

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL LOU VOLGER, CHIEF OF FUTURE OPERATIONS, U.S. ARMY NORTH; LIEUTENANT COLONEL JAMES SHORES, CHIEF OF PLANS FOR JOINT TASK FORCE-CIVIL SUPPORT, U.S. MARINE CORPS VIA TELECONFERENCE SUBJECT: THE CBRNE (CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL, RADIOLOGICAL, NUCLEAR AND HIGH YIELD EXPLOSIVE) CONSEQUENCE MANAGEMENT RESPONSE FORCE TIME: 12:15 P.M. EDT DATE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2008

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MODERATOR: (In progress) -- following a few minutes of remarks from the panelists, we'll go ahead and take your questions. Please keep your mute button on when you're not asking a question so we eliminate some of that background noise.

Now I will turn to them for more information on this exercise and more on this exciting command.

Colonel Vogler, did you have a few minutes of remarks?

COL. VOGLER: Yes. Again, I'm Colonel Lou Vogler. I'm the chief of future operations at U.S. Army North. And U.S. Army North again is the Army component of US-NORTHCOM, and we're charged with coordinating the potential federal response in the land domain for any domestic operations or disasters, to include CBRNE -- chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high yield explosive response operations. JTFCS, which Lieutenant Colonel Shores is from, has recently fallen under us as part of our task organization to further unify this kind of response setup.

You know, again, for those of you that don't know much about CCMRF, the Consequence Management Response Force is a dedicated CBRNE response force that is trained and ready to respond in the event of a -- some sort of CBRNE incident which would require a federal response in addition to those state and local forces it would reinforce. It's a scalable force. Again, it's designed to come in as part of a federal requirement given the need of a local or state agency that could not meet some gap in capabilities. And one of -- the advent of CBRNE response force -- what kind of makes it new, although its been around for a couple of years, is that it soon will be assigned directly to US-NORTHCOM, kind of enhancing our ability to ensure its readiness and shorten the lines of command, should we have to utilize this force.

(Inaudible) -- any questions, that's all I have.

MODERATOR: Okay. And Colonel Shores, did you have any remarks to start us out?

LT. COL. SHORES: Other than mentioning that plans and policy director here at JTFCS, we are DOD's standing JTF headquarters -- about 200 personnel -- that are focused on CBRNE response in the event that it would happen -- recognize that just as sure as a CCMRF -- the actual forces that are out there that are required on a string to be able to respond -- that all requires a response level and the command and control aspects, and that's what JTFCS is -- proudly under the AR- NORTH joint force land component commander, exercising out here with our new 9.1 CCMRF assigned October 1st to certify them in accordance with General Renuart's guidance.

That will -- (inaudible) -- any further questions.

MODERATOR: Okay, great. We'll go ahead and go to questions.

Now, Terri (sp), did you have a question?

Q My biggest question -- having worked in the civilian sector as a police officer in law enforcement, what do you have in place to coordinate with those local and state agencies to ensure that communication is there, because I know that's sometimes been a problem in the past?

COL. VOGLER: Yeah, this is Colonel Vogler. I'll start and then pass off to Lieutenant Colonel Shores. Again, the overall federal response builds on the local and state response in accordance with the incident command system and those existing plans -- processes that are out there. So we understand, you know, all incidents are local and that local authority takes the initial charge and everything builds up from there.

So we also conduct significant pre-mission planning and training, as is kind of ongoing right now out there with Colonel Shores, and we try to integrate those systems and ensure that we've got that compatibility at the planning and tactical level for communications.

Jim, you want to add some more?

LT. COL. SHORES: Yes. We also exercise that. Generally twice a year NORTHCOM puts on what's called a Defense Interoperability Communication Exercise. Last March we did a dual -- (audio break) -- one out with AR-NORTH and one out at our location at Fort Monroe, where we get players from the -- not only the DOD but also from local responders from the state and communities to come out there. And it's really a test -- (inaudible) -- of all those type of capabilities -- bring them all together; tie them into one central location for what we call a COP, or continuity of Common Operating Picture -- situational awareness, things like that.

Q Great. I think you've answered my question, then. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Okay. And Chuck, did you have a question?

Q Hi. Good morning, gentlemen. My name is Chuck Simmins and I'm with America's North Shore Journal. I come at this also from the civilian perspective -- several years as a firefighter, and about 14 as an EMT. My -- I have a whole bunch of questions. My first question, though, is where do you fit in with the National Incident Management System? And how does the incident manager get to a point where he requests your particular set of services?

COL. VOGLER: Okay. I'm going to answer the second part first: In two ways, of course. You know, the local incident continues just to keep rolling up from local to regional or county, if you will, to the state, and those requests that I'm sure you're familiar with. And then the state would request federal assistance, and then at that point, based on other federal assets available, DOD could be called to meet some of those gaps.

As part of the catastrophic incident supplement, which triggers certain push of federal assets based on the scale of a disaster or a situation, the CCMRF meets part of that DOD response in the catastrophic incident supplement. So it could be a push of capabilities based on a significant catastrophic event.

With regard to the specific incident management system, I'm kind of more of an operational guy, so I'm familiar with the premises and that, but I'm not necessarily one of the hands-on executors of that. I'll defer more to Jim Shores down there at the JTFCS level. But we do work hard to make sure that all our people have the basic training for what the incident management system is. In fact, the CCMRF -- and I'm sure Jim could talk a little bit more about that -- is undergoing two days of academics training to familiarize these DOD forces with those civilian processes so that they're familiar operating in the civilian environment.

Jim, you want to take over from there?

LT. COL. SHORES: As far as NIMS -- our tie-in at the JTF headquarters level -- that would be through the conduit of what we call the defense coordinating officer into the joint field office. The joint field office -- who we're in support of -- is the lead federal agency or the primary agency, which would be the federal coordinating officer.

Within the JFO, you have the SCO and the FCO and then the DCO -- the Defense coordinating officer that coordinates with the FCO in getting those tasks as that local response pushed them up to state and needs some assistance. That would then be handled on the federal level. At such time federal assets on the interagency side didn't have that capability, then they would go over to the DCO and push that MA -- mission assignment -- for approval.

Now, at that point we would convert that MA into a FRAGO for our task forces. Those task forces would then be given that information in a FRAGO and who they're supposed to link up with and what the MA entails, what their expectations are and requirements are. That FRAGO is additional to the op order we've already given them that will tell them how they're going to execute their mission. So at the tactical level, those linkups occur after they've gotten that FRAGO to go out and support that MA.

COL. VOGLER: Yeah, I'm going to follow up just a touch, too, because Jim said it very well, but what I didn't -- what I didn't capture probably -- this is Colonel Vogler again -- is that all these requests are going to be approved at very specific levels -- either at the NORTHCOM commander level or the secretary of Defense level. And what we do in this environment is always in support of local, state and federal officials. It's not a DOD-run thing. It's us executing missions in support of those responding agencies, over.

Q Can I follow up, Lindsay (sp)?

MODERATOR: Yeah, go ahead.

Q Okay. Then let me take it down to a very basic level: We're three days into an incident here in Rochester, New York. The appropriate requests have been made. We need decontamination and medical. How am I, sitting in my ambulance, going to be able to communicate with DOD people who have set up facilities, radio-wise, procedure-wise, process-wise? You know, you're going to operate differently than our local trauma center is. How am I going to -- how am I going to interface -- how are you going to interface with me?

LT. COL. SHORES: Sir, this is Lieutenant Colonel Shores. I can answer some of that if not all.

First I need to break it down into two separate categories. One, you need assistance, and you need to request it. So that would go through the process that Colonel Vogler already mentioned.

Q Right.

LT. COL. SHORES: After that MA was converted to that FRAGO, those task forces would go down and link up with that incident commander.

Q Okay.

LT. COL. SHORES: That's where the linkup would occur. That tactical commander -- whatever that MA required -- DECON, mortuary affairs or what -- that would be where that link occurs. You would have that guy come to you.

Q Okay. So in other words, all communication would be passed through -- there wouldn't -- you wouldn't have a direct communication capability with the individual civilian responders.

LT. COL. SHORES: Oh. Once that tactical unit commander went down there and linked up with you, yes, sir. That's why we do the DICE (sp) exercises -- to prove that capability.

Q Okay. So you have the radio equipment, the -- whatever that would pick up appropriate frequencies, and like that? You know, we don't -- we don't have to worry that your radios won't pick up our radios or --

LT. COL. SHORES: Yes, sir. You bring up a point that's been --

Q Yeah, where I'm headed is the confusion that happened on 9/11 in New York City where police couldn't talk to fire and couldn't talk to hospitals and things like that.

LT. COL. SHORES: Yes, sir. Part of the CCMRF is a frequency management requirement. There is frequency management planning that goes into deploying our forces. We recognize that a number of counties, a number of states use the same frequencies, and when you're dealing with multi-state transfer of large forces back and forth, we need to have a frequency management plan. That's part of the planning that goes in before we deploy to hopefully deconflict some of that. Now, we however cannot -- we cannot deconflict some of the things that are already occurring between a fire department and a police officer. Those are the things that we are counting on that are being handled at the state level for their own interoperable communications issues. All that we can do is exercise our understanding of what those frequencies or what that

capability that they'll be using so we can tie into it when we arrive. So I can only answer how we cover down on our requirement to talk to them.

COL. VOGLER: And if I may, we have some communication (suites ?) that Jim described that we test, but those are located at central command and control nodes. We do not have handheld radios that every soldier or every team would be able to carry to give that point-to-point connectivity. But we do have communications -- interoperable communications established at key command and control nodes, and then we'd go back to military communications. Does that help answer it, over?

Q Yes. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Okay. And did we have anyone else join on the line later that has a question? I heard a couple possibly pop in. Any other questions for anyone new?

Okay, we'll take follow-ups for anyone that has them.

Q Terri, do you have anything?

Q No, I don't.

Q Okay, because I've still got more. (Laughs.)

Q Okay.

Q Okay.

MODERATOR: The floor is yours.

Q Okay. Gentlemen, the civilian side has been buttressed quite significantly since September 11th with things like -- I know here in Monroe County, New York State, we have a supply of medications necessary for, let's say, a chemical attack response. Does your part of the operation bring in all its own components, or are you planning on using civilian -- existing civilian supplies as part of your response?

LT. COL. SHORES: Colonel Vogler, sir, I can answer this.

COL. VOGLER: Go ahead, Jim.

LT. COL. SHORES: We come self-sufficient. When you put that MA in for our support, we come self-sufficient or -- (audio break) -- capability within the DOD to support ourselves. We actually have tasks to instead support those types of civilian entities like the National Disaster Medical Stockpile that need distribution support -- i.e., the bodies that can help move it around.

Q Okay.

LT. COL. SHORES: So we actually were supporting the civilian effort doing that. And I know where your question's coming from: Do we come now as a burden on the people we're trying to support? No. We come there to help them, is the mantra. So I hope that answered the question.

Q Yeah. Yes, it did.

Now, a number of agencies have very specific -- civilian agencies have very specific organizations targeted at aspects of this problem. I'm thinking of NEST teams, for example -- NEST teams.

LT. COL. SHORES: (Inaudible.)

Q Are you guys going to step on any toes, or are you working to try to let all these little kingdoms know that you're their support and not their replacement?

LT. COL. SHORES: Sir, I can answer this. Shores here, JTFCS.

We would not get the request unless those resources -- now, theoretically we would not get the request unless those federal resources were already tapped out. The NEST team -- I know that they work with the terrorist incidences and provide the interagency support for that. We would not interrupt the DOE teams, the RAP -- Radiological Assistance Program. We do have our own assessment capability, but we would not step on that. In fact, we would collaborate with information they've gotten on scene before we even arrived to provide our own situational awareness.

Q Okay. And I guess my final question is going to relate to the posse comitatus question. You're going to be working within the United States in what is probably -- well, conceivably going to be a criminal incident. How do you train your people? How do you -- what is your relationship to law enforcement? And how are you going to interact from the posse comitatus point of view?

COL. VOGLER: Jim, let me start on this and then you can follow up.

I want to back up one question on you, sir, and I apologize. Really, to set the stage for this I probably didn't make it clear that -- or as clear as I could have that again, we build -- it's that state, local and federal response builds and all the teams that Jim just talked about -- we are an additive to that. Q Right.

COL. VOGLER: And one of the main things we strive to bring with JTFCS and their expertise is that unity of effort, is to get a headquarters in there that can synchronize and collaborate that information Jim just talked about to make sure we're all working to the same goal and capturing any additional capabilities or response needed.

Q Okay. So your first movement is going to be to get a headquarters in place.

COL. VOGLER: Absolutely. And to establish an assessment and a coordination element as we -- (inaudible) -- so we can tailor that force, flow it in to fill those gaps in the response that's already ongoing.

We're additive to those CSTs that each state has -- that's the Civil -- weapons of mass destruction Civil Support Team that's out of the National Guard that each state has access to to assess that situation. The National Guard also has CBRNE-enhanced response force packages, which again are some medical, engineer and DECON capability regionally based that can respond. And then we again, are additive -- the CCMRF, I should say -- and the federal response is additive to that process.

Now, with regards to posse comitatus, again, we are clearly in support of federal agencies, and we do not have a law enforcement role. We will integrate with law enforcement to understand the situation and make sure we're aware of any threats, but CCMRF is not designed to enforce security on the local population. It's designed to respond. It has forces for security, but that's really -- they call them security forces, but that's really just to establish our own footprint and make sure that we can operate and run our own bases. So there's -- just so there's no confusion there, we do not expect a law enforcement role.

We train our soldiers on posse comitatus. We train them on the restrictions that we have to operate domestically, and that's really one of the major differences for a lot of these soldiers. You know, the truck drivers drive trucks just like they would always do, but they're going to operate in a unique Defense support of civil authorities to meet the domestic environment, and that's what we strive to teach them -- that they will be operating inside the United States, and there are very different rules than they might have if they were deployed overseas.

I think that captured it, and then Jim can talk a little bit more about the direct ties in at the JTF level. Jim?

LT. COL. SHORES: Yeah. We of course concur totally with that. Title 32 -- we leave that up to the National Guard to do those law enforcement elements. Even if -- let's say even if there was a scenario that developed into a branch of a civil disturbance -- even at that point it would take a presidential directive to even get it close to anything that you're suggesting.

MODERATOR: Great. Are there any other questions?

Q I don't have any more.

Q No, I'm set. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

MODERATOR: Well, I did have one question that was e-mailed in, and let me make sure I get it -- wanting more information about vibrant response. Can one of you speak a little -- I'm not sure how much you can talk about, but just tell us a little bit more about that exercise that's going on and what you're doing there.

COL. VOGLER: I guess I'll set up the framework, and then Lieutenant Colonel Shores is actually down there right now. But the vibrant response is about a two-week exercise designed to take the CCMRF force and, as we said, familiarize them with the -- (inaudible) -- environment, the potential CBRNE environment and response scenarios that they might have, and then to take the headquarters -- this is not the entire force, but it's the headquarters and leadership of the force and train them through some simulations and decision making exercises where they have to face scenarios, to make decisions, process the orders. And that will culminate in about a three-day, four-day command post exercise where they will have a scenario with computer-driven actions, with a cadre of observers to help train them -- observers-trainers to help train them. And they'll go through about three days of simulated operations, issuing the orders that they would be expected to give in a response. And this will get this -- their headquarters trained and prepared to respond -- (inaudible) -- be ready for the mission on 1 October, over.

LT. COL. SHORES: This is Lieutenant Colonel Shores. I'd also like to add, it's an opportunity for network building in an unprecedented assignment of forces. We've always had the -- what we call the (TIDFIT ?) or allocation of forces out there -- contingency sourced -- but this is a precedent-setting network building with the forces that we ultimately will go out and execute with. It's -- as our (CG ?) would say, it's the opportunity to pass out business cards way before an incident as opposed to when it's too late to pass out business cards, after the incident has occurred.

It's based on National Planning Scenario I, so the scenario is built from that. Again, that's from the National Response Framework -- formerly National Response Plan. So we are taking those same estimates, assumptions from those interagency planners that have also done this. So it's an opportunity to get to know our forces, to see them in execution, to mission-orient them and be that much better, to be that much more responsive. Over.

COL. VOGLER: Another alibi -- I'm sorry -- Colonel Vogler. And we do have some actual FEMA and other interagency representatives that will be down there, as well as retired interagency personnel that are part of the contracted exercise cadre to make sure we get that integration with the interagency -- state, local and federal portrayed in this response, over.

MODERATOR: Okay, great. And now I guess if we don't have any more questions, are there any final comments or anything else you'd like to add as we close out, either Colonel Vogler and Lieutenant Colonel Shores?

COL. VOGLER: Jim, why don't you go, and then I'll finish up.

LT. COL. SHORES: In closing, with this exercise coming up, looking out to the future with this unprecedented assignment, this also gives us the opportunity to collaborate and exercise further over the next year. And it will make us that much more responsive, so overall the nation will be better prepared to have its DOD ready to support. Thank you.

COL. VOGLER: Again, we at NORTHCOM and Army North as the land component and JTFCS as the standing CBRNE response headquarters take this mission very seriously. The assignment of the CCMRF just makes us that much more prepared in terms of having standing relationships and an ability to train with a specific force full time, under the control of NORTHCOM, that's ready to respond. Again, the force has always been in place, but now the relationships are closer than ever.

This type of planning and coordination and training is a priority both in our headquarters and at NORTHCOM, as we understand our responsibilities to be ready should the requirement be bet, God forbid. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Great. Well, then, thank you everyone for participating in today's roundtable. Thanks so much, Colonel Vogler and Lieutenant Colonel Shores, for your time. You can find the transcript and audio file at DefenseLink.mil/blogger. This concludes today's roundtable. Have a great day.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you.

COL. VOGLER: Thank you.

Q Goodbye.

LT. COL. SHORES: Thank you.

END.