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USAWC SUPPORTS U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE

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Developing a regional disaster response capability, particularly as it pertains to the deliberate or inadvertent release of chemical, biological, or nuclear contaminants, may serve as a rallying point of common concern for countries in a given theater, and a foundation for other cooperative endeavors. In response to a request from the United States Central Command, the USAWC Center for Strategic Leadership facilitated a discussion/assessment of the command's Consequence Management (CM) program in support of the nations of the Gulf Cooperative Council, Jordan, and Egypt. The assessment was the focal event in a conference hosted by the Near-East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, held 15-17 September 2003 at the National Defense University. The discussion was facilitated by Prof Bert Tussing, Dr. Kent Butts, and COL(R) Art Bradshaw, drawing upon a forum of representatives from Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.



CENTCOM-NESA Consequence Management Conference

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The CM program is a vital component of CENTCOM's Cooperative Defense Initiative (CDI) against Weapons of Mass Destruction. CDI's overarching intent is to introduce non-offensive aspects of counterproliferation to our military partners in the Middle East, focusing on steps toward:

- Providing education surrounding WMD threats and available responses
- Identifying requirements for active and passive defense systems against the same
- Constructing training programs needed to put those systems to use
- Developing realistic plans to initiate this training and procure equipment toward these ends, and
- Validating these actions through bilateral and multilateral exercises.

The Consequence Management portion of CDI focuses specifically on these steps as they pertain to capabilities surrounding the mitigation of the results of a deliberate or inadvertent release of chemical, biological or radiological contaminants, or the effects of a high-yield conventional explosive resulting in mass casualties/mass destruction.

CENTCOM's Consequence Management program for allies and coalition partners takes place in six phases:

- Phase 1: Assessment. Devoted to identifying existing capabilities in terms of personnel, equipment, and training, this phase pays particular attention to medical response capabilities. These capabilities, especially as they pertain to handling mass casualties, are the dominant underlying concerns in consequence management.
- Phase 2: Senior Level Policy Workshop. This phase is devoted to examining, or beginning to establish, a national crisis response policy.
- Phase 3: Seminar. The first of two major exercises in CENTCOM's program, exercise INITIATE RESPONSE is devoted to exercising a country's evolving National Response Plan, identifying "fault-lines" in that plan, and beginning the process of "shoring-up requirements" by identifying shortfalls.
- Phase 4: First Responder Seminar. This phase of the program focuses on the "tactical" requirements of the country's first responders, paying specific attention to equipment, personnel and training issues for local emergency response teams.
- Phase 5: Exercise. The capstone event of the "bilateral" portion of CENTCOM's cooperative building effort with individual countries, exercise IMMEDIATE RESPONSE is designed to be a final validation of the country's National Response Plan.
- Phase 6: Sustainment. Phase 6 marks the beginning of a sustained "multilateral" phase that seeks to build on national capabilities for a greater, regional response. This stage of development recognizes the limits of an individual country's ability to respond to all aspects of the WMD threat, and/or the realization that any given country's capability to respond could be eventually overwhelmed in a mass casualty/mass destruction event. Accordingly, this phase of CENTCOM's program emphasizes the value of regional cooperation through multi-national training and exercises.

Progress through the phases of CENTCOM's Consequence Management program vary among the members of the GCC and Jordan, but forum participants were able to share their perspectives on their country's programs to date. Overall, the Consequence Management program was assessed to be successfully serving the region's needs in developing response capabilities. There were, however, specific areas of concern raised that stood as potential impediments to continued progress.



Assessing Consequence Management Initiatives

- Interagency Myopia. Several representatives bemoaned the fact that many of their senior ministries were “unaware,” and failed to display a proper understanding toward the severity of the threat, the complexity of preventing attacks, and the challenges of mitigating their effect. Bureaucratic barriers exacerbated by this misunderstanding were seen as one of the most significant impediments to progress in both individual countries’ progress and desired regional collaboration.
- Constrained Resources. Even those countries which have been “leaning forward” with Consequence Management initiatives raised concerns over budgetary constraints that will hinder the sustainment of those programs, to say nothing of regional cooperative efforts. At the same time, some of the delegates saw these constraints as an added impetus toward regional cooperation, in that a judicious “division of labors” in preparing for regional deterrence, defense and response could supercede needless duplication of effort in developing capabilities.
- Reticence of Civil First Responders. Several participants indicated concern over civilian first responders’ trepidation towards working in contaminated areas. Particular concerns were raised over some countries’ medical response in these conditions. Most of the forum held the belief that this apprehension was due to a lack of education, rather than any type of callous disregard. This, too, hearkened back to concerns over a lack of understanding within the countries’ associated ministries.

- Developing and Sustaining Strategies. While acknowledging deliberate efforts to develop national response plans and build the competencies needed to support them, some members voiced concern over sustaining those competencies and continuously validating newly developed plans. The entire forum acknowledged that readiness attained must be sustained; that a deliberate threat would adapt to preparation and response measures; and that, therefore, there was an inherent requirement to continuously exercise, validate, and update response plans after they are developed.

In spite of these concerns, the prevailing atmosphere of the forum showed a clear inclination toward expanding cooperative efforts in the region. CENTCOM's initiative in the GCC, Jordan and Egypt is currently serving as a template for similar efforts underway in the Central Asian States and the Horn of Africa. As the cooperative spirit already demonstrated by the militaries of the Gulf Cooperative Council and Jordan gains similar momentum among the civil ministries they serve, these programs will grow even more worthy of emulation, and the stability of the region will be significantly enhanced.

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