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America's Army as First Responder

by

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The catastrophic nature of Hurricane Katrina in late summer 2005 confirmed once again that the standard "reactive" nature of federal assistance, while appropriate for most disasters, does not work during disasters of this scale. When local and state governments are functionally overwhelmed or incapacitated, the federal government must be prepared to respond proactively. It will need to anticipate state and local requirements, move commodities and assets into the area on its own initiative, and shore up or even help reconstitute critical state and local emergency management and response structures.¹

Introduction

In the wake of the Katrina disaster, followed closely by Hurricane Rita, Americans can be forgiven for becoming uneasy about the capacity of its governing institutions to perform effectively in a large-scale disaster. Setting aside the political "blame game," the crisis laid bare a number of institutional and leadership deficiencies in U.S. management of a major domestic crisis. Inevitably, these raise questions concerning the nation's ability to deal not only with natural disasters but also with a major act of terrorism.

It is our view that the capacity for rapid and effective response is available to the nation but will require significant changes in both approaches and attitudes for this resource to be brought to bear effectively. Specifically, the nation should acknowledge the reality that the Army, composed of active forces, the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve, has enormous de facto capability for dealing with emergencies and that such capability should be exploited to the fullest.

America's Army is unique among all of the nation's institutions, including the other armed services. It is deeply and broadly embedded throughout the fabric of the United States at local, state and federal levels. It has long-standing linkages and relationships that provide for direct

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continuing interaction with citizens and both governmental and nongovernmental organizations and leaders. Furthermore, it is a globally unified institution both organizationally and culturally. It can think and act locally, regionally and nationally.

We are not suggesting an “organizational fix,” nor do we believe that major improvements will require substantial new investment. The essential resources exist now. These include intangibles such as leadership and professionalism, along with the overarching values of service to nation and discipline that are ingrained in the U.S. military culture. Army values as expressed in “Duty, Honor, Country” are not adopted simply because they are attractive; they are functional organizational requirements for success in prevailing in warfare. Without them, organizational coherence and survival in combat would be impossible. It is this categorical imperative of values that transforms a part-time citizen-Soldier of the National Guard into a warrior when called to active duty. These same qualities are needed in a domestic crisis. They are very difficult to replicate through bureaucratic solutions combining diverse and ad hoc politically motivated—not competence-driven— individuals and organizations.

We will begin with a brief overview of how U.S. domestic forces are organized and their capacity for mobilizing efforts in concert with other authorities within the United States and interfacing with them in both planning and execution. We must also deal with existing impediments to fully effective and rapid operations, and how they can be overcome. Some are statutory, deriving from the federal nature of the republic. Others are needed improvements in capabilities through training, coordination and national reconsideration of an emerging domestic role of landpower in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005.

The Army’s Reserve Component

The National Guard and the Reserve—the reserve component of U.S. armed forces—have their origins in the earliest days of the United States. The Army National Guard, derived from the various state militias of the revolutionary period, has dual roles—state and federal. It is subject to the authority of state governors and operates at their discretion in meeting the needs of the states in emergencies. It is at heart state and local; these are proud, competent Americans supporting their communities at times of great need. Yet the Army Guard is organically linked to the active military structure. The Guard is armed, equipped, trained and inspected for competence by the active military. It can be federalized by the President to perform national security missions under the command of the Department of Defense. The Army Guard is represented at the national level by the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., headed by a lieutenant general from the National Guard. Symbolically, its professional association headquarters in Washington is located much closer to the Congress than to the White House, emphasizing that the Guard is first and foremost a product of the fifty states and the major territories of the federal republic.

Repeatedly throughout U.S. history, the Guard has performed alongside active duty forces in times of war. During peacetime they are integrated into contingency planning by the Department of Defense; they undergo extensive joint training and coordination under the direction of U.S. Army Training, Readiness and Mobilization Command (formerly First Army). Federalized Army National Guard units have served with notable distinction in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. Supporting the Partnership for Peace program, they were the leading edge of influence in a major national strategic victory as the Russian glacis in Western Europe was rolled back to the East after the Cold War. State by state and collectively, the Army Guard has served with exceptional distinction.

Its leaders—officers and noncommissioned officers—are highly experienced, superbly prepared citizen-Soldiers. Whether hurricane or other calamitous occurrence, they are ready—likely the most immediately ready, most competent resource a governor possesses to address unanticipated disasters of whatever nature.

The contributions of the reserve component to U.S. security have been enormous, although perhaps not well understood. At times some 40 percent of U.S. forces in Operation Iraqi Freedom have been federalized and deployed Army National Guard and Army Reserve units. The Georgia National Guard, for example, has had 4,500 men and women deployed in Iraq. In the wake of Katrina, it dispatched some 2,500 additional Soldiers for service in disaster relief on the Gulf Coast. The total authorized strength of the Guard is 350,000. Citizen-Soldiers who normally pursue civilian lives and careers, they serve exceedingly well at great personal and often financial sacrifice.

Limitations were placed on deployment of both active duty and federalized Guard units for law enforcement within the United States as a result of experiences of the Reconstruction Era. The *Posse Comitatus* Act limits intervention of either active duty or federalized reserve forces without agreement of state authorities to an executive order by the President.² An exception is when a state of martial law has been declared. This issue is often overblown or misunderstood. The need, exposed by Katrina, is to make federal or federalized state resources available not to usurp but to support local authorities, including assisting in providing or restoring law and order. (For reasons unique to their functions, the Coast Guard does not fall under *posse comitatus*.)

In addition, there are effective practical checks on Army intervention to restore law and order at state and local levels. Aggressive national media coverage accompanies every disaster, promoting the “blame game” to increase interest. There is an elaborate local, state and national political infrastructure watching closely, intensively, on behalf of the disaster’s victims. Local and state bureaucracies aggressively monitor any external intervention. There is a highly competent, responsible chain of command in the Army. The need for safeguards to prevent inappropriate law and order actions by a standing Army was generally understood by the Founders. But as they established appropriate safeguards to maintain civilian control over military force through the mandates of the Constitution and subsequent practice, they simply could not anticipate the effectiveness of today’s constraints on inappropriate actions that are effectively generated by the visual impact or timeliness of television and the Internet—national and global—influencing both the press and the citizenry in general.

America’s Army is expensive, but it provides an extraordinarily skilled volunteer force of seasoned leaders possessing competencies that match any public or private organization at the local, state or federal levels. This broad range of civilian-related competencies is provided in general by the Army Reserve. The Ready Reserve comprises both organized units and the Individual Ready Reserve. Army Reserve units generally are focused on support functions for needed augmentation of the active forces as required. Reserve units are under the command of Army Reserve Readiness Commands, which in turn are under the command of the U.S. Army Reserve Command.

The active Army is federal and national. The Army National Guard is state, regional and often local. The Army Reserve is federal and regional. It is this unique combination of characteristics that creates America’s Army and makes it so well suited for domestic disaster relief as well as for

providing land combat power to national defense capabilities. America's Army, supported by the other military services, is vastly more competent, organized and equipped for national emergency response than the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) or any state's or group of states' Offices of Emergency Preparedness.

U.S. history over the decades since the end of the draft in 1973 has shaped the role of the reserve component. It has been viewed primarily as an augmentation of active forces, providing not only additional residual combat power but also essential service and support functions. In an era of constrained resources and manpower, this role has allowed the active forces to concentrate on maximizing the combat power of the units on active duty. The need to be combat-ready demands that emphasis be placed on that function, in both equipment and training. Prior to deployment to a combat theater, reserve force units are often augmented with equipment, and combat units receive extensive training at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California, the Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana, or the Joint Multinational Training Command at Hohenfels, Germany. These are very serious training exercises. Prior to Operation Desert Storm in 1991, some significant National Guard units were unable to meet the training standards at Fort Irwin and were not allowed to deploy to the Gulf. Since that time, through intensive training and improved leadership, many of those same units have met Army standards at a training center and are now performing well in Iraq and Afghanistan. Increasingly, these are combat-seasoned first-line Army units by any military standard. In fact, if the active Army is the global military "gold standard," it is generally considered that the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are among the top five military establishments in the world.

The increased role of the reserve component on active duty missions raises a number of major issues. While landpower missions must remain transcendent, both the 2001 terrorist attacks and Hurricane Katrina remind us that the equally essential role of domestic emergency response must be considered a vital national security requirement. It should be placed on a priority par with power projection abroad. "Providing for the Common Defense" now involves new challenges.

The rapid growth of major urban areas and increased reliance on motor transport make population control and evacuation far more challenging than even a few decades ago. With increased wealth, multiplication of services and increasingly interlocking economic activity, U.S. national infrastructure becomes more complex and vulnerable to new forms of disruption. Examples are the too frequent failures of electric power grids, and the pressures placed on gasoline and natural gas supplies by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The nation is in the midst of change and must adapt its military priorities and capabilities accordingly.

Another issue faces the reserve component. Major, extended, overseas combat deployments raise questions about the sustainability of reserve manpower. In an earlier era, "draft pressure" provided an incentive to join the Guard or Reserve as an alternative to active duty. That pressure no longer exists. One of the strengths of the reserve component has been its local character, with community-based units. This creates bonds with the population at large and deep roots within the populace, but it also can mean disproportionately large impacts on specific local economies. It unfortunately can also lead to a greater concentration of combat casualties within a given community. Casualties within active forces are spread more generally throughout the population at large.

The Army's reserve component is a vital national asset that must be preserved. In our view, Katrina/Rita can and should serve as a forceful reminder that the new post-9/11 world demands

that foreign and domestic security be viewed as a whole. These recent natural disasters absolutely demonstrate the relevance of the reserve component to domestic emergencies. It is also likely that increased emphasis on serving fellow citizens in the event of a crisis would be a compelling recruiting advantage. The capabilities needed for dealing with a natural disaster such as Katrina are essentially the same as those required for reacting to a major act of terrorism on U.S. soil. If both foreign and domestic security needs are to be met, the role and emphasis of the reserve component as part and parcel of America's Army with the active regular forces must be rethought.

All of the organizational and execution competencies (skills, knowledge, attributes) required to address Katrina and other disasters are available at the local, state and federal levels and are practiced daily in the Army. They were not applied recently in a timely and effective way because of originally sensible but now outdated policies and practices governing domestic employment of the Army. These dysfunctional attitudes and policies of the past have generated a nearly impassible bureaucratic maze of divided responsibility and authority.

Responses to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

The inadequate national response to Katrina and the ensuing disaster resulted from a failure of deliberate planning—a failure to take the actions required. While no plan completely survives the first minute of action, state and local authorities were unable to respond effectively when the original plan was no longer applicable. They apparently had great difficulty in adapting to changing conditions and demands. Events such as the failure of the levees in and around New Orleans were met with confusion and paralysis. Early on, there was little apparent unified chain of command, nor adequate communication through which to exercise control.³

Contradictory and confusing orders were given, and leaders could not adapt. For example, New York City firefighters en route to New Orleans were held in Atlanta apparently for mandatory sexual harassment training due to bureaucratic procedures that prevailed in the face of an overwhelming emergency. Water could not be delivered to devastated areas because flexible preparations for its distribution were not made. Local police organizations in a number of affected parishes and communities were apparently never contacted and given instructions. Neither procedures nor adequate communications were available. In the absence of strong leadership and direction, maintaining order became exceedingly difficult. Unexpected change can be assumed in a crisis; leaders must have an ability to improvise and act on common sense in the absence of directions or unexpected challenges.

The response to Rita was an improvement over that following Katrina, in large part due to rigorous analysis of lessons learned. Katrina was a powerful motivation for leaders and citizens alike, and resources had been mobilized and were in hand for Rita. Of equal importance was psychological motivation. The threat was taken seriously at every level. This may not always be the case in other unexpected, no-notice crises.⁴

Yet serious deficiencies were revealed. Most notable was the chaotic evacuation of Houston. When residents were told to leave the region, they did so in unexpectedly large numbers, swamping local officials. They found themselves stranded in 100-degree heat in monumental traffic jams. High-occupancy traffic lanes were left unused, as were inbound lanes of highway. This situation could have been avoided with proper preparation and execution by those with expertise and experience. These basics of road transport—provision of route control, fuel, repair, food and

water—are known and practiced by military leaders from sergeant to general throughout the Army. Where were they in Houston? Their initial absence spoke volumes to the nation and to foreign observers about American competence. Whatever else comes out of these episodes, clearly there must be more sophisticated evacuation plans for large urban areas to deal with these predictable developments.

In the aftermath of both hurricanes, the FEMA response was lacking. There was widespread confusion over its role and responsibilities—FEMA is not intended to be a first responder but is to bring resources to bear for the local authorities at the scene. But this does not excuse inadequate planning or poor judgment; as in the case of state and local authorities, organizations are only as effective as their leaders, training, plans and culture of responsiveness to change. Their career preparation is modest if not trivial in comparison to the lifelong in-service professional development of officer and noncommissioned officer leaders in the Army. It is easy to criticize leaders who were unable to deal with an unprecedented disaster for which they had no experience or training. In fairness, their shortcomings were part of a larger failure.

Some of FEMA's difficulties in Katrina can be traced back to its absorption into the Department of Homeland Security. From the outset, the focus of that department has been counterterrorism. Resources are allocated to the states, theoretically at least, based on terrorist threat assessments. While the capabilities needed to respond to both major terrorist attacks and natural disasters are similar, the required mind-sets are different. A primary problem is the bureaucratic nature of the department. There appears to be no unifying culture or outlook; its components do not have the common traditions and experiences that instill shared values and bond a large team. For example, the U.S. Coast Guard and the Immigration and Naturalization Service are bedfellows in the same organization, but their roles and missions are completely different. These and a host of other diverse agencies with significantly different cultures and embedded practices presumably take direction and leadership from the same headquarters. It would be difficult to forge a coordinated response under these circumstances even if provided days of warning; an effective no-notice response to an unanticipated attack using weapons of mass destruction seems highly unlikely. Yet that standard of performance is routine in the Army.

Unfortunately, FEMA's shortcomings predate the Department of Homeland Security; it has rarely had the clout, competence and authority to make things happen. Inevitably it has been preoccupied with turf and budget battles, and too often its leaders have been lacking in experience and stature. Unlike the military, there is no established generational leadership training or culture of service to handle the unexpected. In contrast, for the U.S. military, crises are a way of life—not the exception but the rule. From a Soldier's first day in uniform, the primary objective is to be effective in combat or in supporting those on the front line. This ethos permeates the profession worldwide at all ranks and across functionally diverse units, both active and reserve. This ethos of service beyond self, married to extraordinary individual and group competence, is a noteworthy source of national pride and esteem. That excellence is a result of prolonged, enormous national investment—unequaled for any single civilian emergency response agency or group of agencies, including the American Red Cross (currently undergoing serious review).

Army Reserve Component as First Responder

It is our basic premise that the Army National Guard and the Army Reserve are highly competent and can be expected to respond effectively to national emergencies as the Army's "first

responder,” and that they can—with proper planning and established procedures for sharing authority and roles with state and local governments—perform that function for the nation and local authorities. The National Guard can be rapidly reinforced by the active component as needed to provide both functional capabilities and additional leader support.

A primary need in the disaster area is effective command and control in the early stages of an emergency. Federalizing the Guard provides for this to take effect in a manner already illustrated by National Guard activities in Southwest Asia and elsewhere. This is of particular importance in multistate disasters wherein reserve units must collaborate across nontraditional boundaries and authorities. In these situations, higher federal military authorities, the National Guard Bureau and U.S. Army, North (formerly Fifth Army) under U.S. Northern Command in Colorado can coordinate and direct multiple units and activities in a manner that no state or other national authority can. After the initial stages of uncertainty and probable disorder, the military would pass these functions to other authorities while continuing to support their efforts.

While required capabilities for dealing with natural disasters such as hurricanes are similar to those needed in response to a terrorist attack, there are distinct differences of great importance. For Katrina and Rita, there was at least some warning and preparation time, however brief. But it must be assumed that a terrorist attack will come with little or no warning at an unexpected location. This makes standby capability for immediate action essential. One can imagine the crisis that would have resulted from a large-scale chemical or biological attack in the Gulf Coast area. And while hurricanes are destructive, they do not intentionally select targets for maximum death and destruction, as would a terrorist organization.

Clearly national traditions must be honored. States are appropriately jealous of their constitutional prerogatives. This need not be an issue if responsibilities and expectations are clearly understood as a matter of long-standing policy. In the maintenance of law and order, the obvious preference is for local authorities to play the lead role unless dire circumstances dictate otherwise. The issue should not be concern over military control of civil processes, but how best to exploit existing resources that are available to civil authorities. Yet this concern often results in the most respected institution in America being kept at arm’s length during crises because of a misdirected fear of Army involvement in domestic law enforcement.

Over its long history, the United States has created a range of competencies in the U.S. Army that would be exceedingly difficult to replicate by any other organization. Much of this derives from the nature of the Army as a land force operating among populations and wedded to the terrain wherever it is assigned. The Corps of Engineers goes back to the early days of the nation, and its capabilities are well known due to its extensive work on major civil projects.

Less well known are functional competencies the Army has developed in support of its land operations around the globe. These include medical (to include mobile field hospitals), supply and transportation coordination, construction, communication, civil affairs, water purification, and biological, nuclear and chemical decontamination. These are autonomous capabilities, not dependent on external augmentation. The persons and organizations with these functions have working relationships with related civilian industry. These leaders can provide essential links to share data, information and knowledge between the Army and civilian functional expertise.

One approach could be the creation of virtual teams—mentored by Army Reserve functional leaders drawing on the Internet and knowledge management collaboration tools to generate and

sustain Communities of Interest—supporting important functions such as transportation, communication, supply and medical across government, business and academia. These teams, well established nationally, could be the nucleus for jump-starting disaster relief across America. Functional Communities of Practice could be composed of aggressive, flexible leaders of industry wanting to help (e.g., Wal-Mart in Katrina). In the U.S. free-enterprise system, they are routinely on the leading edge of best practice. The Army Reserve could be charged with sustaining national functional Communities of Practice to provide immediate, multiple, simultaneous Internet coordination of disaster relief.

A review of emerging lessons learned from Katrina and Rita reveals that perhaps the most useful capability the Army could have provided would have been effective mobile command and control organizations prepared to command if necessary, but more likely (and preferably) to advise and provide appropriate staff and communication to designated local leaders and support to those actually in command. In some cases in New Orleans, senior civilian officials were essentially isolated from the world outside their makeshift headquarters in hotels. Any Army battalion commander has far greater command and control capability than did many elected leaders of the people, and this resource could have been available almost immediately with proper planning and flexible execution.

Simultaneously, these leaders could be provided with world-class functional experts assembled virtually or locally by the Army Reserve and linked to global, functional best practices for the appropriate disaster situations. Virtual functional expertise could be made regionally or locally available to leaders to support their needs very rapidly.

The Army has many combinations of highly mobile and globally capable command and control elements, both within the active component and ready in each state within the National Guard. These constitute rapidly available, highly competent cells that could provide plug-in technical management competence in direct support of state and local authorities. This was neither a capability nor a requirement foreseen by the writers of the Constitution, who were fearful of a standing army. The Army has provided this type of functional capability for years in foreign military assistance programs. Similar support for unpracticed and ill-equipped U.S. governors and mayors could be provided and made more effective by prior training and preparation before disaster strikes.

The character of the Army as a whole thus can provide a range of capabilities to state and local authorities. The Army National Guard can reinforce political authority on a geographic basis, while the Army Reserve can enable world-class virtual or actual national functional support without geographic limitations.

Planning for Disaster

The primary mission of the U.S. Army remains to fight and win this nation's wars. That mission cannot change. Indeed, it is the faithful and relentless pursuit of the ability to fulfill that mission that gives the Army the extraordinary range of capabilities to make it effective in dealing with domestic disasters. It makes no sense either to ignore this reality or to attempt to replicate this resource elsewhere. In extremis, as in Katrina and Rita, the nation eventually gets around to drawing on these capabilities. An example is the request by the governor of Louisiana for 15,000 additional troops on standby in anticipation of Hurricane Rita. This is in sharp contrast to the indecision and reluctance evident in the days prior to Katrina.

We propose that the Army be assigned a lead role and a formal mission in planning for and responding to major emergencies on American soil. The commanders of Army Training, Readiness and Mobilization Command and U.S. Army, North would be charged with developing integrated Army National Guard and Army Reserve plans in coordination with state and local authorities as well as with FEMA and other government agencies. Within this structure, Army Reserve Commands would be charged with functional support for disaster planning for their areas of responsibility. Plans should be based on analysis of potential natural disasters (e.g., a major earthquake in southern California) as well as the regional threat posed perennially by hurricanes. These would complement Army National Guard responsibilities for state support. The expertise and the infrastructure are largely in place now for implementing such a concept.

This would advance beyond ad hoc, decentralized planned operations by local authorities of varying competencies and resources. These plans should include responses to potential terrorist attacks, already subject to analysis by the Department of Homeland Security. Once agreed upon, roles and missions for local, state and federal organizations would be assigned. A large role for the Army National Guard would be obvious; it would be a primary first responder for the Army as a whole and for the states affected. The roles and missions would be tested and validated by simulations and mission exercises games. All would acknowledge the constitutional constraints on the application of federal resources.

This raises serious issues of missions and resources. The current approach has been that the Army be prepared for operations in three areas: high-, mid- and low-intensity warfare, including counterinsurgency and reconstruction. We would add a new mission: In the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack, the Army would be given responsibility for providing essential command and control capability to local authorities immediately for the first 48 to 72 hours.⁵ This would enable other leaders and agencies at all levels to come into play without a vacuum of capability. As local, state and other federal authorities ramp up to full capability, these command and control capabilities and functions would be passed to other authorities as they come on line. This concept cannot be made a reality unless extensive planning and coordination provide a framework for implementation. The Army can also fulfill the planning function on a nationwide basis, city-by-city and state-by-state. The expertise and professional dedication to fulfill such a mission are readily at hand. Buildup and responsible handoff of missions is routine practice in today's Army.

The complexity and magnitude of planning and preparing for a major emergency should not be underestimated. A comparison of the challenges of the terrorist attacks of September 2001 and the responses to Katrina and Rita offers some insights. Devastating as it was, the attack on the World Trade Center directly impacted only some 16 acres. It occurred in a location with perhaps the most highly organized and seasoned response infrastructure in the United States and within a single political jurisdiction. The Gulf Coast hurricanes impacted millions of people over an area of thousands of square miles in at least four states. Furthermore, the disaster threatened major economic dislocation by impacting the Port of New Orleans, the vast Gulf oil production and refining facilities and vital river transport reaching deep into the heartland of the Midwest.

To adequately prepare for such a catastrophe would involve anticipating multiple requirements; meeting those requirements in detail would involve coordinated contingency plans by numerous agencies. The scenario for each type of emergency would be unique to the potential threat and require specialized responses.

To go beyond generalities, consider how the nation might respond to a pandemic. For example, assume that the greater Atlanta area might be struck with a major outbreak of Avian Flu. This would impact a multicounty area with a population of several million people. In a worst case, masses of infected persons would overwhelm local emergency rooms and clinics. It might be necessary to quarantine the region to prevent the spread of the disease by people fleeing the scene or entering it by both land and air. This would be far beyond the capability of any local authority.

Under our concept, coordinated planning support to requesting federal, state or local leaders planning for such a disaster would be the general responsibility of U.S. Army, North under the supervision of U.S. Northern Command. Army North would assign specific general planning responsibility to the Georgia National Guard or perhaps the U.S. Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, or the 3d Infantry Division at Fort Stewart, Georgia. To address the medical aspect, Army North would coordinate with the U.S. Army Reserve Command to designate a Reserve medical support command (perhaps the 3d Medical Brigade in Decatur, Georgia) to coordinate with the Centers for Disease Control, if asked, in anticipating treatment requirements and for stockpiling and distributing vaccines and medical supplies. The Reserve medical brigade, if asked, would work with state health authorities to identify and prepare treatment facilities. It would also work with the Veterans Administration to involve veterans' hospitals in dealing with large numbers of victims. The Reserve medical brigade would be the "last resort" default medical planner for developing this comprehensive response if called upon by federal, state or local authorities.

To implement a quarantine, the Georgia National Guard (or the Infantry Center at Fort Benning or the 3d Infantry Division at Fort Stewart if designated the lead support role) would work with requesting state and local authorities. A major role would be required of the Georgia Department of Defense and its Adjutant General, who directs the 48th National Guard Brigade. Also involved in the planning would be the Georgia Department of Transportation and local and state police organizations. One of the reserve military police commands (such as the 220th Military Police Brigade from Gaithersburg, Maryland), as well as a transportation element (perhaps the 143d Transportation Command from Orlando, Florida) could play leading roles in assembling functional police or transportation support if asked by FEMA, Georgia or Atlanta authorities. Airspace control would require work by the Federal Aviation Authority and the Air Force and Navy organizations at Dobbins Air Force Base and elsewhere. The Georgia Federal Emergency Management Agency would participate in the planning process on behalf of Homeland Security for support requirements they can provide. These would be incorporated into the overall plan.

All of these requirements and a host of others would be broken down into specific tasks for all participants as parts of first local, then state and then federal response on a prearranged basis.

This type of preparation cannot be done in an extemporaneous fashion in the midst of a crisis. Clearly this is a huge challenge. It is feasible but not desirable for the Army to take the lead in initiating such detailed planning. But the abiding competence, experience and values of selfless service to nation of its Soldiers mandate a reinforcing role when called upon by federal, state or local authorities. Failure is simply not an option. Without meeting these planning and execution challenges, the results of a pandemic would likely be panic, chaos, perhaps civil disorder and needless loss of life. It should be obvious that far more than simply developing and stockpiling effective vaccines (not now available) would be necessary. Similar plans could be put in place for other areas throughout the country and for various types of emergencies.

There are many other measures to be taken to improve U.S. response capability. Resource allocation and priorities should be evaluated for active and reserve elements charged with greater responsibility. This should be reflected in Department of Defense force development and budgeting. Greater use should be made of the talent currently available in the superbly prepared retired military community in each state. Emerging knowledge and information technology could be used to assist in forming functional teams responsive to unexpected contingencies. This is current practice in the growing Army Battle Command Knowledge System actively supported by the Army Reserve.

Conclusion

The measures suggested do not carry a large price tag, nor do they create a new bureaucracy. They are aimed at effectively organizing and mobilizing the vast resources of talent and capability already in existence, particularly in the active and reserve components of America's Army.

The globalization of terror, highlighted by the September 2001 attacks, has shaken the world order to its foundations. We live in the "new normal." America has taken vigorous action at home and abroad in response to this unfamiliar environment. If anything positive is to come out of the Katrina disaster, it must be a greater awareness of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities in defending the homeland. The world was shocked as the nation's fumbling response raised questions about U.S. ability to act as an international leader. Effectiveness in dealing with emergencies faced by U.S. citizens is not only a moral obligation we all share, it is also a major national security issue. We must not be content with bureaucratic, halfhearted measures. We have to get serious. The Army as a default backstop is a serious response.

Endnotes

- ¹ U.S. House of Representatives, "A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina," February 15, 2006, p. 132 (available online at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/congress/index.html>).
- ² Title 18, United States Code, Section 1385.
- ³ Well documented in "A Failure of Initiative" and in The White House, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned," February 2006 (available online at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/reports/katrina-lessons-learned.pdf>).
- ⁴ A great example of what might be is the Florida emergency response to five hurricanes in 2004—highly competent, effective, organized governance.
- ⁵ As acknowledged explicitly in "A Failure of Initiative" (page 132), "The need for assistance is extreme during the initial period of a catastrophic hurricane, yet the ability of state and local responders to meet that need is limited. That is why it is so important for the federal government, particularly [Department of Defense] resources, to respond proactively and fill that gap as quickly as possible. Because it takes several days to mobilize federal resources, critical decisions must be made as early as possible so that massive assistance can surge into the area during the first two days, not several days or weeks later."

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