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THESIS

**HARNESSING THE POWER OF COLLABORATIVE
RELATIONSHIPS TO IMPROVE NATIONAL
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSIVENESS**

by

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September 2011

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IMPROVE NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSIVENESS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the activities of leading and the elements of partnerships to move a large bureaucratic organization to a higher level of fitness and remain reliable and relevant in keeping the nation prepared to respond to national emergencies and domestic events. The critical elements of leading and partnerships include a combination of building trust, sensemaking, and collaboration with all the activities of leading and partnerships that those elements encompass. This combination creates the basis for collaborative relationships that when used correctly can help organizations to work and lead across boundaries to tackle the wicked problems that face homeland security professionals today.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ARNORTH	U.S. Army North
ASCC	Army Service Component Command
BSI	Base Support Installation
CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CBRNE	Chemical, Biological, Radiological Nuclear, And Explosive
CDSC	Contingency Dual Hat Status Commander
COA	Course of Action
COCOM	Combatant Command
CS	Civil Support
DCE	Defense Coordinating Elements
DCO	Defense Coordinating Officer
DHC	Department of Homeland Security
DOMOPS	Domestic Operations
DSCA	Defense Support of Civil Authorities
EMPLO	Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer
ESF	Emergency Support Functions
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
HD	Homeland Defense
HRF	Homeland Security Response Force
HSS	Health Service Support
IC	Interagency Coordination
JFLCC	Joint Force Land Component Command
JFO	Joint Field Office
JRMPOs	Joint Regional Medical Plans And Operations Officers
NGO	Nongovernment Organizations
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command
NRF	National Response Framework
NSSE	National Special Security Event
RDO	Regional Desk Office
REPLOs	Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers

RFA	Request For Assistance
RISC	Regional Interagency Steering Committee
SEPLOs	State Emergency Preparedness Liaison Teams
USNORTHCOM	United States Northern Command

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. INTRODUCING THE COMPLEX WORLD OF NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS

Today, we live in a world of changing borders and of breathtakingly fast change that is stretching our ability to comprehend it, much less manage it. These skirting borders include those between near and far...peace and war...domestic and foreign...state and individual, privacy and surveillance...civil and military...and the border in my case between homeland security and homeland defense. It is along these increasingly-murky borders that many of the security challenges we face today ride...and many come home to roost in our homeland. —Admiral Winnefeld, Commander NORAD and USNORTHCOM (Winnefeld, 2011)

Admiral Winnefeld's statement illustrates how complex the world has become in the twenty-first century, and how challenging the emerging threats can be for organizations such as United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM).

The days of agencies, at all levels of government, operating primarily as a singular entity are over. In an increasingly globalized world, policy challenges transcend geopolitical, socio-economic, cultural, and generational boundaries. In doing so, they test conventional governments as never before. Issues such as pandemics, aging populations, climate-change, rising citizen expectations and public safety are both global and local in nature. These types of complex challenges will increasingly test government interactions in the years to come. (Deloitte, 1–6)

This thesis acknowledges that homeland security leaders face an ever-changing landscape of complex challenges that Marcus, Dorn, and Henderson refer to as “new hazards” in their paper on Meta-Leadership and National Emergency Preparedness. They state that there is a requirement for unprecedented coordination of resources, information, and expertise in the face of new hazards (Marcus, Dorn, & Henderson, 2006), hazards that Rittel and Webber (Webber & Rittel, 1973) refer to as “wicked problems.” They state that the problems of governmental planning and especially those of social or policy planning are ill defined and cannot be successfully treated with traditional linear, analytical approaches (Webber & Rittel, 1973). Robert Horn takes it a step further and

refers to these hazards not as problems, but as social messes because, unlike problems, they do not have straightforward solutions (Horn, 2001).

In a 2011 interview, Tom Brokaw reminds us that these wicked problems can push government organizations and their leaders to the edge of chaos. That point where small changes in a system produce cascades of change. In the interview he states,

I can't recall any other time during my adult life that a President has faced such a confluence of events. Now it is the President's job to take on big challenges, but few have come so swiftly and all from unexpected circumstances. These challenges include fighting two wars, taking military action in Libya, a major earthquake and tsunami in Japan followed by a nuclear meltdown, a recession at home, and political paralysis in Washington over the budget (Brokaw, 2011).

B. NATIONAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

In order to meet these challenges in the United States, the Department of Homeland Security published the National Response Framework (NRF) in 2008, which is a guide to how the nation conducts all-hazards response. The NRF states that it

is built upon scalable, flexible, and adaptable coordinating structures to align key roles and responsibilities across the nation. As incidents change in size, scope, and complexity, the response must adapt to meet requirements. The number, type and sources must be able to expand rapidly to meet needs associated with a given incident. The NRF's disciplined and coordinated process can provide for a rapid surge of resources from all levels of government appropriately scaled to need. (DHS, 2008)

For the NRF to work properly, the NRF states,

Leaders at all levels must communicate and actively support engaged partnerships by developing shared goals and aligning capabilities so that no one is overwhelmed in times of crisis. Engaged partnerships includes ongoing communication of incident activity among all partners to the NRF, and shared situational awareness for a more rapid response. (DHS, 2008)

C. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore how USNORTHCOM develops partnership engagements in order to improve the integration of military capabilities

during domestic incidents. Therefore, this thesis examines the development and establishment of a new program office at USNORTHCOM that was created to facilitate this objective. The regional desk officer program was established by the commander of USNORTHCOM in November 2010 to improve his situational awareness of the state's capabilities and plans to respond to man-made and natural disasters. This new program was designed to give him direct access to this information during times of crisis, without working its way through the entire organization. This timely information would give him the situational awareness he needed to anticipate the support that would be requested of USNORTHCOM during a domestic incident therefore allowing him to prepare the required capabilities before the official request for assistance (RFA) was received and increasing the speed of USNORTHCOM's response and integration of military capabilities with the requesting civil authorities.

The mission of the United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) is to conduct homeland defense, civil support, and security cooperation to defend and secure the United States and its interest (USNORTHCOM, 2010). However, USNORTHCOM must provide civil support in accordance with the NRF, which puts USNORTHCOM in a supporting role to civilian agencies. The NRF states that incidents must be managed at the lowest possible jurisdictional level and supported by additional capabilities when needed. This means an emergency must exceed the capabilities of local, state, and federal agencies before USNORTHCOM becomes involved. Unfortunately, it takes valuable time for a request for assistance (RFA) to make its way through the bureaucratic process of approval because it must be approved by the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Lichtenstein, Uh-Bien, Marion, Seers, Orton, and Schreiber state in their paper on complexity leadership theory that

a new mindset is beginning to emerge, however, which recognizes that social processes are too complex and “messy” to be attributed to a single individual, organization, or pre-planned streams of events. (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Seers, Orton, and Scheiber, 2006, 2–4)

They would consider the NRF and all-hazards response as a complex adaptive system (CAS) where relationships are not defined hierarchically, but rather by interaction among heterogeneous agents and across agent networks. They go on to note that a CAS is comprised of agents or organizations, who resonate through sharing common interests, knowledge, and goals due to their history of interaction such as in the NRF (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Seers, Orton, and Scheiber, 2006).

Adding to the challenge is the fact the USNORTHCOM has few permanently assigned forces, even though it has the responsibility to plan, organize, and execute civil support missions. Instead, it is assigned forces whenever necessary to execute missions as ordered by the president or secretary of defense (USNORTHCOM, 2011). This procedure of assigning forces after the incident occurs hinders USNORTHCOM from developing the relationships and engaged partnerships that the NRF states are essential for national emergency preparedness, and causes delays in DoD response during the first critical days following a disaster. This slows the response of military capabilities being integrated into domestic events.

Admiral Winnefeld acknowledged these challenges during a speech in April 2011:

USNORTHCOM has a major role in supporting our federal and state partners in times of disasters. However, time is our enemy in these disasters and we must search every day for ways to become more agile in responding to the needs of our partners. Therefore, as military commanders, we must be fast and make quality decisions at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels all at once because the pace of events, nimble adversaries, and instant communications flows demand it. This has led to the development of NORTHCOM's first command motto "Velocitas cum Prudentia," Latin for speed of wisdom and we have to live this every single day. (Winnefeld, 2011)

D. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In order for USNORTHCOM to improve its ability to integrate military capabilities in accordance with the NRF, it needs to use the activities of leading, combined with the elements of partnerships, to improve its ability to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with other organizations.

E. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Primary Question

What are the activities of leading and elements of partnerships that the regional desk officer program uses to improve USNORTHCOM's ability cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with its federal and state partners in order to properly integrate military capabilities for domestic incidents?

2. Secondary Questions

What mechanisms or programs does USNORTHCOM use to improve cooperation, coordination, and collaboration with its federal and state partners for emergency preparedness and response?

How has the regional desk officer program improved USNORTHCOM's ability to develop partnerships and integrate the use of military capabilities?

F. METHODOLOGY

This thesis uses a combination of the ethnographic research methods and qualitative data analysis including participant observation and grounded theory. Social and behavioral scientists use the ethnographic approach to learn about the social and cultural life of a particular social setting. This approach is used to solve complex social problems by going below the surface of issues to challenge the assumptions made about the topic (Schedsul & LeCompte, 1999). By going below the surface, "ethnographic research is like peeling back an onion. As you peel back the layers of an onion, you discover there is yet more to be seen" (National Park Service, 2010). Therefore, ethnographic researchers need to focus their studies on a particular topic or "lens" to view the social group they are studying (Schedsul & LeCompte, 1999).

Ethnography is an approach to inquiry that uses the researcher as the primary tool of data collection. It emphasizes and builds on the perspectives of the people in the research setting. Therefore, it is important to adapt the research to locally appropriate aide of data collection or instruments that are effective in building a narrative, story, picture, or theory of the local culture that is predictive and produces hunches, guesses,

and hypotheses that can be applied to the same situation or to similar situations using the same research methods and data collection techniques (Schedsul & LeCompte, 1999, 5).

1. Participant Observation

This thesis uses the method of participant observation to collect data of the research setting. It requires the researcher to become immersed in the social setting in order to simultaneously observe and participate in the social interactions that the researcher is documenting. This method allows the researcher to participate in people's everyday lives and record what is seen and heard. "The rationale for this approach is that be 'being there' and actively taking part in the interactions at hand, the researcher can come closer to experiencing and understanding the 'insiders' point of view" (Mulcock, 2005). Through this observation, the researcher can collect data for meaningful analysis. Participant observation produces detailed descriptions of what the researcher sees and hears along with the researcher's own interpretations and analysis of the data (Mulcock & Hume, 2005).

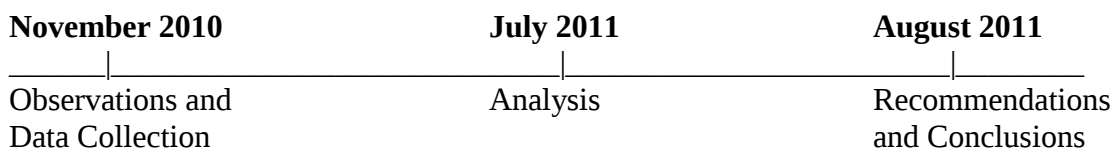
G. GROUNDED THEORY

Another characteristic of ethnographic research "is that it uses inductive, interactive, and recursive processes to build theories to explain the behavior and beliefs under study" (Schedsul & LeCompte, 1999). Grounded theory is a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the generation of theory from the collected data. The first step is to perform data collection through a variety of methods including participant observation. The researcher collects data and then develops a credible conceptual framework. This allows the researcher to extract key points and/or trends from the text of the data and groups them into categories, which then become the basis for the creation of theory. Therefore, grounded theory is dependent on the researcher's ability to conceptualize and organize the data to make abstract connections. This leads to one of the goals of grounded theory, which is to formulate or "reverse engineer" a hypothesis based on the conceptual ideas (Strauss & Glaser, 1967) (Glaser, 2009). This same process is referred to as domain and structural analysis (Spradley, 1979), and/or recursive analysis (McLaughlin & LeCompte, 1993).

H. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis examines the newly formed regional desk office (RDO) program to determine the activities of leading and elements of partnerships that can be used to improve USNORTHCOM's ability to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with other organizations. The author used his new position as a desk officer in the RDO to observe and study the development of the RDO concept and program by participating in the daily work lives of the staffs of USNORTHCOM and the Defense Coordinating Element in one of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions. The study lasted eight months, and was accomplished through office visits, teleconferences, emails, meetings, and site visits at USNORTHCOM Headquarters in Colorado Springs, as well as federal and state agencies throughout the FEMA region. The purpose was to record what was seen and heard through these multiple forms of communications in order to produce detailed descriptions and combine them with the author's interpretation and analysis of the data as an ongoing process throughout the study. Finally, the information and theories generated from the study were used to determine the key activities of leading and the essential elements of partnerships required to develop and maintain successful partnerships at USNORTHCOM in order to improve the integration of military capabilities during domestic events.

I. RESEARCH TIMELINE



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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. BACKGROUND

USNORTHCOM is an established geographical combatant command with over eight years of operational and planning experience in providing Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) within the continental United States. Therefore, the volume of relevant literature on the topic is constantly growing due to congressional, departmental, and academic review of its performance with the passing of each significant event. A general consensus in the literature is that there is a lack of interagency understanding of the capabilities that will be requested by civil authorities versus the capabilities that DoD can timely provide through USNORTHCOM in response to a catastrophic event.

Three categories of literature are relevant to thesis. The first reviews the difficulties that USNORTHCOM has had in integrating military capabilities with civil authorities during domestic events. The second and third categories involve both the activities of leading and the elements of partnerships. In today's complex world of homeland security, combined with the reality of shrinking budgets, agencies once again find themselves having to do more with less. However, the reality is that agencies at all levels of government must find ways to cooperate, coordinate, and integrate their resources and capabilities in an effective and efficient manner. The literature on leadership and partnerships provide ample theories, methods, and mechanisms for organizations such as USNORTHCOM to work in a collaborative manner and increase the level of national emergency preparedness. This chapter reviews articles and books that provide such guidance for organizations to follow.

B. GOVERNMENT REPORTS

This category of literature includes congressional reports, lesson-learned reports, and audits on the effectiveness of DSCA operations performed by USNORTHCOM since its establishment. Nine years after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the United States continues to face an uncertain, complex security environment with the potential for natural disasters and terrorist attacks. However, the poorly coordinated national response

to Hurricane Katrina in 2005 highlighted the need for a more coordinated and integrated civilian and military response to a major domestic incident (D'Agostino, 2010).

According to the White House Lessons Learned Report for Hurricane Katrina, the federal response to Hurricane Katrina demonstrated that the DoD has the capability to play a critical role in the nation's response to catastrophic events. During the Katrina response, DoD demonstrated capabilities to translate presidential decisions into prompt, effective action on the ground. In addition to possessing large numbers of operational personnel who have been trained and equipped for their missions, DoD brought robust communications infrastructure, logistics, and planning capabilities (White House, 2006).

However, the report also highlighted various challenges in the use of military capabilities during domestic incidents, which slowed the application of DoD resources during the critical initial response. These included separate command structures for active duty military and National Guard, which hindered the unity of effort, and the twenty-one step request for assistance (RFA) process that DoD must use to assign capabilities to support civil authorities, which led to critical needs not being met. It also stated that DoD capabilities must be better identified and integrated into the nation's response plans—before the catastrophic event occurs—to ensure the DoD is not late to need again. The lesson learned was that the DHS and DoD should jointly plan for DoD support of federal response activities (White House, 2006).

The DoD Office of Inspector General also concluded that USNORTHCOM and DoD need to improve planning and coordinating with the DHS, federal agencies, the National Guard Bureau, and the states. This would enable the DoD to provide timely assistance to civil authorities when needed during future disasters (Scott, 2007). Unfortunately, these lessons were identified again during the 2007 and 2008 California wildfires. The DoD inspector general concluded that USNORTHCOM unnecessarily used at least \$3 million for civil support that potentially could have been provided by existing DoD assets and other agencies already in the disaster area, or through contracts. Once again, this highlights the lack of understanding by senior DoD leadership of what the DoD capabilities will be required to support civil authorities during a disaster (Jolliffe, 2010).

The Advisory Panel on DoD Capabilities for Support of Civil Authorities published a report in September 2010 outlining imperatives for enhancing defense support of civil authorities for the Secretary of Defense and Congress. The report found that the emergency response community has long understood that the foundation for effective response to a catastrophic incident consists of effective planning, information sharing, coordination, and preparation before the incident occurs. However, the advisory panel concluded that policies and institutions impede the information sharing and coordination that are required to substantially improve national preparedness. It also concluded that the defense coordinating officer (DCO)/defense coordinating elements (DCE) that are assigned to each FEMA region will be unlikely to perform all missions to ensure adequate preparation, planning, and response for catastrophes. Furthermore, the existing DCO/DCE structure cannot scale up sufficiently to effectively perform its missions during a large-scale incident because it does not have a staff sized or structure to exercise command and control of anything by a small federal military force (Advisory Panel on DoD Capabilities for Support of Civil Authorities, 2010).

Unfortunately, five years after Hurricane Katrina, issues remain about the DoD's ability to provide defense support of civil authorities for catastrophic events. While the DoD has assigned DCO/DCE to coordinate civilian requests-for-assistance, it has not clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and command/control relationships. Nor has it conducted a formal staffing needs assessment that accounts for difference across FEMA regions, and has not identified the capabilities it will be asked to provide during a catastrophic event (D'Agostino, 2010).

As stated above, many documents have been written over the years directing the DoD and USNORTHCOM to plan and execute DSCA operations. Even more literature has reviewed and critiqued these operations after events, with recommendations to improve planning, coordinating, and executing DSCA operations. However, there is a noticeable gap in literature that proposes processes to improve integration of DoD capabilities required by civil authorities during a catastrophic event.

C. LEADERSHIP

The articles and books in this category of literature explore the state of leadership over the past two decades, which has made a departure from focusing on the characteristics and traits of the individual leader. Instead, the literature has been leaning towards the importance of examining the activities of leading. The problem with the traditional understanding of leadership is that well-intended leaders fortify the silo mentality of agencies, instead of working across organizational lines and boundaries, in a coordinated effort to improve national preparedness (Marcus, Dorn, & Henderson, 2006).

1. Meta-Leadership and National Emergency Preparedness

Today's complex homeland security environment requires an array of government and non-government organizations to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate to increase the speed and effectiveness of national preparedness and response. Marcus, Dorn, and Henderson state that "leaders who are able to influence and accomplish such collaboration of effort across organizations—multi-jurisdictional, multi-agency, and public-private—are termed meta-leaders." They go on to state that meta-leaders do not derive their power from formal positions. Instead, they influence other organizations by effective negotiation and the development of personal and organizational creditability that reaches across organizational boundaries. They chart new courses in coordination with a range of external organizations outside their organizational experience or responsibility (Marcus, Dorn, & Henderson, 2006).

2. Where Military Professionalism Meets Complexity Science

In this article, the authors discuss and explore key leadership tasks for complex adaptive systems:

- **Relationship building:** leading in a complex adaptive system requires focusing more attention on relationship building instead of defining roles for people.
- **Loose coupling:** when problems are poorly defined and the environment is uncertain, complex and ambiguous, loose coupling enhances organizational adaptability because it allows more degrees of freedom in the organization.

- **Complicating:** trying to keep things simple and use a predesigned formula and sticking to it can lead to a disaster. Instead, leaders must develop complicated sets of information-driven networks that will enable the creation of order.
- **Diversity:** when a complex incident occurs, leaders need differing points of view in order to adapt correctly to the situation.
- **Sensemaking:** when a system is unknown, sensemaking becomes more important than decision making. Before decisions can be made, leaders must have a notion or sense of what is going on around them.
- **Learning:** the task for leaders in a CAS is to create a learning organization that values information sharing and teamwork.
- **Improvising:** this is needed when complex events unfold quickly and the organization must respond to it. (Paparone, Anderson, & McDaniel, 2007)

3. **Complexity Leadership Theory: An Interactive Perspective on Leading in Complex Adaptive Systems**

In this article, the authors propose that

leadership (as opposed to leaders), can be seen as a complex dynamic process that emerges in the interactive “spaces between” people and ideas. That is, leadership is a dynamic that transcends the capabilities of individuals alone; it is the product of interaction, tension, and exchange rules governing changes in perception and understanding that they label as a dynamic of adaptive leadership.

They go to explain that effective leadership does not reside within the leader’s symbolic, motivational, or charismatic actions. Instead, the notion of leadership is that it

is an emergent event, an outcome of relational interactions among agents. As such, adaptive leadership does not mean getting followers to follow the leader’s wishes; rather, leadership occurs when interacting agents generate adaptive outcomes. (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Marion, Seers, Orton, & Schieber, 2006)

4. **The Importance of Flexible Leadership**

In his article, Gary Yukl reviews a sampling of the literature on adaptive leadership. He explains that research on leadership provides strong evidence that flexible, adaptive leadership is essential, especially when there is substantial change in the situation (Yukl, 2008). Yukl notes that several skills are relevant for flexible,

adaptive leadership; these include the ability to understand the situational requirements for effective leadership and to be flexible in adapting to changing conditions and crises (Senge, 1990). Situational awareness and social intelligence both involve a person's ability to identify and understand the leadership situation, including social and political processes and relationships. Social intelligence also includes the ability to select an appropriate response and to be flexible on one's behavior (Zaccarro, Gilbert, Thor, & Mumford, 1976).

5. Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Strategic Change Initiation

Gioia and Chittipeddi utilize the metaphors of sensemaking and sensegiving as means to bring about strategic change in an organization. They state,

Strategic change involves an attempt to change current modes of cognition and action to enable the organization to take advantage of important opportunities or to cope with consequential environmental threats.

To bring about this change, leaders must make sense of a new or complex situation, which is referred to as sensemaking. This is followed by the leadership providing some guiding vision of the changed organization to all stakeholders, which is the process called sensegiving. Therefore, the metaphors of "sensemaking" and "sensegiving" broaden the concept of leading activities during the period of change (Chittipeddi & Gioia, 1991).

6. A Leader's Framework for Decision Making

In this article, David Snowden describes his decision-making model, based on a sensemaking framework that he refers to as the Cynefin Framework. This framework can be used by both leaders and the collective organization to make better decisions. Snowden realizes that we all have different backgrounds and experiences that influence us in ways we can never understand, and that have a profound effect on the way we make decisions. Therefore, the premise of the Cynefin Framework is that leaders learn to define the framework with examples from their own organization's history and scenarios of its possible future. This can be done through simple storytelling, which enhances communication and helps leaders to quickly understand the context in which they are operating (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Snowden explains that there are three domains in this framework: ordered, complex, and chaotic. However, in the framework, the ordered domain is divided into *simple* and *complicated*, and adds in an area known as *disorder*. The key to the Cynefin Framework is that when a problem develops for an organization, the leader must understand the context of the problem. Once understood, the leader can then make the appropriate type of decision. The problem is when a leader does not understand the context and is therefore in danger of using the wrong decision type. When this happens, the leader is in the area known as disorder and usually falls back on prior experience to make a decision—the thought process being that past success will lead to success in the future (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

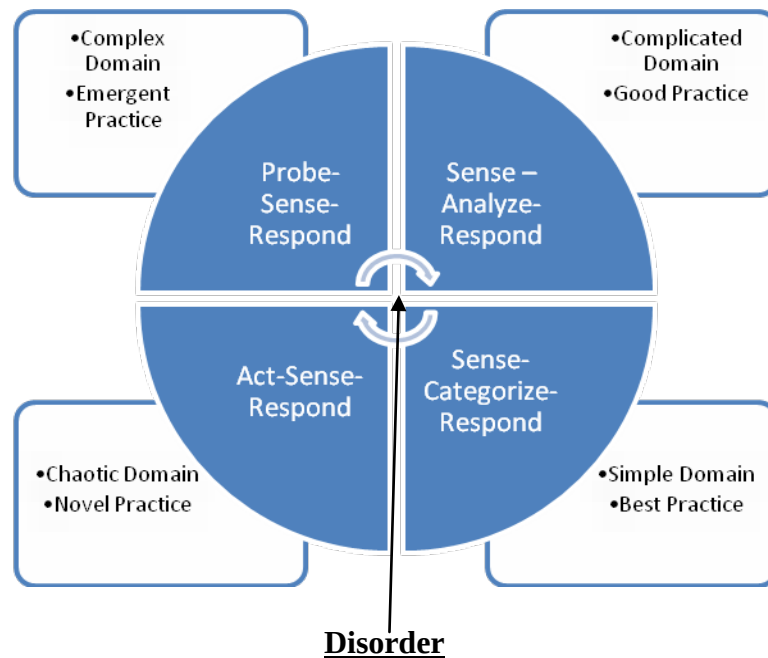


Figure 1. Cynefin Model (From Snowden, 2009)

D. THEORY OF PARTNERSHIPS

The articles and books in this category of literature not only define partnerships, but describe common aspects, characteristics, or elements that are crucial for the success of any partnership. Starting with a working definition, Mohr and Spekman define partnerships as

purposive strategic relationships between independent firms who share compatible goals, strive for mutual benefit, and acknowledge a high level of mutual interdependence. They join efforts to achieve goals that each firm, acting alone, could not. (Spekman & Mohr, 1994)

Partnerships emerge in response to a problem and when people feel that the benefits exceed the costs. The benefits of participating include prior mutual respect, perceived need for collaboration, a history of working together, and the expectation of a payoff from sharing information and resources. However, participation is unlikely when people have a history of disrespect, when their turf is threatened, and when they fear that they will not get sufficient credit for their contribution (Rosenbaum, 2002). Therefore, the key elements that enable partnerships are collaboration, relationships, and trust.

1. Partnering Theory and Practice, Jim Walsh (Walsh, 2011)

In his article, Walsh states that the partnering process implies a commitment to working towards common objectives; having high level of mutual trust; a willingness to co-operate, share responsibility and accept accountability; and, where necessary, to alter the prevailing institutional structures. This requires that each partner accepts agreed objectives based on negotiation between partners coming from different perspectives. This aspect of partnerships is likely to require fundamental changes in attitude and priorities. This challenge can be overcome gradually through constant nurturing, managing, and reinforcing. The article goes on to conclude that all partnerships should ensure the following:

- Each actor has a recognized role and a clear idea of the benefits to them.
- That representatives on the partnership structures are committed individuals with significant authority and influence within their respective organizations.

- That there are clear communication lines between partners and effective boards, committee and form structures.
- That partnership structures are able to adapt to changing circumstances.

2. **Characteristics of Partnerships Success: Mohr and Spekman (Spekman & Mohr, 1994)**

Mohr and Spekman explain their hypothesis about partnerships in their article. Their hypothesis states, more successful partnerships, compared with less successful partnerships, exhibit higher levels of:

- **Commitment:** Because more committed partners will exert effort and balance short-term problems with long-term goal achievement, higher levels of commitment are associated with partnership success.
- **Coordination:** Without high levels of coordination, processes fail and any planned mutual advantage cannot be achieved.
- **Interdependence:** Both parties recognize that the advantages of interdependence provide benefits greater than either could attain singly.
- **Trust:** Is highly related to firms' desires to collaborate. Relationships featuring trust will be able to manage greater stress and will display greater adaptability.

3. **Partnership Synergy: A Practical Framework for Studying and Strengthening the Collaborative Advantage – Lasker, Weiss, and Miller**

In their article, Lasker, Weiss, and Miller pull from multiple articles to demonstrate the importance of collaboration within partnerships. They state that the substantial interest and investment in collaboration is based on the assumption that collaboration enhances the capacity of people and organizations to achieve goals (Lasker, Weiss, & Miller 2001). Gray defined collaboration as

a process through which parties who see different aspects of a problem can explore constructively their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible. (Gray, 1989)

Others describe collaboration as a process that enables independent individuals and organizations to combine their human and material resources so they can accomplish objectives they are unable to bring about alone (Kanter, 1994).

The power to combine the perspectives, resources, and skills of a group of people and organizations has been called *synergy*. Clearly, the synergy created by collaboration can be very powerful. The raw materials for synergy are the people and organizations that come together in a partnership. Collaborations with diverse participants, whose heterogeneous traits, abilities, and attitudes bring complementary strengths to the table, may have the greatest potential to solve problems (Mays, Halverson, & Kaluzny, 1998).

4. Evaluating Multi-Agency Anti-Crime Partnerships: Theory, Design, and Measurement Issue – Dennis P. Rosenbaum (Rosenbaum, 2002)

In this article, Rosenbaum describes the dynamics of partnerships, which include:

- **Social cohesion:** To what extent can the partnership be characterized as a cohesive group, where members feel positively toward one another, enjoy working together, and are committed to make the partnership a success?
- **Cooperation:** Good organizational climate implies limited conflict among members.
- **Coordination:** Occurs when agencies within the group take into account each other's actions when making decisions
- **Interaction Patterns:** Long-standing coalitions are characterized by frequent meetings with high attendance and good channels of internal communications

As Rosenbaum explains, the health of partnerships will be reflected in these social dynamics among group members. Therefore, the group's social relations and ability to communicate directly will affect the group's ability to reach an agreement on problems and to execute a plan of coordinated action (Rosenbaum, 2002).

5. Working Across Boundaries: Making Collaboration Work in Government – Russell Linden (Linden, 2002)

In his book, Linden creates a working definition for collaboration:

collaboration occurs when people from different organizations (or units within one organization) produce something together through joint effort, resources, and decision making, and share ownership of the final product.

Linden believes that organizations collaborate for several reasons:

- To achieve cost savings through economies of scale

- Ability to create something that you can't create on your own
- Higher quality of service for the end user
- Potential for organizational learning
- Better ability to achieve important outcomes

Linden goes on to describe that relationships are the glue that binds collaborative efforts. He states,

Poor relationships will kill almost any alliance; because without strong relationships, there's no trust, and without trust there will be no collaboration. When trust has been built, people are usually willing to give one another the benefit of the doubt and take small risks with each other.

A key aspect of his book is his list of some of the ways people develop relationships in their collaborative efforts:

- Begin meetings by getting reacquainted and getting people to reconnect
- Use open and candid communications such as self disclosure or acknowledging the other person's point of view even if you disagree with it
- Build trust by giving the parties a chance to be accountable
- Learn to collaborate by listen carefully to the other parties
- Provide and share credible information when it is requested or even before it is requested
- Use stories to communicate messages
- Make time for relationships and trust
- Create a sense of Entity through a shared past and envisioned future

6. The Speed of Trust – The One Thing That Changes Everything – Stephen Covey (Covey, 2006)

In his book, Covey states:

There is one thing that is common to every individual, relationship, team, family organization, nation, economy, and civilization throughout the world, one thing, which, if removed, will destroy the most powerful government, the most thriving economy, the most influential leadership, the greatest friendship, the strongest character, the deepest love. On the other hand, if developed and leveraged, that one thing has the potential to create unparalleled success and prosperity in every dimension of life. Yet, it is the least understood, most neglected, and most underestimated possibility of our time. That one thing is trust.

He goes on to define trust in the words of Jack Welch, former CEO of General Electric. He said, “You know it when you feel it.” Simply put, trust means confidence. The opposite of trust—distrust—is suspicion. When you trust people, you have confidence in them—in their integrity and in their abilities. When you distrust people, you are suspicious of them—or their integrity, their agenda, their capabilities, or their track record. Covey believes that trust is a function of both character and competence. Your character includes your integrity, motive, and intent with people, and competence, which includes your capabilities, skill, results, and track record.

Covey also quotes Jim Burke, Former Chairman and CEO, Johnson & Johnson:

You can’t have success without trust. The word trust embodies almost everything you can strive for that will help you to succeed. You tell me any human relationship that works without trust, whether it is a marriage or a friendship or a social interaction; in the longrun, the same thing is true about business, especially business that deals with the public.

Covey states that trust is a function of two things that are vital to building trust, which are character and competence. Character includes your integrity, motive, and intent with people, while your competence includes your capabilities, skills, results, and track record. He goes on to explain that they are equally important elements because a person may be sincere, even honest, but you will not fully trust them if they do not get results. The opposite is also true. A person who possesses great skill and talents, with an excellent track record, but is not an honest person, should not be trusted (Covey, 2006).

E. THEORY OF COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

This literature review, as a whole, demonstrates similarities between the activities of leading and the elements of developing successful partnerships. Based on these similarities, a theory of collaborative relationships was derived by synthesizing the literature cited above. The important activities of leading and elements of partnerships that are the basis for collaborative relationships include:

- **Trust:**
 - o Empowering each party and holding them accountable
 - o Creating confidence by being competent and having integrity
 - o Sharing credible information even before it is requested

- **Sensemaking:**
 - o Gaining situational awareness
 - o Creating an atmosphere that allows for learning through such mechanisms as trial and error
 - o Being adaptable and flexible
 - o Storytelling
 - o Negotiating

- **Collaboration:**
 - o Listening to each party
 - o Using open and candid communications
 - o Building social cohesion through informal interactions
 - o Creating a unified effort by developing interdependence through shared experiences, goals, and vision
 - o Creating buy-in

When used correctly, these elements and activities can be used in combination to help organizations to work and lead across boundaries to tackle the wicked problems that face homeland security professionals today. This sampling of literature demonstrates that there are methods and skills that leaders at all levels can use to move their organizations to a higher level of fitness, and develop the engaged partnerships that are required by the National Response Framework. However, what is not provided in this literature is an example of how these activities and elements come together in a large bureaucratic organization that is attempting to increase its level of fitness and remain reliable and relevant in keeping the nation prepared to respond to national emergencies and domestic events (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

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III. PROVIDING CIVIL SUPPORT AT UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND

Partnerships: More than any other commands I've observed, we are dependent on healthy collaboration with other nations and organizations.....USNORTHCOM will further tighten our collaboration and a variety of key domestic partners, foremost among which are the Department of Homeland Security, the National Guard, and the Intelligence Community. We will indicate to all of these organizations our eagerness to work on a trusting and transparent basis in order to better accomplish our overlapping missions. —Admiral James A. Winnefeld, Commander, USNORTHCOM

A. INTRODUCING THE CASE

The previous chapter provided literature that described the activities and elements organizations should use to develop successful partnerships. The purpose of this chapter is to give the reader an insight and understanding into USNORTHCOM's willingness and desire to build partnerships with organizations that it must support during domestic events. Therefore, this chapter provides information on the history, vision, and organization of USNORTHCOM, to give the reader an understanding of how it is organized to provide civil support. This chapter also describes the multiple organizations within USNORTHCOM that have overlapping duties and responsibilities to coordinate with its federal and state partners, and to provide situational awareness to the commander during times of domestic crises that have led to confusion both internally and externally.

B. BACKGROUND

In response to the terrible events of September 11, 2001, senior leaders in DoD began planning for the establishment of a combatant command whose primary mission would be to defend the U.S. homeland. On April 19, 2002, the 226th anniversary of the *shot heard around the world* at the Battle of Lexington, President Bush authorized the establishment of U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) to consolidate, under a single unified command, those existing homeland defense and civil support missions that were previously executed by other military organizations (USNORTHCOM, 2011).

C. VISION

The commander's vision is that NORTHCOM will be:

- Forward-looking, responsive, and agile
....ahead of every problem, overcoming barriers to speed, adapting quickly
- Effective and relevant at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels
...Focused on the right issues at the right levels at the right time
...Adept in understanding and managing risks
- Well-known for collegiality, integrity, competence, and humility
...Always a welcome partner in any activity or contingency
- Eager to push boundaries of how we perform our missions
...At the leading edge of technical and process innovation
- Internally synchronized and externally understood
...A well-informed, fully aligned, and confident staff
...Tuned to the many audiences in our communications space
(USNORTHCOM, 2011)

As stated in the previous chapter, this vision demonstrates the elements of partnerships. It states that NORTHCOM, as an organization, will be known for both its character and competency. It will also communicate effectively with external organizations while being confident in its own abilities, and will be relevant and flexible to its partners needs.

D. ORGANIZATION

Multiple pre-existing programs and organizations located throughout USNORTHCOM have the role and responsibility to communicate with civil authorities to integrate military capabilities and planning for domestic incidents. The following organizational charts depict the component commands of USNORTHCOM, followed by the Headquarters Staff organizations of USNORTHCOM. Many of these organizations have a direct role in coordinating with federal and state partners to provide civil support and/or situational awareness of domestic events to the commander of NORTHCOM.

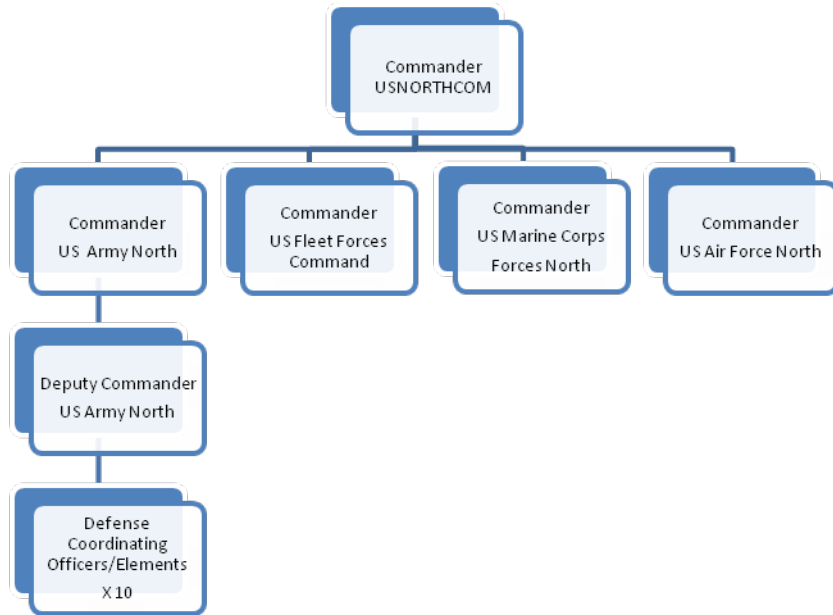


Figure 2. USNORTHCOM Component Commands

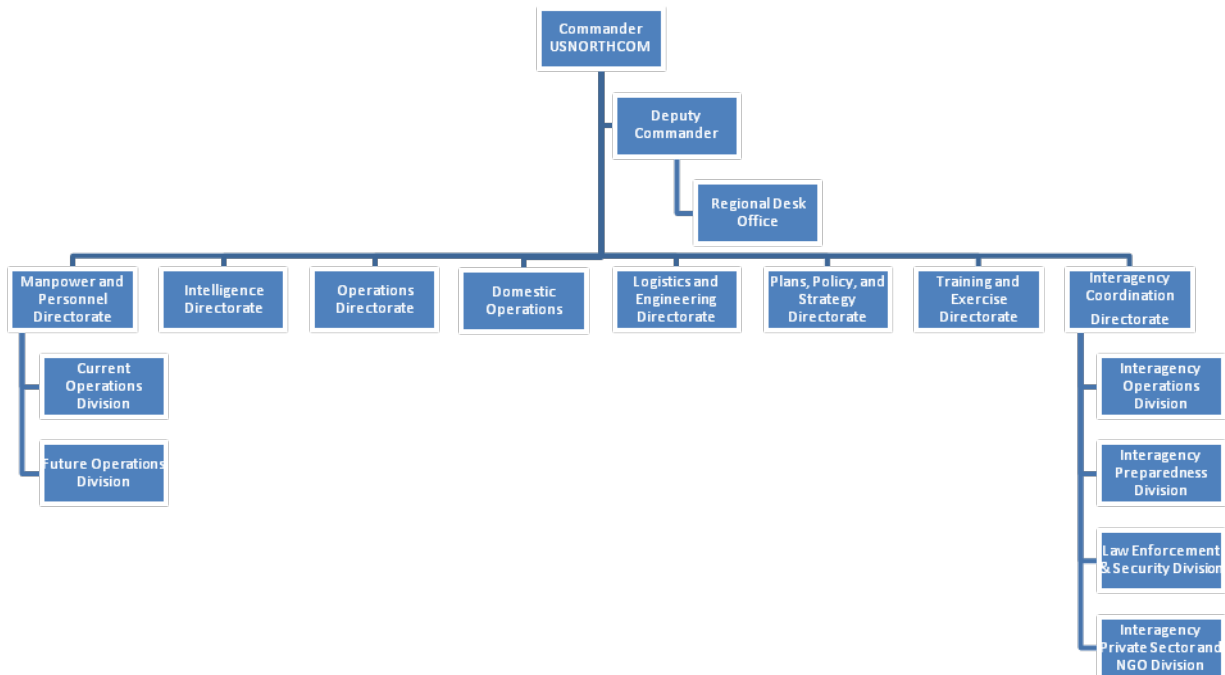


Figure 3. USNORTHCOM Headquarters Chart

1. U.S. Army North (ARNORTH)

ARNORTH is a subordinate command of USNORTHCOM. Its mission states:

ARNORTH, the Joint Force Land Component Command (JFLCC) and Army Service Component Command (ASCC) to USNORTHCOM, conducts Homeland Defense and Civil Support operations and Theater Security Cooperation activities in order to protect the American people and our way of life. One of its key tasks includes coordinating the activities of Defense Coordinating Officers (DCO) and their elements (DCE) assigned in each Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) region.

ARNORTH has ten assigned defense coordinating officers (DCOs) and assigned one to each FEMA region. If requested and approved, the DCO serves as the DoD's single point of contact at the joint field officer (JFO). With few exceptions, requests for Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) originating at the JFO are coordinated with, and processed through the DCO. The DCO has a defense coordinating element (DCE) consisting of a staff and Emergency Preparedness Military Liaison Officers to facilitate coordination and support to activated Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). (ARNORTH, 2010)

2. Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO)

Duty Description of the Defense Coordinating Officer: Command and control of permanently assigned staff and Operational Control of Army Emergency Planning Liaison Officers (EMPLOs). Provide subject matter expertise for state and federal emergency response plans, emergency preparedness oversight with military installations regarding Base Support Installation Operations, and readiness oversight for designated /dedicated Homeland Defense (HD)/Civil Support (CS) Chemical, Biological, Radiological Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) forces. Perform as a key player in local, state, federal, and DoD HLD/CS exercises. Represent DoD in the disaster area providing liaison to state and other federal agencies, validating mission assignments from the FCO and determining the best military resources for specific missions. DCO Responsibilities: (ARNORTH, 2010) (Dept. of the Army, 2009)

- Subject matter expert for all state and federal emergency response plans.
- Build synergy & habitual relationships with:
 - o FEMA Staff

- o State Emergency Responders
- o State Adjutants General and State Joint Force Headquarters staff
- Key player in all local, state, federal, and DoD Homeland Defense and Civil Support exercises.
- Maintains liaison with the Regional Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Headquarters and other federal agency partners.
- Maintains situational awareness of developing situations involving state, regional, and federal agencies, and potential terrorist intelligence, as well as DoD Active Component, and Reserve Component units, facilities, and capabilities.
- Oversight with all military installations regarding Base Support Installation (BSI) operations.
- National Special Security Event (NSSE) planning and support.
- Be prepared to conduct operations in another region.

DCE Responsibilities: (ARNORTH, 2010) (FEMA, 2011)

- Deploy consistent with current response plans.
- Represent the DoD in the disaster area.
- Provide liaison to state, local, and other federal agencies.
- Validate Mission Assignments for the Federal Coordinating Officer.
- Determine the best military resource for the mission.

State Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (EPLO) responsibilities: (ARNORTH, 2010) (FEMA, 2011)

- DoD liaison with states and federal agencies for Defense Support of Civil Authorities
- Visibility with the National Guard in the state
- Observe and participate in training exercises
- Maintain situational awareness within the state

Regional Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers (REPLOs) responsibilities: (ARNORTH, 2010) (FEMA, 2011)

- Subject matter experts for the Region and on the DoD Services
- Highly trained in Request for Federal Assistance (RFA) and Mission Assignment development
- Staff reserve element for the DCE

Joint Regional Medical Plans and Operations Officers (JRMPOs) (USNORTHCOM, 2009):

- Provides subject matter expertise related to DoD medical assets within the area of regional responsibility.
- Provide subject matter expertise related to state and regional non-DoD medical capabilities.

- Provide Health Service Support (HSS) plans and operations assistance to DCOs, Services, and SEPLOs) within designated regions.
- Provide regional/state plans and operations expertise/input to the NORTHCOM Headquarters, its components, and elements.
- Provide interagency HSS plans and operations support through active participation in meetings with the FEMA Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC).
- Provide HSS input on plans to NORAD and USNORTHCOM Family of Plans, Service Planning and Regional/State Public Health and Emergency Manager/Coordinators and orders generated during NORTHCOM DSCA operations.
- Maintain regional interagency relationships through relationship building.

3. USNORTHCOM Interagency Coordination (IC) Directorate

The Interagency Coordination Directorate is designed to be a relationship builder that facilitates, coordinates and synchronizes sharing and activity across organizational boundaries. Its mission is to integrate and the synchronize USNORTHCOM interagency activities to ensure mutual understanding, unity of effort, and full spectrum support. (USNORTHCOM, 2011) USNORTHCOM Interagency Coordination (IC) Directorate Functions: (USNORTHCOM, 2011)

- Serves as the Command's leader, manager, and coordinator on interagency operations.
- Focuses on building effective, durable, and lasting relationships between USNORTHCOM and federal, state, and non-governmental, commercial, and private sector agencies; agencies that partner in Counter Terrorism (CT), civil support, and address the asymmetric threats against the homeland.
- Develops and fosters close interagency cooperation and interoperability to ensure synchronization of activities, mutual understanding, and unity of effort. Interacts with senior level combatant command (COCOM), National Agency, and Allied Government personnel on a daily basis.
- Leads and manages the interagency effort through the tiered emergency response levels during exercises, contingencies, and war.

4. USNORTHCOM Directorate of Operations (J-3)

The mission of the directorate of operations is to be the principal advisor to the commander of USNORTHCOM on all operational matters, providing strategic guidance to plan and execute USNORTHCOM

missions including air, land, maritime, ballistic missile defense, and cyber homeland defense operations, as well as Defense Support of Civil Authorities. (USCG, 2011)

This is accomplished through several divisions including the Current Operations Division (J33), which provides the commander of USNORTHCOM situational awareness of operations information from across the commands, regions, and components of USNORTHCOM.

The mission of the Current Operations Division is to assess, synchronize, facilitate all current operations and exercises within the NC AOR while maintaining situational awareness of the operational environment, assessing emergent information, and operational impacts upon current and future operations in order to produce actionable knowledge and understanding for senior leader decisions and future operations. (USNORTHCOM, 2011)

USNORTHCOM Domestic Operations (DOMOPS):

The Domestic Operations Division within the Operations Directorate of USNORTHCOM provides the commander with the scalable capability to form the core of a Joint Task Force or enable multiple organizations in order to anticipate and conduct homeland defense and civil support missions anywhere in USNORTHCOM's area of responsibility during planned or crisis operations while providing programmatic oversight of the Contingency Dual Hat Status Commander (CDSC). (USNORTHCOM, 2011)

5. Contingency Dual Hat Status Commander Program

The CDSC concept is intended to achieve unity of effort when federal support is needed to support a state during a disaster. It allows a single commander to direct federal and state resources to better coordinate domestic incident responses. Its purpose is to allow USNORTHCOM to support the state joint force headquarters commander's staff with some federal expertise, should the state desire it. Therefore, USNORTHCOM will assign Title 10 active duty deputy commanders who will be trained alongside the state CDSC's. USNORTHCOM can also leverage a staff element from DOMOPS to also support the state joint force headquarters staff. (NGB, 2011)

The contingency dual-status commander concept is intended to foster greater cooperation among federal and state assets during a disaster. (USNORTHCOM, 2011)

This chapter outlined the many organizations and mechanisms that USNORTHCOM relies on to coordinate with interagency partners. However, these multiple organizations with overlapping interests and/or equities can overwhelm interagency partners who may not be staffed to respond to these multiple organizations. It may also lead to confusion for both federal and state partners with whom they are talking. This can actually cause damage to the very partnerships that USNORTHCOM is attempting to develop, foster, and maintain in order to increase its speed of response in times of crisis.

IV. REGIONAL DESK OFFICER (RDO) STORY AND ANALYSIS

A. THE EMERGENCE OF THE REGIONAL DESK OFFICER PROGRAM

The previous chapter described the multiple organizations within USNORTHCOM that have overlapping duties and responsibilities to communicate and coordinate with federal and state agencies as well as other organizations. These organizations are also responsible for keeping the commander informed about these interactions to include partner capabilities to respond to domestic events and environmental threats that may require USNORTHCOM support of civil authorities. However, this information must work its way through USNORTHCOM and the chain of command before it is briefed to the commander. This causes the information to be delayed and possibly altered while it goes through an approval process at each level of leadership. Therefore, the commander created a new organization that would report directly to him with real-time information that included raw data and insight into the capabilities that existed in the FEMA regions and the environmental concerns our federal and state partners had in their specific regions. This new organization is called the regional desk office, which is responsible to administer the regional desk officer program.

This chapter contains observations on the development, implementation, and refinement of the regional desk officer program at USNORTHCOM. The observations were made while the author fully participated in the program over an eight-month period as a regional desk officer. The purpose of this chapter is to present these observations to the reader in a manner that allows the data to be analyzed to determine lessons learned that can be used to develop strategic partnerships in other public bureaucratic organizations.

B. CYNEFIN SENSEMAKING FRAMEWORK

1. Creation of the Regional Desk Officer Program

The concept for the regional desk officer program was developed during the summer of 2010 by a working group made up of representatives from across the command. The working group was formed shortly after Admiral Winnefeld took

command in order to develop a new capability that would provide him real time information at the state level during a domestic event. According to members of the working group, the purpose of this new capability was to enhance partnership building between USNORTHCOM and the states while providing the commander situational awareness on the capabilities and gaps of each state that would require military support during a crisis.

The members of the working group commented that they had received minimal direction from the commander at the beginning. The commander simply stated that he wanted a group of subject matter experts (SMEs) on the states that he could reach out and touch during times of crisis. Therefore, the working group was convinced that a problem did not exist and they only needed to develop a new capability in response to the commander's desire for direct access to information.

This concept of having action officers become SMEs for each state is not a new idea. The Joint Staff and other combatant commands have established "Country Desk Officer" programs. In those programs, action officers are assigned specific countries and become subject matter experts on them. They also have the responsibility to get approval for DoD members to travel into their assigned country or countries for conference, exercises, meetings, and operations. Their day-to-day responsibility is to be the link for coordination and information flow between the commandant command or Joint Task Force and the country coordination elements in each of the different American embassies in the combatant commands area of responsibility. They also facilitate connecting the embassies with the correct directorate or person when embassies have questions or concerns relating to military matters. The bottom line is that the country desk officers are a coordination element between DoD and U.S. Embassies.

As one member of the working group stated,

We immediately determined that the USNORTHCOM could not afford to have an actions officer dedicated for each state, so we decided that each course of action (COA) would include only ten regional action officers that would be aligned with the FEMA regions and Defense Coordinating Officers. We also made the conscience decision not to perform a mission analysis to determine the duties and responsibilities of this new office

because we figured they would be developed later by the office itself. Therefore, we simply designed feasible courses of action considering the limited resources that were available.

2. Analyzing the Initial Decision to Develop a Regional Desk Officer Program

When we consider the decisions that leaders make and attempt to study them, it is useful to utilize a framework in which to analyze the data. In this case, David Snowden developed a decision-making model he developed based on a sensemaking framework that he calls the Cynefin Model. David Snowden said

Its value is not as much in logical arguments or empirical verifications as in its effect on the sensed-making and decision-making capabilities of those who use it. It gives decision makers powerful new constructs that they can use to make sense of a wide range of unspecified problems. (Snowden, 2003)

By using this model, we can drill down and study each decision along the development, implementation, and refining phases of the regional desk officer concept. The Cynefin Model is considered a decision-making model and by using it, the decisions that were made from the development of the regional desk officer concept through implementation and refinement can actually be tracked and analyzed. Upon taking command, the commander decided to employ a regional desk officer concept because he sensed he was not getting information quickly enough to make timely decisions about civil support (Snowden, 2003).

As the combatant commander, he is ultimately held responsible by the Secretary of Defense to ensure the quick and effective integration of DoD capabilities to support civilian authorities during domestic events. He had recently completed the nomination process and congressional confirmation hearings in order to take command of USNORTHCOM. Therefore, he was well aware of the reports that criticized USNORTHCOM's past performance of integrating DoD capabilities with civil authorities during domestic events. However, as the new commander, he felt or "sensed" that he was not able to get accurate information in a timely manner to make informed

decisions quickly during times of emergencies. Therefore, his decision to immediately establish a working group to develop a feasible program that would “satisfy his desire for direct information on the states.”

By allowing the data in the story to develop the framework, it seems that upon taking command, Admiral Winnefeld was in the central domain of disorder. He established a working group of experts who looked at a few courses of action— attributes of the complicated domain. However, this group consisted of individuals from a cross section of the command, which the recommended that the duties and responsibilities of the new office should emerge during the implementation phase. These are attributes that reside in the complex domain. However, his decision to utilize the “Country Desk Officer” concept was straight out of the simple domain. Snowden states,

Individuals compete to interpret the central space on the basis of their preference for action. Those most comfortable with stable order seek to create or enforce rules.....The stronger the importance of the issue, the more people seem to pull it toward the domain where they most empowered by their perspectives.

Snowden goes on to explain:

Problems in the simple complex are in an ordered system. There is a relationship between cause and effect and it is predictable, so it can be determined in advance. The decision model is sense, categorize, and respond. We see what is coming-in, we make it fit a previous determined category, and we decide what to do. It is a model based on best practices such as standard operation procedures or bureaucratic procedures. (Snowden, 2003)

In the case of the regional desk officer concept, Admiral Winnefeld had already made the decision to utilize “state desk officers” based on the practice of other military organizations using “country desk officers.” He basically sensed there was an information flow and sharing problem, determined that the problem fell into the same category as other military organizations dealing with individual countries, and determined the solution was the same “country desk officer” procedures of other military organizations.

Unfortunately, when leaders use best practice in a complicated or complex domain, trouble can occur. As Snowden states, “you end up pissing people off.” (Snowden D., 2009). Tim Harford, who is a columnist for the *Financial Times*, has defined this problem as the “God Complex.” This occurs when leaders in the face of an incredibly complicated world are nevertheless absolutely convinced that they understand the way the world works. Therefore, no matter how complicated the problem, the leader is absolutely sure that his/her solution is the correct one. However as Harford states, “with billions of people, the world is far too complex to think in those terms” (Harford, 2011).

3. Building the Regional Desk Office

I joined the regional desk office at the end of November 2010. However, I soon discovered that the office was just coming together, and no one was sure what our mission, duties, and/or responsibilities were as regional desk officers. Therefore, I did not receive a clear mission statement or defined requirements. The only guidance we all received from the office director was to travel throughout our assigned regions and build relationships with state and federal emergency preparedness personnel. As my new boss stated, “We are building the plane as we are flying it.” In hindsight, this metaphor was right on target. The lack of a clear mission and ambiguous requirements led to months of confusion among the regional desk officers, across the USNORTHCOM staff and the defense coordinating officers, as well as our state and federal partners. It also created animosity between the DCOs and our new office because they thought it was the role of the DCO to communicate between the states and the commander, USNORTHCOM. It seemed to the DCOs that we were sent out by the parent organization to watch over their shoulders and even do their jobs for them.

This is an example of what Snowden refers to as the boundary between the simple domain and the chaotic domain. He refers to this boundary as the “zone of complacency.” This is when decision makers start to believe that things are simple and ordered, and that past success means that you cannot fail (Snowden and Boone, 2007). In

this case, it refers to the past success of the country desk officer program. Unfortunately, before you realize it, you fall off the cliff from the simple domain into the chaotic domain, which puts the organization into a crisis.

Snowden explains that the chaotic context is the “domain of rapid response.” In a chaotic context, searching for the right answers would be pointless: The relationship between cause and effect are impossible to determine because they shift constantly and no manageable patterns exist—only turbulence. In this domain, a leader must first act to establish order, then sense where stability is present and where it is absent, then respond by working to transform the situation from chaos into complexity, where the identification of emerging patterns can both help prevent future crises and discern new opportunities (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

This is exactly what the director for the region desk office did. He sensed he needed to do something to relieve the pressure on the RDO Office from organizations both within USNORTHCOM and externally in the regions. Therefore, he acted by directing all the regional desk officers including himself into the field to act, sense, and respond through the crisis. No one was sure what the duties and responsibilities of the new office were, but he was receiving pressure from the commander, deputy commander, ARNORTH, and the USNORTHCOM staff to do something in order to prove the concept. In addition, the DCOs, and our federal and state partners were asking what our purpose was. The traveling gave the impression that the new office was doing something, and what we got out of it was a sense of what the mission should be and the role the office should have in USNORTHCOM.

4. Refining the RDO Program

By January, the regional desk office made its first attempt at defining a mission statement in preparation for briefing the commander on the operations of the new program. The mission statement and briefing were sent out to the defense coordinating officers throughout the country who objected to the mission statement:

The RDO Mission is to provide the Commander greater situational awareness and improve USNORTHCOM's speed of response to FEMA regions and interagency mission partners, when requested.

The reason for their objection was that it cut them out of information flow process between the commander of USNORTHCOM and the FEMA regions. They strongly believed that the defense coordinating officers who were co-located with the FEMA regional offices should remain the single point of contact for DoD to ensure that the relationships that were formed over the years were not suddenly changed during times of crisis. It was important to make sure that the message to the commander was accurate and consistent in order to make sure the correct capabilities were delivered when requested by FEMA.

Therefore, by February, a new mission statement was developed and presented to the commander during a briefing with the regional desk officers. The new mission statement included utilizing the defense coordinating officers and element. It stated:

The RDO Mission is to provide the Commander greater situational awareness and improve USNORTHCOM's speed of response to FEMA regions and interagency mission partners, through the DCO/DCE, when requested.

The Commander provided his feedback and guidance for the program. He re-stated that he expected to have an action officer assigned to each FEMA Region that would be subject matter experts on each region, including the critical infrastructure and capabilities that were in each region. He expected that each regional desk officer would develop relationships with the emergency management personnel of each state including the National Guard. He wanted action officers who had a complete understanding of each state and could increase his situational awareness of events occurring in any state, so that USNORTHCOM could lean forward and increase the speed of its response. He also stated that each regional desk officer would become familiar with state emergency preparedness and response plans and assist the states in developing their plans by communicating the USNORTHCOM perspective to them.

The director of the regional desk office held a planning meeting following the briefing to the commander to discuss the way ahead for the program. He believed that the work that we had been performing was on track with the commander's intent, but we needed to clarify our duties and responsibilities, as well as our position within the USNORTHCOM staff. He realized that we were a new organization and the creation of the program was considered a "big threat" to organizations such as ARNORTH. ARNORTH had the administrative responsibility for the DCO program and they were not comfortable with the DCOs ability to go directly to the command by utilizing the regional desk office.

The final mission statement that was developed in coordination with ARNORTH, the DCOs, and the Interagency Coordination Directorate, and published in the NORTHCOM Instruction stated:

The RDO Mission is to develop knowledge and networks required to provide the Commander greater situational awareness and improve USNORTHCOM's speed of response to the FEMA Regions and interagency mission partners, through the Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordination Elements, when requested. Additionally, support States and regions in developing their plans by providing the HQ USNORTHCOM perspective.

As pointed out in the story, there was a lot of activity during the refinement phase because the regional desk officer program has moved into what Snowden refers to as the complex context. This is the domain of emergence and the realm of "unknown unknowns" where the whole is far more than the sum of its parts. There is no right answer that can be ferreted out. In this domain, the situations and decisions in organizations are complex because of some major change that introduces unpredictability and flux. In this domain, things can only be understood in retrospect. Instructive patterns, however, can emerge if the leader conducts experiments that are safe to fail. That is why the leader must patiently allow the path forward to reveal itself. The leader needs to probe first, then sense, and then respond. The one concern is the temptation for the leader to fall back into traditional command-and-control management style and to demand fail-safe business plans with defined outcomes (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

Once again, the data that can be pulled from the story illustrates Snowden's points about the complex context and domain. The director of the RDO Office was able to move the program from the chaotic domain when he "sensed" enough action had occurred and sufficient information had been collected in the field. It was at this point that he began to formulate the first mission statement for the program office with input from each of the regional desk officers. The mission was then sent out to the DCO to get their feedback. Unfortunately, the mission statement missed the mark, and the mission statement was revised for the commander's review.

Again, the mission statement was not on target, but got closer. At this time, the commander provided his guidance and more information. The mission statement was sent to several offices within USNORTHCOM to get their feedback, which was incorporated. In this case, the RDO director went through what Tim Harford refers to as the process of trial and error. Harford states, "Show me a successful complex system and I will show you a system that has evolved through trial and error" (Harford, 2011). The process of refining the mission statement was trial and error or probing and refining. As Henry Ford once said, "Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again more intelligently." To his credit, the director of the RDO did not fall back on his traditional experience of command-and-control management for which the military is known. Instead, he created an atmosphere where it was safe to fail and try again until the mission was refined.

The director of the RDO did not stop with refining the mission statement. He also believed that, due to the lack of clearly defined program requirements, we needed to integrate action officers into other office's processes for steady state and crisis operations. We needed to develop partnerships and relationships throughout the staff to ensure we had access to the most current information about the regions and states. He initiated two courses of action to get the ball moving. The first was to get permission to use a contract that consisted of "Information Exchange Brokers." This contract was a pre-existing contract vehicle that USNORTHCOM utilized to analyze how information was shared among the staff. It was their job to assist the regional desk office to integrate smoothly and effectively into the existing processes of the staff. The second course of

action included assigning me the task of developing the USNORTHCOM Instruction that would clearly define the mission, organization, and responsibilities of the regional desk officer program for the staff to understand.

A USNORTHCOM Instruction is an internal directive that explains the purpose of USNORTHCOM programs. The USNORTHCOM Instruction for the regional desk office documented the functions of a regional desk officer, which were developed in coordination with the Defense Coordinating Officers, Army North, and the Interagency Coordination Directorate. These functions include:

1. *Serves as an advisor to the Commander, USNORTHCOM on regional and state capabilities and plans in order to anticipate requests for DoD support.*
2. *Provides the CDR greater situational awareness on FEMA regions and states by enhancing information sharing through the DCO/E to the FEMA Regional Headquarters, interagency mission partners, Non-Government Organizations (NGO), and public private partnerships.*
3. *Facilitates information exchange between the Commander and the DCOs.*
4. *Coordinates with DCO/Es to provide USNORTHCOM perspective on DSCA plans to state and regional partners.*
5. *Coordinates across the USNORTHCOM staffs, external agencies, Interagency, Liaison Officers, and the following Special Staffs: Interagency Coordination Directorate, NORTHCOM National Guard Integration Office, and Public Affairs to improve situational awareness during steady state operations, exercises, planning, and logistical conferences, and to crisis operations.*
6. *Serves as the primary point of contact of entry for the DCOs to exchange information across the NORAD and USNORTHCOM staffs as needed.*

The refinement phase of the program is an on-going process that allows the organization to grow and adapt. In this case, Snowden refers the complicated context or the domain of experts. In this domain, there are several ways of doing things, all of which are legitimate if you have the expertise. Therefore, you must analyze the choices or call in experts who can make the right decision (Snowden & Boone, 2007).

This is what the director of the RDO did once he got a sense for direction of the program. He received permission to use a group of experts who were on contract to USNORTHCOM. These “Information Exchange Brokers” consisted of several retired

senior colonels who had worked in key positions throughout USNORTHCOM prior to their retirement. One was even the former ARNORTH liaison officer to USNORTHCOM. They had a thorough understand of both USNORTHCOM and ARNORTH, had professional connections throughout both organizations, and a firm understanding of the operations of both USNORTHCOM and ARNORTH.

As for the USNORTHCOM Instruction for the regional desk officer program, it outlined several functions that represent several possible ways regional desk officers can accomplish their mission—each of which are legitimate depending on the situation and circumstance. It gave the program the flexibility to adapt and provide the commander with the information he originally desired about the states.

C. THE HERO'S JOURNEY IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FRAMEWORK (BELLAVITA, 1991)

1. Background

The first half of this chapter reviewed the decision-making process that developed, implemented, and refined the regional desk officer program at USNORTHCOM. However, there is more to the story. We must also examine the RDO program from the individual point of view. The development of the regional desk officer program from the beginning was a team approach. It took multiple organizations and individuals working together, and at times arguing with each other, to provide the ingredients, friction and heat to mold the commander's concept into an operational program that could make a difference.

The best executive is the one who has sense enough to pick good men to do what he wants done, and self-restraint to keep from meddling with them while they do it. —Theodore Roosevelt

The commander of USNORTHCOM did just that. He picked a team of experts from across the command to bring his vision into a concept that could be resourced. The concept was then handed off to another group of individuals that again represented a cross section of the command with their own unique and varying experiences and expertise. This group of individuals forged a team of regional desk officers that allowed

a path for the program to emerge through sensing as well as trial and error. As the story reveals, this was a challenging process in which many people and organizations had input.

This story may be about the regional desk officer program, but it is actually describing a complex adaptive system (CAS). A CAS is

comprised of agents, individuals as well as groups of individuals, who “resonate” through sharing common interests, knowledge and/or goals due to their history of interaction and sharing worldviews. Agents respond to both external pressures (from environment or other agents, e.g., leaders) and internal pressures that are generated as the agents struggle with interdependency and resulting conflicting constraints. These tensions when spread across a network of interactive and interdependent agents, generate system-wide emergent learnings, capabilities, innovations, and adaptability. Importantly, such elaborations are products of interactions among agents, rather than being “caused” by the specific acts of individuals described as leaders. (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Seers, Orton, & Scheiber, 2006)

A central theme emerges in the literature on CAS and in the RDO story itself. It is the importance of relationships. As stated by Sibthorpe, Glasgow and Longstaff, “CAS are agents connected to and exchange information with others in the system through a complex web of relationships” (Beverly Sibthorpe, 2004). According to the complexity leadership theory, “leadership is an emergent event, an outcome of relational interactions among agents” (Lichtenstein, Uhl-Bien, Seers, Orton, & Scheiber, 2006).

As for the story, the commander’s own expectations were “that each regional desk officer developed relationships with emergency management personnel.” This notion was also reiterated by the director of the RDO when he provided the guidance to travel to our assigned regions and build relationships with federal and state emergency preparedness personnel.

In order to study the importance of relationship building in the development of the RDO program, the author will continue with the RDO story from a personal individual perspective. It is my intention to utilize observations from my own personal experience

to provide examples to the reader on how relationships were formed and used to define and refine my role as a regional desk officer, as well as advance the position of the program within USNORTHCOM.

However, in order to analyze the data that is weaved throughout story, the author utilizes a second framework in which to examine and analyze the data. This time the author has chosen a framework model known as the “hero’s journey,” originally developed by Joseph Campbell (Campbell, 1968), but later modified and adapted by Chris Bellavita, who referred to it as “the hero’s journey in public administration” (Bellavita, 1991). While studying the successful and positive work experiences of some public administrators, Bellavita discovered that their stories were structurally similar to Joseph Campbell’s “hero’s journey.”

I designed the questionnaire to elicit data about the organizational nature of individual experience. What emerged instead were stories about people overcoming forces to bring new vitality to stagnant systems. —Chris Bellavita

According to Bellavita,

The hero gets the call to adventure...., the second stage is the ordeal. The hero enters the threshold of the journey and has one last chance to say no to it. The ordeal involves planning, organizing, and implementing a specific vision of the future. During the ordeal, the hero encounters helpers and enemies. The third stage of the journey is the hero’s return. The hero.....is a changed person, and some part of the hero’s world is transformed. (See Table 1) (Bellavita, 1991)

Table 1. The Hero's Journey in Public Administration

Call to Adventure
Duty
Opportunity
Drive
The Ordeal
At the threshold
Elements of the ordeal
Allies
Enemies
The Return
Rewards
Transformation of the hero
Transformation of status quo
Transformation of the world

*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference. — Robert Frost*

This is the story of my experience as a regional desk officer for USNORTHCOM, from the time I was notified of my selection in November 2010, until I received my orders transferring out in July 2011. The first thing the reader should understand is that I did not apply for the position. In fact, I had never heard of the regional desk officer program at USNORTHCOM, even though I had worked there since March 2009. Little did I know that I was just beginning a journey that would teach me not only about the program, but about the complex interconnected world on interagency collaboration and the web of relationships that are created to ensure the nation is prepared to respond to the next man-made or natural disaster.

The purpose of the story is not only to document the journey, but also to analyze it. Like most journeys, trials and tribulations along the path can be examined so that lessons may be drawn for others to use. Harold McAlindon, a successful business leader in his own right, once said, "Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail." So, it is with this story that I hope to leave a trail for the readers to follow, to effect changes in their own organizations as they face an increasingly complex world.

2. Call to Adventure

I was notified of my possible selection to this new job via angry emails and voicemail messages left by people in my current office at USNORTHCOM. I was assigned to the Strategic Plans Directorate (J5) as the Director for the Pandemic Influenza and Infectious Disease Program, but was attending school at the time. The messages were fairly consistent in tone and wording. They all wanted to know why I had applied to be an action officer in the newly formed regional desk office. Apparently, my chain of command had been told to release me from my current duties and transfer me to the new regional desk office. I explained to my chain of command that I did not apply for the position and was just as confused as they were about the situation. Once I explained this to my chain of command, they pushed back on releasing me. Unfortunately, it was the deputy commander of USNORTHCOM who had requested my transfer to the new office, and so it was a done deal.

The surprises did not stop there. When I reported to my new boss, it was obvious he did not share the deputy commander's vision of me working as a regional desk officer. I believe the conversations went something like:

Let me explain something to you. All those people out there applied to be regional desk officers and went through a selection process, but I guess you don't have to because you are special. The Deputy Commander said you are the right person for this job, so now you're here. However I allowed everyone else to give me input about the region they would prefer to work, but for you I am going to tell you which region you will get.

My thoughts immediately went to "here we go again." This is exactly how my last job started!

Bellavita states that there are three main reasons why people heed the call to adventure: duty, opportunity, and the drive to accomplish something (Bellavita, 1991). In my case, it was most definitely a call to duty from the deputy commander of USNORTHCOM. However, this does not imply that my heart was not in the job; it simply means that I did not know what I did not know about this new position. In fact, I did have experience with the FEMA regions from my previous job as director for the USNORTHCOM Pandemic and Infectious disease program. Therefore, I saw this new

position as an opportunity to work directly with the FEMA regions and possibly make a positive difference in how USNORTHCOM integrated with its federal and state partners.

3. Threshold of the Journey

I was at the threshold of my journey when I found myself flying to Washington, DC, to attend a FEMA conference on my first day in my new job. It was a small regional jet and, as luck would have it, the deputy commander was on the flight. As we were getting off the plane, I politely thanked him for this new opportunity to succeed. He smiled and asked if he *got me* on this one? I explained that he had—in more ways than one. At which point, he replied that I did not have to accept the position. However, he knew that I had worked on several new programs over the years because I wanted to make a difference. Therefore, I accepted the new challenge. He then explained his reasoning for selecting me—one of the new regional desk officers. He said

Who better than a national guardsman who is actually from one of the states in his assigned region? You know the people in the National Guard throughout your region, you were a civil support planner, you have worked with states and the interagency in both a military and civilian capacity, and you know how to work at the edges to build relationships and accomplish the mission.”

At which point, I explained to him that I was not assigned to that particular region. His reply was that he would see about that. That led to another interesting conversation with my new boss, who was also attending the conference.

At this point, it is important to examine the difference between my interactions with the deputy commander verses the director of the RDO. The difference is that I had a relationship with the deputy commander and not my new boss. Therefore, the reader needs to understand the definition of a relationship and the context that is used in the story. Margaret Wheatley states

In the quantum world, relationships are not just interesting; to many physicists, they are all there is to reality. None of us exists independent of our relationships with others and with relationships we give up predictability and open up to potentials. (Wheatley, 1999)

Michael Fullan believes that relationships are what causes an enterprise to be successful, because it is the relationships that make the difference (Fullan, 2001). Lewin and Regine, make the case that

There is a new style of leadership in successful companies, one that focuses on people and relationships as essential to getting sustained results because it requires a genuine connection with co-workers; you can't fake it and expect to get results. (Regine & Lewin, 2000)

The regional desk office reported directly to the deputy commander of USNORTHCOM, so he had a vested interest in its success and therefore selected me to be in the new office. He had seen me work in different capacities over the last seven years on some very complex and sensitive issues. Therefore, he had a preconception that I could help get the new program to meet its full potential. As for me, the decision to take the journey was made easier knowing that he had a genuine connection with me, one that was built over the last seven years.

Bellavita explains that, before the ordeal can begin, the public administrator is faced with six possible “good” reasons that will prevent the hero from completing the journey (Bellavita, 1991). They include:

1. No Credentials
2. Prohibitive rules
3. Political Barriers
4. No Money
5. History is opposed
6. Risk of failure

In my case, I was confronted with a combination of reasons not to pass over the threshold including:

1. No Credentials: The regional desk officer program was a new concept that was unproved, and people were not sure of that the program was needed.

2. Prohibitive Rules: There is an agreement between USNORTHCOM and the National Guard Bureau that USNORTHCOM will not communicate directly with National Guard of each state without prior coordination with NGB. Therefore, the mandate to coordinate with the states would prove difficult.

3. Political Barriers: As stated in Chapter III, there are many organizations throughout USNORTHCOM that believed they have the mission to perform coordination and share information with the interagency as well as to brief the commander during domestic events.

4. History is opposed: The defense coordinating officers have been recognized and accepted as the single DoD point of contact with FEMA. They also have State Emergency Management Liaison Officers that train and plan with the states.

4. The Ordeal

Bellavita explains:

Once passed the threshold, the ordeal begins. Each journey is unique because what the hero must do to be successful is specific to the situation. But the structure of the ordeal can be outlined. It involves a vision of what is to be accomplished; planning, organizing, and implementing actions to achieve the vision; and having faith and courage to believe that the adventure will succeed. The journey is an ordeal because it tests the hero's ability to accomplish something beyond the normal range of experience and achievement. (Bellavita, 1991)

My journey was certainly unique and the process of being hand selected for assignments is not especially helpful when it comes to earning people's trust. Everyone in the new office was friendly enough with me, but there were always little digs about me having a special relationship with the front office. However, I was slowly accepted as time went on—to the point that we began having social lunches on Fridays to build team spirit and camaraderie within the office. It was during one of these lunches that one of the action officers who was in the Air Force actually said, "Don't take this wrong because it is meant to be a compliment. As an Army officer, you are more Air Force than most Air Force officers I know." The comment was quickly followed by another who joked, "That's because he is a civilian in an Army uniform." This is an example of what Linden refers to "as making time for relationships and trust."

These lunches gave us the time in an informal setting to discuss issues and make decisions, while providing the time to form relationships (Linden, 2002). Rosenbuaam

also calls this *building social cohesion*, where members enjoy working together and are committed to making the partnership a success (Rosenbaum, 2002).

On another occasion, the office director pulled me aside to apologize. As he said “it turns out the General was correct, you were the right guy for the job because you work hard, I can depend on you, and you get the job done right.” This is an example of building trust through character and competence (Covey, 2006).

As for working with the regions, the lack of clearly defined mission requirements also created animosity between the defense coordinating officers and our new office. During my initial visit to the region in December with the defense coordinating officer and the defense coordinating element, which is his full time staff, it became evident that they did not understand the need for a regional desk officer. Everyone in the office was friendly with me during the initial meetings, but they were guarded. Most discussions between staff members occurred behind closed doors. During my initial office call with the DCO, he explained his expectations of me. He stated that they had no problem working with me because that is what the NORTHCOM commander directed and “whatever the Four Star wants, the Four Star gets and we will make you look good.” However, I needed to keep him informed of all my visits, meetings, and office calls that I planned to attend in the region.

The office is collocated with the FEMA Regional Headquarters and, during the visit, I was given a tour and introduced to the FEMA personnel. It was obvious that the relationship between the DCO staff and the FEMA staff was well established. Everyone agreed that being collocated was conducive to sharing information and working as a team. It was also evident that the FEMA personnel were also confused and concerned about the regional desk officer program. The regional administrator stated that she had formed a good relationship with the DCO and she was going to continue to utilize him and his staff as the single point of contact for DoD. She and her staff had no objection to a regional desk officer visiting, but that I should communicate through the DCO.

I also received guidance from the commander of Army North (ARNORTH) during his visit to the FEMA regional office. He wanted to ensure that I clearly understood the following points.

1. That he had day-to-day administrative responsibility for all the DCO/DCE staff throughout the country. However, the DCOs worked directly for the commander of NORTHCOM during a domestic crisis.

2. Relationships with our federal and state partners are extremely important, and the DCO had done an outstanding job cultivating these relationships for several years.

3. To avoid confusion with our federal and state partners, the DCO should be the single point of contact for DoD throughout the region, and I should work through him to communicate with people in the region.

By February, I was assigned the task to develop the USNORTHCOM instruction for the regional desk office, which formally documents the organization, duties, responsibilities, and functions of the regional desk officer program. Once the document is signed by the commander, it gives the regional desk office its authorities to carry out its assigned mission and tasks.

5. The Hero's Friends

I took this opportunity to work with other offices throughout the command to get their input and buy-in in the development of the mission statement, duties, responsibilities, and functions of the regional desk office. I also included the DCO and ARNORTH in the development and review phases of the document. In essence, the USNORTHCOM Instruction for the regional desk office was a collaborative effort and was developed in coordination with the Defense Coordinating Officers, ARNORTH, and the Interagency Coordination Directorate. This allowed me to develop relationships across the command and with my DCO/DCE in the field. They all felt that they had a voice in the process and appreciated the chance to contribute. This is an example of the steps Linden explains that assist in building a collaborative effort that can develop into

successful partnerships. “Build trust by giving parties a chance to be accountable, listen carefully to the other parties, acknowledging the other organization’s point of view” (Linden, 2002).

These relationships played a key role along my journey, because they became what Bellavita refers to as the “hero’s friends” (Bellavita, 1991). I relied on my fellow regional desk officers, the DCO and DCE, as well as the people I worked with across the command to help move the RDO program ahead. Without their help, guidance, feedback, and cooperation, I would not have been able to get the instruction finalized and approved. I also would not have been able to get the information about my region in order to perform my job and develop the partnerships that the commander directed through his vision.

6. The Hero’s Enemies

Unfortunately, the confusion across the USNORTHCOM staff about the proper role of the regional desk office continued. The regional desk office is responsible to provide advice to the commander and/or deputy commander on regional and state capabilities during a crisis. The regional desk officer is also responsible to facilitate the flow of information from the region (DCO) to the commander during a crisis, increase his situational awareness, and inform him for rapid decision making. This was not well received throughout the command because several organizations already believed it was their mission to carry out and not the regional desk office. In fact, there were many throughout the command that thought the RDO concept would not last. This is what Bellavita refers to as the hero’s enemies. According to Bellavita, the hero will also encounter forces that do not want the journey to succeed. He states, “The pathologies of bureaucracy can be the most pervasive enemy” (Bellavita, 1991).

Two incidents illustrated the difficulties confronted by the regional desk office in performing their responsibilities. The first occurred during a meeting on March 9, 2011, in the Deputy Commander’s Office of USNORTHCOM. The purpose of the meeting was to get a situational update on the flooding that was occurring throughout the

Mid-Atlantic area. The meeting included senior representatives of the Interagency Coordination Directorate and the Operations Directorate, with me representing the regional desk office.

In the hallway, prior to the meeting, the representatives of both organizations were objecting to a regional desk officer attending the meeting. They all stated that there was no need for the regional desk officer program because their staffs had complete situational awareness. However, during the meeting, they had no information about the situation from the state level. As the RDO who was supposed to be the SME, I briefed the group on the current situations in the affected states. I was immediately chastised by both directorates for talking directly to my contacts in the states, and the information and the situation was utilized as an example of why there should not be an RDO program.

The second incident took place during the National Level Exercise in April 2011. Prior to the exercise, the Operations Directorate (J-3) presented an argument that the RDO program should report to their directorate and not directly to the commander and deputy commander. Therefore, at the request of the J-3 director, the RDOs were required to work in the Future Operation Center of the J-3 during the exercise in order to provide input into their planning efforts. Unfortunately, the RDO desk officers became isolated due to their location in the Future Operations Cell, and were prevented from maintaining situational awareness and connectivity with their regions.

These two incidents are examples of specific enemies of the hero. The first one is referred to as “Warlords.” Bellavita defines them as people whose territory, resources, or other interests are threatened by the hero’s action (Bellavita, 1991). As was the case in the deputy commander’s office, the leaders representing those two directorates felt that it was their job or territory to brief the deputy commander—not the job of a regional desk officer. The second is referred to as “The Anxious.” Bellavita explains that the hero must overcome other people’s fear of the new and untested. In this case, the operations directorate attempted to have the RDO report to them. This in effect would allow them to control and direct an organization that they were trying to understand.

7. Vision, Planning, Organizing, and Implementing

Through the process of developing the USNORTHCOM Instruction for the regional desk officer program, the vision of developing a partnership with the DCO and his team became clear. Therefore, my plan was to work closely with them and visit in person whenever possible. The best way of organizing that was to determine what events and meetings in the region were important opportunities to work on relationship and trust building. I then proceeded to work with the DCO's staff to make sure I was able to attend those key events and meetings throughout the region with them.

During the following months of March, April, and May, I was able to attend multiple events with the defense coordinating officer and/or his team at both the regional and state levels. This gave me the chance to observe how they went about building relationships and maintaining partnerships with federal and state agencies. One thing that stood out in each of these visits is that the defense-coordinating officer had built a solid team of people who worked well together. However, he did not have a direct supervisory position over most of the people; he simply provided the informal leaderships that enabled them to work together and integrate their efforts as if they were formal organization. In fact, most positions on this informal team consist of people of the same rank as the defense-coordinating officer.

This point of teamwork and camaraderie was driven home to me during the regional hurricane conference that the DCO hosted in May. Every member of the team, to include the regional, state, and joint medical emergency preparedness officers, was present and fully participated. The entire team voluntarily stayed at the same hotel and socialized together in the evenings. When I inquired about how this team of teams became so cohesive, several people gave credit to the DCO for ensuring that everyone remained trained, informed, and empowered to perform their jobs. As two people stated,

You know that he always has your back because he trusts you to do your job and he supports your decisions. That means we do not have to worry about someone second-guessing and looking over our shoulders. We can just concentrate on getting the job done right and making a difference.

Another person stated,

The DCO puts a lot of energy on the front end of the process. He makes himself part of the interview process to ensure he gets the right person for the job. Then he makes sure you receive the proper training, guidance, and information to correctly perform your job. At which point, he gets out of the way and places trust and confidence in you to do your job without micro-managing you to death.

I was able to observe this for myself when I attended a drill weekend with the regional emergency preparedness liaison team, hosted by one of the state emergency preparedness liaison teams (SEPLO). The SEPLO team provided site tours and facilitated meetings with the Army Corps of Engineers, the National Guard State Joint Forces Headquarters and Joint Operations Center, and with the State Emergency Management Agency and Emergency Operations Center. It was obvious that the SEPLO team had developed a working relationship with all three agencies. Everyone was on a first name basis and joked with each other easily. As one emergency management personnel stated,

These guys are part of the team and we are constantly sharing information and talking with each other. When a crisis occurs in the state, they have these seats already assigned to them and we work side by side to get through the crisis. It really is the only way to have a truly integrated approach to emergency response.

As for the DCO, he was unique in that he has been in the position since it was created in 2006. In that time he has also created partnerships and relationships throughout the region; it is obvious that federal and state agencies trust and value his opinion. Although I was never given the opportunity to attend, he had a weekly one-on-one meeting with the FEMA regional administrator to maintain information sharing between FEMA and DoD within the region. The DCO also ensures that either he or one of his planners attends the quarterly regional interagency steering committee meeting (RISC). The members of the RISC represent the agencies that would respond to a major disaster under the Federal Response Plan. FEMA holds meetings with this group quarterly to discuss initiatives and advances that relate to their disaster response

capabilities. It also provides an opportunity for FEMA officials to advise the group on developments within FEMA that bear on the response situation.

At the state level, the DCO and his team were well engaged with State Emergency Management Agencies and the National Guard. The SEPLOs attend training on the weekends with the Joint Force Headquarters of each state to ensure there is integration during times of crisis. SEPLO's have assigned seats in both the National Guard Joint Operations Centers and the State Emergency Operations Centers for exercises and operations during an incident. The DCO and his team were also invited to several National Guard conferences during this period to include the initial regional homeland security response force (HRF) conference that was hosted by one of the states and attended by the National Guard Bureau, FEMA, the state emergency management agency, and National Guard representatives from each of the states in the region. The DCO attended with several members of the DCE, regional and state emergency preparedness liaison teams.

The DCOs input was sought out by the state and NGB, and was well received. Other states also sought out the DCO's expertise, experience and participation in their emergency preparedness conferences held at the state level. After speaking with representatives from both states, it was clear that a strong relationship had developed with the DCO and his team, which was seen as mutually beneficial to ensure that the region has a comprehensive and integrated approach to emergency preparedness. One state official stated, "I wouldn't think of not including the DCO in these conferences. He is an experienced leader who knows how to get the job done right and understands what the states need."

8. Transformation and Return to the Kingdom

The amazing thing about the journey is that by developing a relationship built on trust with the DCO and his staff, I learned how to form partnerships from watching how he conducted himself. Through this process, I was able to develop the partnerships with USNORTHCOM's federal and state partners and succeed in meeting the commander's expectations. By the end of the Journey, I had people throughout the region that I could

call to get the information the commander required. This in turn could allow USNORTHCOM to “lean forward” and prepare to respond to a domestic incident before the request is received.

On a final note, as the end of my tour nears, I also find myself a member of the DCO’s regional team. Perhaps there is validity to my observations as I seem to agree with the person who stated, “the DCO puts a lot of energy on the front end.... He makes sure you receive the proper training, guidance, and information to correctly perform your job.” As I write this story, and look back over the eight months, I realize that is what he did with me. Once he felt comfortable and was assured that I understood how to operate in this complex environment, he cut me loose to travel throughout the region. Before I realized it, I was part of the informal email chains of invitation to stay at the same hotels, attend dinners, and, more importantly, received the information directly from sources that gave me the situational awareness the commander expected me to have. Somewhere along this eight-month journey, I was accepted as part of the team. As the DCO said at the regional conference, I finally have someone from USNORTHCOM trained and now he decides to get out. Maybe I will find a reserve position as emergency preparedness liaison officer working in the region.

This chapter provided examples of how a bureaucratic organization such as USNORTHCOM can use the activities of leading and the elements of partnerships to move national preparedness to a higher level of fitness. Through the use of these tools, the nation can successfully developed the engaged partnerships that the National Response Framework requires to bring the nation’s resources to bear on any man-made or natural disaster in a coordinated and collaborative effort.

V. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

A. FINDINGS

The purpose of this thesis was to determine how USNORTHCOM could improve its ability to integrate military capabilities quickly and effectively to support civil authorities during domestic incidents in accordance with the NRF. In order to address this problem, the author developed the following research hypothesis, as stated in Chapter I.

In order for USNORTHCOM to improve its ability to integrate military capabilities in accordance with the NRF, it needs to use the activities of leading combined with the elements of partnerships to improve its ability to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with other organizations.

This hypothesis was tested by answering three research questions throughout this thesis, which included a combination of a literature review and analyses of the mechanisms that USNORTHCOM has used to coordinate with its federal and state partners for domestic events.

The three research questions consisted of two secondary questions and a primary question:

1. What mechanisms and programs does USNORTHCOM use to improve cooperation, coordination, and collaboration with its federal and state partners for emergency preparedness and response?

This secondary question was addressed in Chapter III, which reviewed these mechanisms and programs. The chapter also pointed out that these multiple organizations are stove-piped with overlapping interests and/or equities that can overwhelm USNORTHCOM's partners. Unfortunately, as the literature points out, even with these multiple programs, USNORTHCOM has had difficulties integrating military capabilities with civil authorities during domestic events. Therefore, the commander of USNORTHCOM developed the regional desk officer program to get information quickly and directly from a group of subject matter experts on the capabilities and threats in the states that would increase his situational awareness during domestic events.

2. How has the regional desk officer program improved USNROTHCOM's ability to develop partnerships and integrate the use of military capabilities?

This secondary question was addressed in the previous chapter. Russell Linden states in his book, *Leading Across Boundaries*, that "People who collaborate well communicate laterally, look for ways to share ideas, and form relationships well. They tend to be natural networkers, understanding that organizational success relies at least as much on horizontal as hierarchical relationships" (Linden, 2010). Chapter IV demonstrated how USNORTHCOM improved its ability to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with its federal and state partners through the development of the regional desk officer program. The regional desk officer program allowed USNORTHCOM to build the critical partnerships between organizations within USNORTHCOM as well as with its federal and state partners. This program was successful because it combined the activities of leading with the essential elements of partnerships.

3. The primary research question asked: What are the activities of leading and elements of partnerships that the regional desk officer program uses to improve USNORTHCOM's ability to cooperate, coordinate, and collaborate with its federal and state partners in order to properly integrate military capabilities for domestic incidents?

This question was addressed in the literature review and examined during the previous chapter. The key activities of leading and elements of partnerships utilized by the regional desk officer program included a combination of building trust, sense making, and collaboration. As Christopher Paprone stated in his article, where military professionalism meets complexity science, sense making becomes more important than decision making. Due to the nature of "wicked problems" facing homeland security professionals, it is important for people at all levels of the organization to be able to "sense" both the issues and the context that surround them. I believe this is the reason that the commander of USNORTHCOM created the regional desk office, because he desired to have situational awareness of both the threats and capabilities in the states. This would then give him the "sense" of what was going on and what capabilities would be requested. This ability of sense making creates the foundation for a collaborative

environment. Without having a sense of the issues and others' points of views, you will make decisions that are not appropriate (Snowden & Kurtz, 2003).

It is equally important for leaders to be able to communicate and provide guidance to their own organization as well as across boundaries to include all stakeholders through a process of "sensegiving." This can be accomplished and aided through the supporting activities of story telling and negotiating, as seen in the story about the RDO. In order to break down barriers between the regional desk officer and the defense coordinating officer and his staff, time was built in during visits to share stories during meetings and after hours. This created an understanding between the stakeholders and allowed each side to get an appreciation for the differences in perspectives and interests of each side. This led to a negotiated solution on how the partnership would proceed and successfully provide the commander his desired end result, which was to provide him quick direct access to information about the states during times of crisis. The bottom line is that these activities helped create "buy-in" to a solution that otherwise might not be accomplished.

In order for sense making and sense giving to work, the one essential element that provides the glue that holds most collaborative efforts is relationships. The point was driven home throughout this thesis, from the literature review through every aspect of the RDO story. The director of the regional desk office initial guidance was "to get out and form relationships in your assigned regions." Relationships are important because "collaboration requires considerable give and take and that is more likely to happen when good relationships exist" (Linden, 2002). A second reason is that collaborative efforts are difficult; there are many bumps and hurdles along that way, and relationships can help carry partners through difficult and unpredictable times (Linden, 2010) (Linden, 2002). This point has not been lost on Lieutenant General Jacoby, who has been nominated to follow Admiral Winnefeld as the Commander of USNORTHCOM. In his confirmation hearings, Lieutenant General Jacoby stated, "Complex relationships are the key to effectiveness" when it comes to USNORTHCOM and NORAD mission areas. (Pellerin, 2011).

B. RELEVANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

As Linden states, “The most significant challenges facing our society cannot be addressed by any one organization. They all require collaboration among many organizations” (Linden, 2002). Man-made and natural disasters including floods, hurricanes, pandemics, tornados, and wildfire are going to occur across this nation. We will not be able to prevent them, but it is how we come together in the face of such disasters that will test our resilience as a nation. When these events occur and the nation is in crisis, organizations must coordinate, cooperate, and collaborate their efforts and resources to respond and recover from these incidents. As the NRF states, these efforts must take place in times of calm in order to respond effectively together in times of need. Therefore, engaged partnerships include ongoing communications and shared situational awareness for a more rapid response (DHS, 2008).

This thesis explored and examined just one case of how a large bureaucratic organization (USNORTHCOM) embraced partnership engagements in order to position itself to be able to quickly and effectively integrate military capabilities with civil organizations in times of crisis to save lives and protect property. The regional desk officer program demonstrated that it is not the characteristics and traits of the leaders in the organization, but the activities of leading, combined with elements of partnerships, that allow collaboration to occur and partnerships to succeed. However, this theory is based on only one case over a short period of time under one particular commander as shown in the timeline below:

RDO STUDY TIMELINE

MAY 2010	JUN 2010	NOV 2010	FEB 2011	JUL 2011	AUG 2011
ADM Winnefeld Takes Command of NORAD and USNORTHCOM	RDO Concept Phase begins	Implementation of RDO Concept *Data Collection Begins	RDO Operational Phase Begins	**Data Collection Ends	GEN Jacoby Takes Command of NORAD and USNORTHCOM

Also the study took place in only one of the ten FEMA regions; therefore, additional research is needed to determine if the actions could also be attributed to the environment, the timing, and the particular people involved in this region in addition to the activities of leading and elements of partnerships they used. Future research should also examine whether this case can stand the test of time, change of commanders, and the pressures of a large-scale domestic crisis. This additional research will determine whether this is an effective viable process that can be duplicated in other organizations.

C. CONCLUSION

Partnerships take both the activities of leading combined with the elements of partnerships to be successful, and they can occur at any level in the organization, at anytime. However, partnering and leading require many skills and flexibility to work, which makes them difficult to perform well. If they were easy, then everyone would do it. They both ask much of the people involved. It is about give and take, sensing your surroundings and the environment, which takes experience and an open mind. Collaboration is difficult because it requires you to give up some control in order for the whole to accomplish what the parts could not do separately. It takes trust, willingness, desire and the right communication skills to make it possible. It is also about building relationships and sustaining them for the long haul. We all realize from our own lives how much work and effort that can take, but the results and payoffs can make it all worthwhile. As David Snowden is fond of saying, “We are all made up of our past experience that bring forces upon us that we are unaware of and don’t fully understand” (Snowden and Kurtz , 2003). It is therefore our ability to sense what needs to be done at the right time and place that can help secure this country and the American people, and make it more resilient against man-made or natural disasters.

The United States is the world’s fourth largest nation, with 3.5 million square miles of land and 88,000 miles of tidal shoreline. Each year, 11.2 million trucks and 2.2 million railcars cross into the U.S. from the 7,500-mile land and air border shared with Canada and Mexico. More than 7,500 foreign-flag ships make 51,000 calls annually to U.S. ports, and the country routinely admits millions of visitors from around the world.

However, the freedom America enjoys, employs in its commerce, and extends to non-U.S. citizens presents homeland security challenges (USNORTHCOM, 2011).

On the other hand, the sheer size and incredible diversity of this country, combined with the strength of the U.S. economy, means that the nation has many resources and capabilities that can come to bear on the wicked problems of homeland security and national preparedness. However, it takes the activities of leading and partnering with each other to efficiently bring these resources together in an effective manner during a crisis. As Raphael Sagarin explains in his article on evolution,

If the genus *Americanus* want to overcome this latest challenge to its existence, it must adapt its....mechanisms accordingly.

An organism can survive, and thrive, in the presence of an enemy by forming symbiotic relationships that can take a multitude of forms. (Sagarin, 2003)

Therefore, it is vitally important for organizations throughout the homeland security enterprise to develop and maintain these strategic partnerships that will allow the nation to be flexible and adaptable to survive the threats that confront us in the twenty-first century.

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