SOUTH CAROLINA STATE GUARD HOMELAND SECURITY ACTIVITIES UNDER AN AMERICORPS GRANT

Major General Eli Wishart, CG/SCSG

A vulnerability and threat assessment study of South Carolina was done by the South Carolina State Guard (SCSG) in 2002 and found that the state was particularly vulnerable to external threats because of a high ratio of nuclear facilities to population, a major port with several smaller sea ports, several major dams near population centers, rapidly developing coastal areas and four interstate highways. These concerns were reviewed for Homeland Defense impact. A report was prepared containing specific recommendations that were identified as a requirement for the Governor's initiatives in the area of Homeland Defense in response to the events of September 11, 2001.

As a direct result of the report, a Federal AmeriCorps multi-year grant for one-million dollars was submitted to address these compelling community needs. The grant was designed to enhance capability in the areas of Public Safety, Public Health and Emergency Preparedness.

A Homeland Defense Brigade consisting of volunteers was established from within the existing SCSG. These volunteers are used as a force multiplier to assist more readily the Emergency Management Division, the SCSG and other components of the Adjutant General's Office to deal with the new threats posed by the asymmetrical conflict in which our country is now engaged.

The major component of the grant was to establish and maintain a central database of volunteers. The web-based database was designed so that police chiefs, sheriffs and emergency preparedness directors could be given access to the information on volunteers in their area. The database contains a skill set for each volunteer and real time accounting of his or her availability. A massive recruiting effort has resulted in several thousand uniformed volunteers available to city, county and state public safety, public health and emergency preparedness organizations. The end result of the AmeriCorps Homeland Defense Brigade's effort has been to successfully meet the need to establish and maintain a database of volunteers and to check child and adult care facilities.

Extensive on-line and residential training is offered these volunteers. Most communications with volunteers is through e-mail. Two written reports each month are required from all 5th (Homeland Defense) Brigade members who have committed to recruit and to work with volunteers.

An additional private grant of several thousand dollars was received last year for securing supplies and equipment to respond to such natural disasters as hurricanes, tornados, floods and fires.

TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION RECEIVED

- Twenty-one (21) members and volunteers have been trained and certified as reserve law enforcement officers and have given literally thousands of hours of volunteer service with police and sheriffs departments.

- A group of 157 members and volunteers have been trained in basic crowd control and large group security. These individuals have provided security and or crowd control for twenty-one

Report Documentation Page

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festivals in SC. (This is especially important when a town has two or three police officers and more than 20,000 attend the festival.)

- Members have completed numerous Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) courses, Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) training and tactical communications classes in an effort to better prepare for emergencies.

- Eighteen (18) members and many volunteers have taken Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) courses that were taught by SCSG members through the grant.

- Four (4) members received training as volunteer firemen and donated hundreds of hours answering fire alarms. Other members installed smoke detectors, furnished by the fire departments, in numerous homes after inspecting the homes.

- Seventeen (17) members and volunteers have been trained and volunteered hundreds of hours in scene control for homicides (crime scene preservation), drownings, fires, downed power lines, flooding and airplane crashes.

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

- Nine (9) members were certified as instructors for the "Refuse to be a Victim" course. After certification they taught the four (4) hour class to numerous community groups, schools and businesses throughout the state.

- Members bought two (2) dogs and have trained the dogs to detect explosives. Certification of both the dogs and handlers is complete and they have been deployed.

- Six (6) members, certified to teach " Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)," taught five WMD classes to volunteers.

- Two (2) members certified in search and rescue (S&R) operations taught S&R classes to volunteers and scouts.

- Two (2) members were certified to teach CPR and First Aid for the Red Cross.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND ANALYSIS

- Several public service projects were completed ranging from helping to restore an historic public building to cleaning state parks.

- Members trained in surveillance detection have made a security analysis of airports from which the state's constitutional officers fly, as well as other sensitive areas.

- Classes in "Refuse to be a Victim" were taught to community groups, private industry and schools.

- Thirty-eight (38) members and volunteers have participated in numerous Search and Rescue operations.

- Twenty-three (23) members assisted National Guard units that were deployed. They maintained vacated armories, assisted families members, and assembled and mailed material to the deployed Guardsmen.

- One (1) member, a trained counselor, assisted in counseling in prisons, shelters and at wrecks.

- Several members have developed a plan for large animal rescue. They have coordinated this with the SC Veterinary Association and made several animal shelter inspections. They have also recruited volunteers to assist during emergencies and are conducting training for the volunteers.

- Five (5) members assisted the SC Department Health and Environmental Control during the distribution of flu shots.

- Eleven (11) members have assisted the SC Highway Patrol with traffic control at more than 100 wrecks. This allows only one patrolman to be at the accident to prepare the report while an AmeriCorps member directs traffic.

- Two (2) members published a book, *The Medal of Honor: a Commemoration of South Carolina Recipients.* The book was given to all public libraries and public school libraries. The book received one of ten Notable State Document Awards for 2004.

- One (1) member developed a patriotic web site. He recruited volunteers and coordinated with the SC Department of Education for the volunteers to go into schools to talk with classes about patriotism and the price of freedom. The program was very successful and is continuing.

- One (1) member, a Registered Nurse, assisted with blood drives and in emergency shelter inspections.

- Five (5) members established and/or coordinated neighborhood watches.

- Three (3) members, all practicing attorneys, gave legal advice and represented the SC Military Department on several occasions pro bono.

- Seventeen (17) members and volunteers formed a uniformed funeral detail and performed more than one hundred (100) military funerals for veterans. This freed active duty military to continue their other duties in homeland security.

- Nine (9) of the members have worked with youth in a variety of ways: as mentors to high school students, teaching classes to both cub and boy scouts, working with those attending Boys' State, gang activity intervention, drug free programs and assisting with developing emergency procedures for schools.

- Work has been done with the elderly and handicapped through Meals on Wheels to ensure that there is a plan for care of these individuals in times of emergency evacuation.

- One (1) member assisted the coroner in investigating the cause of deaths and talking with families of the deceased.

HOMELAND SECURITY AND DISASTER MITIGATION

- Members and volunteers are working with more than half of the Emergency Preparedness offices in the state in preparing for and responding to emergencies. This included preparation for and participation in both tabletop and full-scale exercises, evaluating exercises and responding to actual emergencies.

- Two (2) members published a periodic AmeriCorps Homeland Defense newsletter that went to all members and volunteers via email.

- Several members provided security or were briefed on security at high visibility areas such as the State building and nuclear station.

- More than 200 talks on homeland security and emergency preparedness were given to business, civic (Lions, Rotary, Civitan and Sertoma), veterans (VFW, American Legion, National Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary and Marine Corps League), faith based (Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic and Salvation Army), professional clubs (computer and electric cooperatives) and governmental organizations.

- Several members assisted with hurricane preparation at Veterans Administration (VA) hospitals, the South Carolina (SC) Department of Public Safety (lane reversal), emergency preparedness offices and repair of emergency generators for three (3) hurricane alerts.

- Four (4) members worked with the American Red Cross in their emergency response section.

- Four (4) members and volunteers assisted for six (6) days with the SC Emergency Communication van during a massive chemical spill.

- Two (2) members worked with college and university students in both the classroom and dormitories to make them aware of the importance of being prepared for both natural and man made emergencies.

These are some of the activities that saved the tax payer thousands of dollars and helped ensure that many of the citizens of this state are better prepared for emergencies.

DEVELOPED WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

The entire SCSG has developed an excellent working relationship with many of the state's law enforcement agencies and most of the emergency preparedness offices (EPD). The relationship is so good with some of the law enforcement agencies that they have assigned radios and equipment to the SCSG unit in their area of responsibility. When an automobile accident happens in the area, the local Homeland Defense Brigade unit is alerted and they assist with direct traffic at the accident, while the public safety officer investigates and prepares the accident reporting.

The excellent relationships with emergency preparedness offices are evident by the fact that equipment is purchased by EPD for the SCSG. One of these units has been given more than $100,000 worth of communications equipment. In return the unit is responsible for that office's emergency communication. Such close working relationships have not always been like this. It has been a concerted effort over the past five years that has resulted in a partnership that saves taxpayer dollars by involved citizens in the homeland defense process.

FUTURE PLANS

Although this grant will end this year, our homeland defense projects will continue. One of the new programs that we plan to expand in the Fall 2006 is to work with schools and pharmacies to prevent abusing prescription drugs. We plan to call it "Meth-Watch." Another continuing effort is to further expand the emergency operations communications unit's capability.