis of updated national supporting strategies and

response documents identifies the direction the military should take to ensure effective disaster response.

First, The National Security Strategy (NSS) of the United States dated March 2006 lists one of its essential tasks as “Transform America’s national security institutions to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century.”¹¹ The NSS acknowledges DoD’s efforts to transform itself to better balance its capabilities across four categories of challenges:

- Traditional- conventional challenges posed by nation states
- Irregular- challenges such as terrorism and insurgency
- Catastrophic- challenges such as those involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), pandemics and other natural disasters that produce WMD-like effects; and
- Disruptive- challenges from actors employing technologies in new ways to counter U.S. military advantages.¹²

The NSS ‘way ahead’ for these challenges at home includes “improving the capacity of agencies to plan, prepare, coordinate, integrate, and execute responses covering the full range of crisis contingencies and long-term challenges.”¹³ These strategy statements stand in sharp contrast to the 2002 NSS where two pages of armed forces contributions to national security contained only the following passage relating to homeland defense: “This broad portfolio of military capabilities must also include the ability to defend the homeland...”¹⁴ The new NSS expanded the catastrophic challenge focus of DoD and other agencies beyond terrorist strikes by including natural disasters and pandemics. This expanded focus complements and reinforces other updated

national strategies and response documents, which seek to elevate DSCA operations to a more even footing with other military challenges.

Second, the National Strategy for Homeland Security (NSHS) dated October 2007 describes America's armed forces as "crucial partners in homeland security. Our active, reserve, and National Guard forces are integrated into communities throughout our country, and bring to bear the largest and most diverse workforce and capabilities in government..."¹⁵ It directs DoD to continue to improve its ability to provide DSCA to respond to and recover from manmade and natural disasters.

Working with the Nation's Governors and State Adjutants General, the Department of Defense must develop operational plans based upon the national planning scenarios that will integrate and synchronize military forces to achieve unity of effort in support of homeland security missions across the Nation.¹⁶

Again, this latest national strategy highlights the importance of the military's role in catastrophic incident response. Additionally, it directs DoD to "determine the specific military requirements and capabilities for accomplishing homeland security missions that will most effectively be met by the combined effort of active, reserve, and National Guard forces."¹⁷

Finally, the Department of Defense must update its strategic documents to reflect the new focus on disaster response missions. The Secretary of Defense produced National Defense Strategy (NDS) dated March 2005 does not mention preparation and response to pandemic and other natural disasters as part of its catastrophic challenge.¹⁸ Additionally, it mentions DSCA operations directly only once in a one sentence sub-bullet comment within the twenty page document.¹⁹ The NDS is not a document specifically mandated by law, but was initiated by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld from the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) law,²⁰ to lay out his vision for

how the DoD will meet the challenges of the 21st century.²¹ Given the potential and proven large-scale effects of catastrophes and the vital role the military plays in supplying manpower and equipment in response, the NDS should be changed as follows:

- Update the strategic objective ‘Securing the United States from Direct Attack’ to include military response to deadly pandemics and other natural disasters that produce catastrophic effects.
- Add a fifth element to the section ‘How We Accomplish Our Objectives’ titled ‘Respond to Catastrophic Challenges.’ This section would address providing DSCA when deterrence fails or in the wake of natural catastrophic incidents.
- In consonance with the National Security Strategy, add a ninth element to the section ‘Desired Capabilities and Attributes’ titled ‘Improving the capacity of the Department to plan, prepare, coordinate, integrate, and execute catastrophic response with other agencies.

The National Military Strategy (NMS), signed by GEN Richard B. Myers in 2004, does mention Homeland Security as one of the military’s joint operating concepts under development; however, the focus is on defending the homeland from direct attack.²² The definition of Homeland Security, however, concludes with the phrase -- “and minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur²³ -- which relates to the military DSCA mission. The NMS states that “during emergencies the Armed Forces will temporarily employ military support to civil authorities in mitigating the consequences of an attack or other catastrophic event when civilian responders are overwhelmed.”²⁴ The next sentence also acknowledges that “military responses under

these conditions require a streamlined chain-of-command that integrates the unique capabilities of active and reserve military components and civilian responders.”²⁵ While this acknowledgement is a great first step, and subsequent actions by DoD, NGB and other agencies have made great strides in laying a foundation for success, the NDS must be updated to raise the priority of civil support missions. Upon comparison of the updated NSS and NSHS against DoD’s strategic documents, this paper argues that the DoD documents are out of alignment with the President’s newest guiding documents. The recommendation is to update the DoD documents relative to DSCA operations, practices, and principles as well as raise DSCA priority on par with other military missions.

Finally, the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves concluded that while DoD SHDCS “states that securing the U.S. homeland is the ‘first among many priorities’, the Defense Department in fact has not accepted that this responsibility requires planning, programming, and budgeting for civil support missions.”²⁶ It also criticizes DoD for not training and equipping forces for civil support missions, but instead continuing to rely on “dual-capable forces” for civil support activities.²⁷ In other words, DSCA missions are considered an extended mission of warfighting instead of a separate mission requiring specialized training and equipment.

Strategic Leadership – National Guard in Lead Military Role for DSCA Operations

You have 460,000 forward deployed assets in every state and territory that know the terrain and they know the relationships and they know the special circumstances of geography and politics and everything else that really prevents them from having to exchange business cards in the middle of a crisis. They are critical, critical people. I mean, every combatant commander overseas cries for cultural experts, language experts, [and] indigenous experts. My God, you have them, and it’s called the National Guard.²⁸

Properly aligning military strategic documents with higher level national strategic documents will give needed priority to DSCA operations within the military's mission set. Nevertheless, the unanswered questions surrounding how to organize, train and lead this mission set still remain. Answers to these questions lie within both existing and recently updated disaster response documents. DoD, as a federal agency, must comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive HSPD-5, which directs that all federal departments and agencies adopt the National Response Plan (NRP) and National Incident Management System (NIMS) with regard to domestic incident response as well as all actions taken to support state, tribal and local governments.²⁹ To do this effectively, the military must establish a response system that parallels and complements the civilian response system. This military system must account for all the demands placed on America's military to include overseas deployments, training, unit locations, and contingencies. It must also closely plan, train, and coordinate with key state and local emergency agencies primarily charged with disaster response. The military force operationally, economically, and geographically capable of providing this level of effective leadership and coordinated response is the National Guard. This section will argue that the National Guard should be the foundational military force upon which DoD builds its military response system.

The National Guard is uniquely capable of providing the first military response in any disaster given its unit stationing, personnel skill sets, and routine coordination with the civilian agencies responsible for disaster response. The National Guard consists of more than 460,000 personnel located in over 3,200 communities across the nation.³⁰ Since 9/11, the National Guard's role has transformed from a strategic reserve designed

for full military mobilization needs, to an operational force required for recurring deployments. The National Guard has proven its ability to train and perform a full spectrum of military operations from DSCA to full combat and should continue to do so. For the foreseeable future, the nation will continue to depend on National Guard and other reserve forces to respond to threats against the nation. National Guard units are filled with soldiers who possess not only their specific military skill sets, but also unique civilian skill sets necessary to effectively respond to complex stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) as well as DSCA operations. For example, during this author's deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina in 2004, our commanding general directed the creation of a civilian skills database of our all-National Guard task force. The list included professional and trade skills such as finance, investing, Certified Public Accountants, construction managers, police chiefs and officers, firefighters, electricians, telecommunications experts, plumbers, waste water professionals, power plant technicians, and more. DoD should build on this National Guard capability to perform across the full spectrum of military operations by properly training, equipping, and manning the National Guard for successful mission accomplishment.

The governors, as chief executives for their states, have a vital responsibility for the public safety and welfare of their citizens.³¹ This responsibility is acknowledged throughout this paper and our national strategic documents. It is also the foundation upon which our NIMS and NRF are built. The true nexus for disaster response integration is therefore the state, and the National Guard is the best positioned force to integrate the military response into the state civil response. The state represents the first response level where practical support is coordinated and assigned to reinforce

local responders, and the National Guard is the governor's military response force. Proper planning for efficient and effective disaster response calls for various agencies and leaders to work closely together on a recurring basis. The National Guard has relationships with state emergency responders and is in the best geographic position to fuse military capabilities into the state emergency response system. General Victor E. Renuart, Jr., the Commander of United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) recently stated that "the last place in the world to make a new friend is at the scene of a disaster. You have to build a relationship over time. You need to plan together for the events you may have to practice."³² The National Guard provides this military-civil interface at the state and local level and represents the best force upon which to build a military response system.

Assigning the National Guard as the focal point for integrating military disaster response at the state level should not be misunderstood as absolving USNORTHCOM or DoD of responsibility for DSCA. On the contrary, each military component plays a key role in disaster response and must be viewed as an integrated whole in support of responsible civilian agencies. Additionally, several policy, process, and capability changes are now in place that did not exist during the Hurricane Katrina response. Among these are the improvements in informal communications between National Guard and USNORTHCOM and the addition of Defense Coordinating Officers and their elements in each of the ten Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regional offices. Improvements like these provide a solid basis for planning and executing DSCA operations. However, without increasing civil support mission priority, providing for formalized planning, programming and budgeting for DSCA needs, and focusing on

better integration of our combined active and reserve military capabilities, we run the risk of continued uncoordinated military response to disasters. The final section of this paper addresses recommended changes at critical nodes of coordination that build on the foundational concepts expressed earlier, and the military changes to date.

Recommendations for Change

America demands a coordinated and effective response to all levels of disaster from local emergencies to catastrophic incidents. The complexity of DSCA operations grows exponentially as the scale and size of the disaster increases, and the military must remain an effective responder at each level. At the same time, leaders must acknowledge that resources are limited and major increases in manpower, specialized units, or dedicated disaster response units are fiscally unrealistic, despite the knowledge that future disasters and catastrophic incidents are certain to occur. Unfortunately, leaders cannot know the location, type, or severity of the next disaster or catastrophe. Leaders must also acknowledge that the federal government cannot protect everything all the time. Therefore, the only realistic and fiscally viable option is to design a military response system that is integrated and prepared to reinforce lower layers of response. The following section offers recommended changes for military coordination and integration into state, regional, and federal response systems.

For the purpose of this paper, recommendations for change at the federal level fall into three categories: changes to be executed by DoD; changes to be brought about through legislation; and changes to be executed by USNORTHCOM. The changes to be executed by DoD include updating military strategy by increasing the priority of DSCA operations; designating the National Guard as the lead force to integrate military

capabilities into state and local civil response; and formalizing the DSCA planning and budgeting process. Necessary legislative changes center on enacting key recommendations of the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves relating to civil support missions. Finally, recommended USNORTHCOM changes focus on Contingency Plan (CONPLAN) 2501-05, Defense Support to Civil Authorities, as well as command relationships between National Guard and active forces responding to disasters.

The top two DoD change recommendations were covered extensively earlier in this paper. DoD must update its NMS, NDS and SHDCS to reflect the new direction outlined in the NSS and NSHS as well as the documented findings from national investigations and committees following the Hurricane Katrina catastrophe, such as those contained in the Select Bipartisan Committee report, *A Failure of Initiative*.³³ The second recommendation is to designate the National Guard as the military force upon which DoD will build its military response system. For this to happen there must be a fundamental shift at DoD toward focusing on both warfighting and non-warfighting mission requirements of the National Guard. LTG H. Steven Blum addressed this critical need extensively during questioning before the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves on January 31, 2007. In his remarks, he highlighted the ability and need for the National Guard to move quickly and seamlessly between state and federal controlled statuses – highlighting the flexibility and ability of state-controlled military forces to support law enforcement activities as well as perform military support missions. Additionally, he called for DoD to plan, program, and budget for DSCA and state military operational needs. State military operations are primarily DSCA operations

which require manning, training, and specialized equipment that would allow the National Guard to more effectively support responsible civil authorities. LTG Blum noted that 88% of the National Guard forces in the United States are very poorly equipped – a combined result of past programmed underfunding of the strategic reserves, failure to resource state military mission requirements, and rotational deployments in support of the Global War on Terrorism.³⁴ Given the central role the National Guard plays in disaster response, these practices can no longer continue.

DoD must also better utilize the United States Army Reserves as an additional resource. This includes improving the Immediate Response Authority (IRA) laws, policies, and planning that govern how Army Reserves respond to disasters. Eric L. Leshinsky wrote a complete analysis of IRA issues and offered sound recommendations to improve IRA for the Army Reserves including:

- Calling for a complete review of currently ambiguous laws permitting the military to act within the United States;
- Providing IRA guidance in a single clearly-defined directive;
- Improving IRA training and education; and
- Reviewing DoD's Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer (EPLO) program.³⁵

Like their National Guard counterparts, the Army Reserves are forward deployed throughout the United States, possessing the military and civilian skills necessary for effective disaster response. These Army Reserve forces should be integrated into the state and regional response plans where they reside – coordinating with National Guard Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) within the states.

Legislative changes focus on recommendations made by the Commission on the National Guard and Reserves in March 2007. The current fiscal year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, recently signed by the President, contains many of these change recommendations. This law includes some of the most sweeping and profound changes to the National Guard in the past fifty years and reinforces this paper's recommendations for an updated military DSCA strategy, as well as identification of the National Guard as the focal military force for disaster response. For example, the law contains provisions:

- To increase the grade of Chief National Guard Bureau (CNGB) to General (O-10) and designate him as a principle advisor to the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) on matters pertaining to state-controlled National Guard forces.
- To require the SECDEF, in consultation with DHS, CJCS, USNORTHCOM and CNGB, to plan for coordinated use of National Guard and active duty armed forces when responding to disasters. This plan must include identification of National Guard equipment required for civil support operations and is due to Congress by June 1, 2008.
- To require SECDEF, in consult with DHS, to determine military-unique capabilities necessary for civil support during catastrophic incidents and implement a plan for funding and resourcing these capabilities.
- To require the President to establish a council of governors to advise the SECDEF, DHS, and White House Homeland Security Council on matters relating to the National Guard and civil support missions.³⁶

These provisions represent a major shift in how our elected representatives view military disaster support operations, and acknowledges the lead DSCA role expected of the National Guard.

The final federal-level change recommendation involves USNORTHCOM CONPLAN 2501-05 (DSCA) and National Guard command and support relationships during disaster response. While CONPLAN 2501-05 does outline the various command relationships available between USNORTHCOM and JFHQ National Guard commanders, the plan clearly separates state-controlled National Guard forces from the plan. The CONPLAN acknowledges National Guard forces operating in the Joint Operations Area (JOA) as an assumption, and that command and control (C2) of these forces remains with the governor.³⁷ Hurricane Katrina's military catastrophic incident response delivered 50,000 National Guard soldiers to support the state's response efforts compared to 22,000 active duty soldiers.³⁸ By any measure, the National Guard response was and will be a fact and not an assumption – they will be first at the scene and likely in greater numbers than active duty forces. The National Guard should be acknowledged as a central player in CONPLAN 2501-05 with the responsibility for integrating federal force capabilities into the states' DSCA response. General Renuart recently acknowledged USNORTHCOM's supporting role by stating, "Our job is not to come in and take over an operation in a state. Our job is to ensure that as the Governor and the Adjutant General see the need, we are on the doorstep with the right kinds of capabilities for them to continue their response, or to sustain it over time..."³⁹ Therefore, in light of the general's comments designating the National Guard as the focal point for

integrating the military disaster response the CONPLAN would require significant changes regarding execution as well as command and support relationships.

The changes required in command and support relationship planning between USNORTHCOM and National Guard forces relate more to leader actions than structural changes. General Renuart's previous comments above represent a positive step in further defining USNORTHCOM's role to support state response efforts. In practice, however, the federal and state military response forces remain separated. Current plans provide an option for commanders of federal-controlled and state-controlled military forces to command the other component (frequently referred to as a dual-hat command) with approval of the President and the governor. In disaster exercise and practice, this option is not implemented. As recently as May 2007, the Ardent Sentry disaster response exercise simulated a nuclear detonation in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was the largest exercise ever held, designed to test the local, state, regional and federal response to a catastrophic incident in accordance with the NRP.⁴⁰ This author participated in Ardent Sentry, and while there was a great and genuine attempt at unity of effort and general cooperation between federal-controlled and state-controlled military forces, there were days of questions and discussions regarding mission assignment processes and command and support relationships that were not clearly resolved. Issues of command and support should be worked out in advance during planning or before the federal forces arrive for reception, staging, integration and onward movement (RSOI). Future exercises must actively employ the dual-hat command option as well as utilize other command relationships short of full C2, in order to improve the coordination and effectiveness of military disaster response.

Other command relationships may be more appropriate during catastrophic incidents. For example, it may be more appropriate to assign federal forces under Tactical Control (TACON) of a state military force commander. TACON authority is limited to the detailed direction and control of movements and maneuvers within the operational area necessary to accomplish assigned missions or tasks. It does not provide organizational authority or authoritative direction for administrative and logistical support.⁴¹ This would allow the Adjutants General, working closely with the governor and state emergency responders, to efficiently and effectively direct all military capabilities supporting the state response. Command of these TACON units would still reside with the higher federal military commander, thus removing the mental obstacle of transferring command.

The Adjutants General would also be responsible for assessing their states' total military capability needs for likely disaster scenarios. The capabilities that do not exist could then be scripted into a mission assignment request to federal forces. Capability requests would not just be limited to specified unit types, but would also include staff support elements as well as C2 elements. Command relationships could be worked out in advance based on disaster scenarios. It would therefore be possible that a small state with limited capabilities would need USNORTHCOM to effectively take command of a state military catastrophic response, where other states with more robust capabilities could command the response with augmentation from federal forces TACON to the Adjutant General or Joint Task Force-State (JTF-State) commander. This approach could work for all levels of disaster to include catastrophic disasters that involve multiple states across a region. Each state would command or direct the forces

within its border to deal with the disaster effects in their area of operation (AO). If the disaster spans several states, a higher level federal force C2 structure provided by USNORTHCOM would act as a 'theater' commander receiving requests from the various states and allocating federal forces and resources in support of the DHS overall recovery plan, via the Department of Defense. This type of arrangement is familiar to military commanders who are used to having responsibility for terrain and forces within their AO and requesting additional support from higher when necessary.

Regional disaster response capabilities offer great potential for effective coordination and planning. A regional response represents the most effective overall mechanism in the event of a catastrophic incident stretching over several states. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides ten regional office locations throughout the United States where government agencies work together to reduce the loss of life and property and protect the nation from all hazards.⁴² The military interface at each FEMA office is the Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) and the Defense Coordinating Element (DCE). The DCO is an active duty Colonel (O6) permanently assigned to each FEMA region in order to plan, coordinate, and integrate DSCA with local, state, and federal agencies.⁴³ The DCE consists of the DCO's six-person staff working at the regional office. This DCO/E assignment greatly increased the effectiveness of the federal military disaster response by having a dedicated officer and staff working daily with government response agencies. The DCO/E does not, however, have any visibility or formal relationship to coordinate National Guard capabilities or operations. Updating the DCO/E structure and responsibilities to formalize this relationship would make it more effective at the regional level.

This paper suggests three recommendations for change concerning the DCO and his element that would better align their capabilities with the new strategy for DSCA operations:

First, the DCO should remain an Army Colonel billet (O6), but also should be open to National Guard officers and not limited to only active duty Colonels as it is currently. This change would align with USNORTHCOM changes to have a NG officer as commander or deputy commander to better integrate federal and state military response forces. The DCO should be required to know state military capabilities as well as federal military capabilities and how to access them both.

Second, the DCE staff should be increased to include a National Guard officer from each state in the region who would work for the DCO. This State Defense Coordinating Officer (SDCO) would be responsible for the same roles and responsibilities of the DCO, only focused on his particular state. This dedicated focus would allow for increased planning, coordination, and preparations that could be integrated into the regional response. The SDCO would work side-by-side with other regional SDCOs in the DCE who are in direct contact with their states and National Guard Bureau (NGB), thus increasing the speed and effectiveness of Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) requests between states. The SDCO would also provide the critical link to USNORTHCOM, through the DCO, for planned or anticipated military capability needs and augmentation to support state military and civilian responses on the ground.

Finally, Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLOs) should be under the operational control (OPCON) of the DCO at all times prior and during a disaster.⁴⁴

EPLOs are reserve officers who advise on their services' resources in an all-hazards environment. They help maintain effective communication between the military components, DoD, and other federal, state and local agencies.⁴⁵ Placing the EPLOs under OPCON of the DCO would focus their efforts on integrated planning and training within the military response system and build a stronger team. Currently, EPLOs are not placed OPCON to a DCO or headquarters until activated for a disaster, which is too late.⁴⁶

The state level is the true nexus for military integration into the disaster response system, and the National Guard represents the bulk of this military response. NGB and Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ) made several structural changes to set the conditions for effective and efficient DSCA response; however, more improvements are necessary. First, each state Adjutant General and potential JTF-State commander should be certified in advance to perform dual-hat command of both federal and state military forces operating within state boundaries. This would ensure maximum flexibility for all military components and layers of the tiered civil response system. Second, the JFHQ should be fully resourced to provide necessary command and control support to the Adjutant General during disaster. The National Guard is under-resourced in full-time manning support based on validated requirements of a strategic reserve force and severely under-resourced based on requirements as an operational force. The 2008 National Guard Posture Statement shows the National Guard was funded at only 63% of its full-time manning requirement – the lowest of any reserve component.⁴⁷ Fully funding the full-time manning requirements of the National Guard would allow the Adjutants General to increase readiness and build necessary capabilities for disaster

response as well as warfighting missions. One of these capabilities would include Joint Reception, Staging, Onward Movement and Integration (JRSOI) of both federal and National Guard forces flowing into the state in support of DSCA operations. Additionally, appropriate key staff leaders and deputies who are trained and prepared to receive other federal or state military capability packages as determined by the situation and needs on the ground should be fully resourced.⁴⁸

Conclusion

America's experiences since 9/11 opened the eyes of leaders at every level to the high probability of future catastrophic incidents and the nation's ability to effectively respond. This disaster potential and its possible consequences drove urgent changes and improvements in how our nation plans, and prepares for disaster response. As with all complex and urgent challenges, the initial national strategies and plans contained gaps, yet the enormous effort and focus had a positive cultural effect in the United States. Unfortunately, for our leaders, America's initial answers to disaster response and homeland security following 9/11 met with a substandard military and civilian response in the face of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.⁴⁹ The results of this catastrophe further focused the country on finding and fixing the system problems that precipitated such an uncoordinated response. Real, hard-hitting, tough investigations occurred to discover what went wrong and what should be done to avoid repeating mistakes. Many changes were quickly put in place, and many more solutions are currently working through governments and agencies. The foundation for success is now in place, and the concept of flexible, military and civilian disaster response is the

right answer, however, the additional changes outlined in this paper are still required to increase coordination and effectiveness.

America expects a coordinated and effective response to disasters and looks to the military to provide the necessary short-notice manpower, equipment, and skills to support responsible civilian agencies. Our system of government places responsibility for its citizens first in the governors of the states and then in the President. America's national strategies acknowledge this fact, and our disaster response system is designed to capitalize on this strength and layered responsibility. Our military must also capitalize on this strength and design a system that aligns with the national objectives and utilizes the strengths of the entire military, both active duty and reserve components.

This paper demonstrated that our military must raise the priority of DSCA operations in order to protect America's most vital interest – protection and security of the homeland. To do this, DoD must update its military strategies to reflect changes in the NSS, NSHS, as well as the updated NIMS and NRF. Additionally, it must designate the National Guard as the central military disaster response force and build its military system around this force. This update and declaration will require detailed planning, programming, and budgeting specifically for both state and federal DSCA operations. The recently passed Fiscal Year 2008 Defense Authorization Act reinforces these recommendations.

Finally, implementation of the changes outlined in this paper for federal, regional, and state coordination nodes will further build on the great progress made in the past three years. Many of the needed changes are more culturally focused than process, structural, and equipment related. America's leaders must push past outdated,

incorrect, and ineffective perceptions and models and fully utilize America's total military capabilities against known threats. America paid an enormous price for its experience of the past six years – it is time to reap the benefits and take the final steps to a successful, responsive, and coordinated military and civilian disaster response system.

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