

TRANSCRIPT

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Q: We're glad to have you with us. General Renuart was the CENTAF DO in Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and ran Southern Watch for a while, and commanded an A-10 squadron in the Gulf War, so he's been around. He's been in his job out there since about mid '07. So welcome.

A: Thanks. It's good to be here.

Q: I would like to ask you about the new CBRNE Emergency Response Forces that have been in the news recently. Talk to us a little bit about that, some of the details. Numbers, planning horizon, where they are, what they, that sort of thing.

A: After September 11th there was a recognition that we did not have a standing capability available to us to respond to a weapon of mass destruction attack. The Department of Defense was asked to create this capacity, both out of the recommendations out of the 9/11 Report, follow-on recommendations from Katrina indicating the need for a standing capability to deal with a large-scale event.

It took some time, but this past year we were directed by the Secretary of Defense to create a capability to respond to up to three near simultaneous CBRN events, Chemical, Biological, Nuclear, Radiological events.

We began training the first of these consequence management response forces in June this past year and certified that force just before the first of October so that it could take

on this mission full time. They would be assigned to Commander, NORTHCOM, and their job would be to be available on a very short notice to respond to a large-scale WMD event or a, if you will, a non-hostile chemical/biological event.

It's a force made up of about 4700 military. The first one is focused or centered around an active duty Brigade Combat Team, the 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Stuart is the planning headquarters for this response force. They are commanded and controlled by Joint Task Force Civil Support which is our standing Joint Task Force. They live down in Fort Monroe in Virginia. They focus on the chemical/biological response activities that DoD might be asked to perform.

The unit is made up of three task forces. Task Force Operations, which basically is the survey teams that go in and assess the kind of agent or event that has occurred, and can do decon, they can do urban search and rescue, they can do airlift of, medevac of patients. They also provide a capability to sustain themselves in that kind of environment for an extended period of time.

The second task force is Task Force Med, Medical. Their job is to do patient decon and immediate care for large numbers of casualties in this kind of chemical, biological, nuclear environment.

The third is Task Force Logistics which really is the underpinnings of all of this.

So this force is made up, as I said, of about 4700. Not all of them, in fact many of the individual skills reside outside of a traditional Brigade Combat Team, but we've attached them into this so you've created essentially a tailored task force that has predominantly active duty but some reserve component. For example, some of the chem/bio are heavily resident in the reserve forces. So we attach them to this task force for this one year duty period that they have.

Their job is to plan for the large-scale event to be able to come in in support of whoever the lead federal agency might be and the state, the Governor and the Adjutant General. They fall in on top of existing civilian and military capabilities.

You may know there are 54 Civil Support Teams around the country. They are made up of 22 people and they do assessment of an event. You may have seen, you may have written on the white powder envelopes that have showed up at states all across the country. Our CSTs in many of those states have gone in and done the initial assessment of those.

There is also a force within the National Guard called the CERF-P. It's a Chem/Bio Emergency Response Force. It's a group of about 150 to 170 National Guardsmen who

have sort of CST-plus capability.

So it allows you to have the first response, a second tier that can come in on top of that, and then if the event is large enough or requires a duration long enough, we can bring this Consequence Management Response Force into sustain that over time. So it's a partnered relationship with the National Guard and with our friends in FEMA who have similar small capabilities but again don't have the large-scale, long sustainment capability that this Consequence Management Response Force might have.

Q: What about the next two groups?

A: We will form two additional forces. The second one will begin training this June. That one will be centered around a National Guard brigade. It's a South Carolina, I think it's the 29th Brigade, but please, we'll get you the exact designation but I believe that is.

The South Carolina National Guard. Again, their Brigade Combat Team headquarters will be the planning headquarters for this. It will be commanded and controlled, if you will, by our U.S. Army North. They have an operational command post much like Joint Task force Civil Support made up of Guardsmen and Reservists. They would provide the overall planning and architecture for that. So that unit will begin training in about June, maybe as early as May. We've already identified all of the component elements of that one. Then we will certify that unit about the first of October. So that will give us two of these Consequence Management Response Forces.

Then in the next fiscal year we will do the same with a third. Again, right now designed to be a National Guard centered unit, but heavily dependent on both Reserve and National Guard.

The Reserves play in all three of these, because--

Q: Where would that one be?

A: We haven't picked that particular unit just yet. Some of it is the states are determining which of their brigade headquarters, one which they would like to do that; and two, the capacity, based on the planned rotations of forces in and out of Afghanistan and Iraq in the coming months.

Q: So these particular groups, you say they're response groups. Can you define to me what response means? Obviously if there were a chemical spill or chemical attack you'd go in, you're responsive. But would it be a response if there's something going on like a Mumbai sort of attack, that that would fall under response?

A: No, this force is--let me answer it in two ways. First, the force is designed and trained and equipped to react, respond if you will, to a chemical or biological or nuclear event. The response part of that is to identify what the elements of the threat may be, not terrorist elements, but elements of the material, if you will. Is it a biological event, is it a chemical event? What type? What type of cordon must you emplace? What kind of capability has to come in through what we would call the hot zone, how you would integrate the medical care. It's that kind of response as opposed to, if you will, a defense of the homeland response. It is not a force designed to go in and enforce laws. The National Guard is empowered to do that. They do that through the states, and certainly the traditional law enforcement agencies do that.

This force is designed to go and render assistance and aid as opposed to create security, if you will. That has been carried in, at least among some critics, that we're creating a force that would go in and impose the law. That's not the mission of this at all. It is to go in and bring assistance to the victims and to create a mitigation effort and a cleanup effort to whatever this particular thing may be.

So you could have, for example, an earthquake that affected a number of chemical plants where there was a large-scale, I'll call it chemical cloud created. This force could come in and help mitigate the effects of that as opposed to imposing security.

Q: General, the role of the National Guard in the next couple of years, it looks like it will be more essentially related to homeland security, homeland defense, the role you were just referring to both in the security and civil support team functions.

What's your feeling of how well prepared they are? Are they going to be doing more exercises? Are you going to be using them more? How is that going to work? Particularly since it looks like so far at least their deployments to OEF are going to be relatively later, and OIF as well.

A: First, any of the forces committed to this activity that we've been describing, we will have a program through the course of what I'll call their on-duty window where we would exercise with them. They'll do collective training among the different units. Because it is critical that this force be well integrated, train together, et cetera. We have national level exercises and NORTHCOM level exercises that will allow us to do that a couple of times through the course of each year.

Having said that, the National Guard has a training cycle for its people that allows us to integrate their training needs with our training schedule as well.

You mentioned it appears that the Guard deployments to OEF might be slowing. I think we're not quite sure that's true yet because as you know, we used the Guard heavily in

the early days, and many of their units have been in a rest, retraining, reequipping cycle. There are a number of Guard units that will start to deploy in the coming year that will show an increase, if you will. So their tempo will begin to pick up. Just because that's the normal cycle of using the Guard and the active in the deployed arena.

So it's important for us to work carefully with both the active component and the reserve components--both Guard and Reserve--to identify units who are available in that cycle so that we don't over-task them.

And we want them to be able to focus principally on this mission during their period of vulnerability. So that's required a real collaborative effort among the services for the reserve components, the National Guard Bureau as well as the states to make sure we balance this.

One of the commitments we've made to Governors is that we would not take any more than about 20 percent of any one Governor's capability to apply against this force, because certainly they need some capability to be resident in their states to be able to respond.

So we wouldn't pull a CST or a CERF-P away to create this. We'd rather use people who have in their basic skills chem/bio, decon, those kinds of things, and then add them into this force.

Does that get to your question?

Q: --internal security improvements. What plans does your command have for beefing up security for the inauguration? What part of the national capital integrated air defense system, any new wrinkles?

A: Tony, as you know, we do what are called national special security events all the time. We provided an integrated team of active and National Guard forces to the Democratic and Republican conventions. We do it for the Super Bowl, we did it for the UN General Assembly. We will be an active participant in both the ceremonial and the defense support to civil authorities to the inaugural events.

The Secret Service is the lead agent here. The active component of the military participation I think numbers about 7500. The Guard component will be, the numbers vary a little bit, but somewhere around 4,000. The National Guard will primarily focus on security support to the law enforcement agencies--Secret Service, Park Police, et cetera, to help provide additional security in the venue areas.

NORTHCOM's role is to plan for and be prepared to respond to any contingencies that

occur and so our Chemical Response Force will be on alert. We'll use our NORAD forces to increase the air defense presence in the area--air patrols. Certainly, as you know, our integrated air defense system in the National Capital Region will be up and robust and available. But we also are integrating a medical response. There is a Joint Task Force in the capital region designed to provide large-scale medical response if you have an event. So all of that planning is being done by General Rich Rowe who is the Commander of our Joint Task Force National Capital Region. He has been integrated into the inaugural planning really from the first day. Again, not because we see a specific threat, but because an event this visible and this important and this historic, we ought to be prepared to respond if something does happen that requires DoD to provide support.

Again, it's important to remember that this is all to support the lead agencies who do this--Secret Service, the District of Columbia who certainly as the host has a big responsibility. But we've got a pretty active role in the planning for contingencies and the ability to respond.

Q: What are the planning for contingencies in the past, to follow up that? How long established are the rules of engagement, chain of command, and training for shooting down a hijacked airplane, commercial airline. I've asked General Eberhart and Admiral Keating about this in the past. They were pretty open in terms of--

A: Absolutely. We have worked very hard, both in our NORAD and our NORTHCOM roles to ensure that we are prepared for another event like September 11th. Every day we launch alert fighters somewhere around the country to intercept, identify, and potentially divert away aircraft that are not complying with some element of the airborne rules of the road. In virtually every case it is a mix of buffoonery or mechanical failure or just lack of understanding of the rules. Fortunately we've not had a repeat of that event. But there are a number of aviators out there who have had a chance to see an F-16 up very close, who have been landed at an airfield that wasn't their planned airfield, and were greeted by 30 of 40 of their newest friends in the FBI.

We do that because we did not have that structure available on September 11th. We do have that now. The FAA lives in our headquarters every day, in our operations center. TSA lives with us every day. So if we have an aircraft begin to raise interest we can very quickly find out who owns the airplane, what their passenger manifest is, are there federal air marshals on board, to try to determine what the intent is of that aircraft. And if we need to, then we'll fly up and intercept them and we have a series of steps that we go through to determine what we would call hostile intent.

Then as you said, the command and control chain, I come on that conference call almost at the inception of concern. Our radar guys talk to our air component down in Tindall. They call me or our designated, what we call an assessor, if you will. It's a two star or

above general officer who's available always, 24 hours a day.

If we begin to believe this is becoming a hostile situation, the Secretary of Defense is brought into the line as well as the Secretary of Homeland Security and others, but the recommendation to the Secretary comes from the acting assessor, normally commander NORAD/NORTHCOM but could be a Deputy or Director of Operations, to the Secretary that we've met all of these steps to declare this aircraft hostile and to recommend a decision to shoot it down. That decision is always based on the risk of where we think that aircraft may go and the effect that it may have on a large populated area versus the very difficult decision of engaging a civilian aircraft in our country. That's a tough, tough decision to have to make, but I think that the events of September 11th have taught us that you have to have that discussion at a very senior level in our government to ensure that we've considered all possibilities before we just allow an airplane to fly into a populated area.

Q: General, looking at the possibility of a large-scale WMD attack, and putting aside for a moment the carefully circumscribed role of the [CSMR], how much do you worry about a possible breakdown in the [inaudible], and the ability and having planned for such ability, but local law enforcement and National Guard [inaudible] become overwhelmed [inaudible]?

A: Elaine, I guess I'd kind of answer this with two phases if you will. First, it is prudent for us always to look at the potential threats out there. Terrorist is really the one we focus on most heavily. So we do think about the possibilities that might require the use of DoD military. But I would tell you that today I don't lose sleep that you would have a breakdown of such magnitude that both a state and federal law enforcement response as well as a state National Guard response might be inadequate. But we do have available always to the nation a response force that can, if so directed by the President of the United States and it's really the President's decision, no matter who that may be, if they feel the ability of a state has broken down to respond then certainly the Governor can ask the President, and that's a key piece, and the President can make a decision to support that government with federal troops. That's not really our role to recommend or advise. Our role is to have a capability that can respond if the President were to choose that action. As you know, I think the last time that was used was in Los Angeles many many years ago.

I think the political leadership of our nation understands the magnitude of that decision, and I think there would be a very detailed discussion at the very senior levels of our government before that decision was made.

So I don't worry too much about that. We do have a capability to provide a force to the federal government should that be required but it's not something we put up there

somewhere high on our list of most likely events. I spend a lot more time worrying about a pandemic influenza.

Q: Would law enforcement, like a cordon around a city, [inaudible] require some sort of a [inaudible]?

A: Well, I think certainly if you have a pandemic event that there will be a need for, I wouldn't characterize it as a cordon around a city, but certainly some sort of security. But again, law enforcement, the National Guard is always that first response there. Our role is to support those events and activities. The Emergency Management Assistance Compact or EMAC is used actively every day to provide additional National Guard to various states. I think if we got to something so significant where federal forces might be required it would be sort of unanimous among every citizen in the country as opposed to sort of imposing that.

Q: You've made some comments recently about the need for the new administration to revisit U.S. Arctic policy. I just wonder if you could outline what are, in your mind, the top military considerations that should be taken into account [inaudible] that policy?

A: Well, we have advocated for a relook at U.S. Arctic policy. The department has been, for example, a strong supporter of the UN Law of the Sea Treaty that is out there awaiting ratification. The reason is, it allows the U.S. to have a seat at the table in discussions among not just Arctic nations, Arctic interested nations, but all nations as it relates to movement and traffic in international waters.

The reason that's important to me is that we have seen a trend over the last three or four years where as the ice pack recedes there is more navigable water in the Arctic region. That then allows for increased traffic in that area. Certainly more research and study of the area. And potentially the desire among some nations to try to harvest whatever resources might be available to us, and there's speculation of natural gas and minerals as well as oil. Not confirmed, but certainly people believe there is that possibility.

Any time nations converge on an area to either compete for or to collectively mine natural resources, there is a possibility, and it's just a possibility, but a possibility that their interests will not coincide. So our concern is that we acknowledge that the Arctic is an area that has more traffic today than it's ever had before. It does have natural resources that are untapped. And there is at least a security concern with a convergence of all of those interests in a single place on the globe. And by the way, it's a place that is a very harsh environment on a day to day basis.

So what we've been a proponent of is first let's have a clear discussion within our own country on what should our security strategy be and policy be in the Arctic, and then

let's find a way to continue to collaborate with the other Arctic interested nations in Denmark, Russia, Canada and others. We've had a Chinese research ship, a Korean research ship into the Arctic this past season. We've had seven cruise ships pass through there during sort of the summer time. If nothing else, you need to have a search and rescue capability that can go up and assist there. Because of the lack of access in the years gone by, we've not paid as close attention to that as maybe we ought to, so we've asked and been a strong supporter of a whole government look on our policies regarding the Arctic. They're dated. We haven't had a good relook at those in a number of years. And in that discussion we think about what security considerations ought to be important to the U.S.. And of course in my role as the NORAD Commander I work for both the Canadian and the U.S. governments and there are some slight policy differences between the two.

So from my perspective as a NORAD Commander, having common ground there that allows me to operate in that environment with good support from both governments is also important.

Q: What are your understandings of the main differences between the two governments?

A: I think really, and I'm not an expert at this, but I believe the only real difference is the Canadian definition of territorial waters versus the U.S., and coming to agreement on how you would notify, for example, the Canadian government of passage through that area. I think there are ongoing discussions on this. I think the nations are moving closer to agreement. But on all the other defense-related issues there is no daylight between the two countries. I think that's a very positive element for our operation in that region, our NORAD operation in that region every day.

Q: A quick clarification on Tony's question earlier on the inauguration. Can you tell me a little bit more about what the active duty forces are doing? And why, it would seem to me you would want more National Guard than active duty for this kind of event, given the flexibility of the National Guard.

A: I think you always want to have capability for the most flexible forces. But there are capabilities that only reside in the active duty. They don't reside in the National Guard necessarily. So we want to have a mix of both of those to allow us to best be prepared to respond.

For example, the air defense resources, for example, are under the command of Commander NORAD. Many are National Guardsmen, for sure, but they are if you will, Title 10 forces under the command of Commander NORAD.

The Joint Task Force Medical in the National Capital Region is a Title 10 capability. It does not reside in the National Guard.

The Consequence Management Response Force that we've just described resides in the Title 10 world, active and Reserve, as opposed to in the National Guard.

So many of those kinds of capabilities, Julian, reside in the active or activated reserve portion of the department.

On the other hand, the support to law enforcement, which is the bulk of what the National Guard will do in the inaugural events, resides in the National Guard. So it makes sense to apply the National Guard against the things they are best equipped for and use active component or active duty military for the things that they bring.

Separate from those two kinds of events there is a large ceremonial piece also, and a big chunk of active duty and Guardsmen will participate in the ceremonial events--parade, reviews, honor guards.

Q: The numbers include ceremonial people.

A: The numbers for both sides include both of those, the ceremonial and the contingency capability.

Does that help?

Q: Yes.

Q: General, as we look back on the Bush administration all of a sudden there are two entities that are active duty military and CONUS. Your emergency response force as well as national missile defense.

Number one, does the existence of national defense make your job easier or tougher? How do you mesh with it? Does it in any way affect what you do on a day to day basis?

And how do you see your mission changing as someone who's here in the homeland all of a sudden having an active duty military role defending the nation from whatever threats it might face. Is that something difficult to get your head around?

A: I think defending your nation is pretty easy to get your head around. I think we owe it to the country to have the best capability to defend ourselves, our homeland, our communities, our families every day, that we possibly can. That has to be an integrated team of active, Guard and Reservists.

I don't have any difficulty wrapping my head around that mission. There are many elements of that mission you mentioned. Missile defense. Those are Title 10 activated Guardsmen when they walk in that capsule. They operate in support of commander NORTHCOM to defend the homeland against a rogue nation missile attack. Air defense. We owe it to the nation to have this capability to be able to respond to unidentified aircraft that either approach or are in our airspace every day.

We talked about consequence management for manmade or natural catastrophic events. We also work very carefully and closely with Department of Homeland Security on port security and access to ports. We're doing surveys of many of our ports to understand the ease or difficulty of rogue element emplacing an improvised explosive device in a maritime environment.

Oh, by the way, we then have to pay attention to Mother Nature, and that is a threat all to herself that we have to be prepared to respond to. And using active duty forces like we did with Navy divers in Minneapolis when the bridge collapsed there on I-35, to provide assistance to a county sheriff and a fire chief worked very well and was very comfortable for us and was very well accepted.

I think it makes sense for us to take advantage of the best capability available and apply it against a problem. Now it's not Department of Defense's role to do everything. So it is always in support of a request by a local official, a Governor, et cetera. But if we have the capability it's important for us to be in a position to apply it in a timely fashion. You wouldn't want to wait days or weeks to get those divers in to try to help recover the remains of those eight individuals that were killed. You want to do that within hours.

So our role has been to integrate the planning for contingencies so that we know the first person there's going to be a National Guard CST, for example, but after a day or two they're going to get pretty tired and they're going to need some additional bulk. So we have to be prepared to provide that when it's necessary. I have no problem at all with that.

Q: General, back to the CBR. You said it didn't have the capability. The Marine Corps established a CBR unit almost ten years ago. I thought that was still in existence.

A: Two different elements, Otto, sorry. CERF-P is that National Guard element. It's about 150 to 180 strong. The CBR, you are exactly right. The Marine Corps established that a number of years ago. That has two elements, kind of equal size and shape, that are initial response capabilities.

The CBR is part of our CSMRF. I hate to kill you with-- [Laughter]. The CSMRF is our

Consequence Management Response Force. If you guys can come up with a better name, please help me with this. [Laughter].

Q: Are they real people?

A: [Laughter]. We've had this discussion.

These, if you will, do allow us to tier a response. Our 4700 strong person, the CSMRF is on essentially a 48 hour beeper, if you will. We expect that the state CST, the CRF-P will always be those first elements on scene. But 48 hours, if it's going to be something of more duration than that, you need to start sequencing in your additional support very quickly. So that's how we designed this is to begin to escalate the response to an escalating situation.

Q: You mentioned ports. There's been concern that nobody really has authority over mining a port. It's kind of fallen between Coast Guard, Navy and--You said you're doing surveys as a question of our capability to detect if somebody has actually planted a mine or something like it in a port. One would be enough to shut down Long Beach or something like that.

I wonder if you can talk a bit more about what you're doing in assessing that problem.

A: Sure. First, I think that there have been things written that there is no one in charge of that. I'm not sure I'd agree with that completely. I think we have not focused an integrated effort on this in quite some time. We've begun that really about a year and a half ago. And the Department of Homeland Security is in charge of port security. The Coast Guard is their principal element of that, bit CBP and the ATF and DEA and all those law enforcement agencies work very aggressively to provide better port security. I would use as an example. There is a project in South Carolina called Sea Hawk Task Force. They have integrated local law enforcement, federal law enforcement agencies, the Coast Guard, the U.S. Navy, NORTHCOM, all into an integrated operations center in Charleston to monitor intelligence and law enforcement information across a whole spectrum of threats to provide better security to that port.

So we are every day improving the integrated defense of our ports. The Department of defense role is two-fold. We support the law enforcement, if you will, inside of the 12 mile limit because that's now U.S. territorial waters and falls to the Department of Homeland Security. Outside the 12 mile limit we provide the ability to partner with the Coast Guard as well to do enforcement. The International Law of the Sea, the [UNCLOS] will help us be more effective in that as we ratify that hopefully soon.

I have a naval component, Fleet Forces Command is my naval component. They are

working very actively with Admiral Allen in the Coast Guard to create a maritime intelligence function that looks out for bad things and then begins to craft the capability to respond as we see them.

Let me fast forward to the port for just a second. Understanding what the sub-surface environment in our ports is in detail, is important to understand where mines could be emplaced. Local port authority are investing in the ability then to monitor that underwater environment for change.

An example, again in Charleston, they have a towed sonar device that they use. It's procured by the state. It is used to take those choke points that you talked about and survey them on a routine basis to ensure nothing's changed in there. But having a baseline survey in each of our ports is critical so that you then look to identify changes in those environments to allow you to be more effective.

I think we're really working the port issue very hard. It's a team effort. But again, DoD doesn't lead that. We support it. Where we have some capability, the Navy counter-mine capability, for example. Helicopter towed counter-mine equipment is important to that and we're using that on a routine basis.

Q: You talked a little bit about the Task Force for

Emergency Readiness. What are they? What makes them unique from the other forces? [Inaudible]?

A: First, the Task Force for Emergency Readiness is a two or three person team that has, this has been funded by the Department of Homeland Security. In five pilot states right now. It is really designed to be a planning element. It's not an execution element. The term task force is a little bit misleading in that it implies execution. These guys and gals are really just--I shouldn't say just because they're critical, but they are planners and the intent for that is to create, again, additional capacity for a state to not only create their own statewide response plans, but then to integrate them with federal responders, be they military or civilian. So the project is beginning in five states, and I apologize, I can't remember all but Hawaii and Washington and three others are part of this pilot. This will sort or prove the concept that this has value for a state.

The intent would be for a state to have money to hire people with extensive planning backgrounds. Frankly, a lot of that translates to retired military, for example, potentially National Guard or Reservists who would then be hired full time to do this work for the state, and integrate the planning efforts of the states. Does that clarify it a little bit for you?

It doesn't execute. They do not respond. They truly will be tasked to build the plans that then enable response to an event.

Q: What kinds of plans are these?

A: Earthquake response, chemical spill response, certainly hurricane response, for example. In the state of Washington, for example, one of their real concerns is an earthquake offshore that could create a tsunami. That's happened in Washington before so they have good reason. And yet this team would allow them to create the response plan, if you will, to an event like that.

Q: General, just a quick follow-on on your earlier thought about the intercepts and close encounters with the F-16s and so forth. Could you give us a sense of how frequently that's happening and what if any steps are being taken to reduce those numbers? There's obviously the danger of an inadvertent escalation of--

A: Sure. I think first, there is an information campaign underway to make sure aviators around our country understand that they have to, it's a different world since 9/11. They have to be more diligent about filing flight plans. They have to check the notices to airmen. Just an example, as the President moves around we stand up and stand down temporary flight restrictions around airfields and principal locations. There clearly is one around the National Capital Region every day. When he travels to Crawford we establish one down there.

Well, I don't know how much you know about that area of Texas, but there's a lot of cotton farmers and other farmers in that area which require aerial spraying of the crops. We've had a couple of instances where 7:00 o'clock in the morning, that's when the crop sprayer gets out to spray his crops, and if his crops are on the other side of a restricted area from his airfield, he just takes off and flies right through it. Well that tends to alert the system quite a bit, and so we've had F-16s or F-22s even in one case, chasing around after a crop duster down there because he could have alleviated that by one, understanding that the flight restricted area was up; and then filing a flight plan or alerting the FAA that he was going to be transiting underneath that at such and such an altitude. But without that kind of education process, and I said information campaign. It really is an education campaign out there, he's, by golly, he's just going to go spray his crops like he always does.

So we're working very closely with small airfields around the country, with the FAA for sure to expand the awareness of these kinds of restrictions.

Some things just happen. A mechanical failure occurs. We had a cargo aircraft, in fact about a week after I took command, had come from an international location, had

cleared Customs in Minnesota but was continuing on towards San Bernardino. Got off route, was not talking to anybody, and its transponder quit. As it got off-route it began to point at some very sensitive areas. So we scrambled fighters. It was a mechanical failure but the crew wasn't aware of it until you had this fighter up.

So how often does it occur? About 400 times a year. Are we working to try to reduce that? We are, and it has begun to come down. But it is sort of an ongoing challenge for us.

Q: Can you just clarify of the 400 times, those are all non-threatening?

A: Every one of them so far has been non-threatening. That's a good news story, by the way. The good news is we've gotten to them, identified them, and that they have not been a threat.

Q: I just wanted to follow on Elaine's question about cordons. There's a public perception that's been reinforced by movies like Outbreak 28 weeks later, that in the event of a pandemic flu, for example, the military's role would be to cordon off an area, shoot anyone trying to get out, and if necessary incinerate the population. [Laughter].

A: You should never let the script of a movie drive you to a conclusion about how we would use military capability.

It's important to understand that the first response to a pandemic event is going to be medical, it's going to be an integrated team--Department of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services. Yes, DoD has a role to play. Our first role is to ensure that our military capabilities to continue to defend and conduct our mission sustain themselves. So you want to make sure that you do the appropriate things for your own force to protect the families and keep people healthy.

We then have a role, much like any other large scale event, to support the lead federal agency on whatever their response may be.

Elaine talked about a civil disturbance of large scale. It's hard to predict what the reaction will be if we have an event like this, but there's a political decision that would have to be made before you would use any military enforcement capability. And first of all, I'm not sure I believe that cordoning a city is even possible. And certainly the kinds of things that you saw in that movie are not the kinds of missions that we would expect our military to conduct.

Q: I wanted to ask you mentioned the Arctic policy. You mentioned the Law of the Sea Treaty. Are there other things that Congress can do to help you in terms of

implementing that policy? It seems like there's a great interest on the Hill right now in terms of--

A: Congress continues to be supportive of the missions of homeland security and homeland defense and support to civil authority so I'm very comfortable with the support that our commands get from our committees on the Hill.

I think the [UNCLOS] agreement is important for us to pursue towards ratification. I hope that will happen. It gives us great flexibility for discussions with many of the nations, both their civilian and their military teams, those nations that are interested in that region. I'm not sure that there are other significant issues that Congress needs to take some immediate action on. Certainly support of whole of government strategy for the future in the Arctic is probably the most important.

Q: General, this is sort of a follow-up on George's question. Regarding the homeland response unit in particular, last week Congressman Murtha, head of the Defense Appropriations Committee said, quote, "I don't know what the hell that is." [Laughter].

I'm wondering, there seems to be a gap in communication. Are you making any efforts to explain this to Congress? What's your response to that? How much money is going to cost in fiscal year money?

A: First, as a matter of fact, Congressman Murtha is going to visit with us in a couple of weeks, I think, so we'll have a chance to spend some time with him and answer any questions that he might have.

I think certainly there have been some misunderstandings on the part of certainly some in the media and some in Congress about what this force is designed to do. I hope I have clarified that for the media today, but I think it's also important for us to engage with Congress to do that.

I think the committees we deal with most often have a clear understanding of that. Congressman Murtha has an important element in the appropriations portion of this. The Defense Department has, I think I'm correct in saying has not asked for additional monies, but rather this is being funded out of existing budget authority. It has really allowed us to reshape missions and units that already would be training for some mission in that window. So there is some equipment that we are advocating for, primarily to support the National Guard, but a small amount for the active duty. But again, that comes in a no-growth budget. So it will be funded from existing authorities that the department already has, so I don't see this as a potential drain on 2010 dollars down the road.

Q: General, you talked about coordinating with National Guard and active duty units to get your mission [inaudible] GAO [inaudible] for [inaudible] for having difficulty IDing requirements you need for military [inaudible]. Also that you have difficulty monitoring the readiness of military units [inaudible].

A: I'm sorry, that last part?

Q: You have difficulty monitoring readiness of your civil support missions because of [inaudible] mission tasks against which units can be assessed. I don't know if that's a JFCOM responsibility and they missed that or not. Can you respond to these criticisms? Do you think they're valid?

A: First, I don't think the criticism is valid any longer. The GAO report was based on information that is a bit dated. I testified to that last year and I will again this year.

I think we have--but sort of the mission we have is to make sure we can respond and that I understand the readiness of the forces we use.

Since March of 2007 we have built a relationship with not only the National Guard Bureau but the states, that is I think exceptional in its integration. We have responded to a number of events in the last almost two years, big and small. Whether it's Minnesota or wildfires in California or Hurricane Gustav or Hurricane Ike. And done so in a more integrated fashion than ever in the history of our department.

I use the example a lot of Katrina. Katrina, because we had a lack of integrated planning, we threw mass at a problem. 72,000 active and Reserve and Guardsmen. But there are pictures of General Russ Honore literally almost standing on street corners trying to direct trucks back and forth because they were going to the same places and we needed aid in different places. So our goal has been to create a better integrated plan and practice that in exercises so that we don't have to solve that problem in the same fashion.

I'd like to be more precise in our assistance as opposed to using mass all the time. It's sort of the difference between carpet bombing and GPS weapons. I'd like to have a GPS-focused approach to disaster response as well.

I think you saw that in Gustav and in Ike. I think you see that as we work with California, for example, with wildfires and the like.

We plan for and integrate the best capabilities of all of the department players and apply them against the problem. So I think the GAO report doesn't reflect that because it was based on data that really was a couple of years old.

In terms of readiness, today we have integrated across our nation, I think we're up to now 46 states into the DRS system, Defense Readiness Reporting. So I can go in, sitting at my desk, and look at the readiness levels of both active and Guard units, Reserve as well, and Guard units across the country, and specifically if they are tasked to do consequence management response, the CSTs, the CRF-Ps, I can look down and find out where they are in their current readiness assessment, whether they're short equipment or personnel or training and the like.

We are advocating on behalf of the National Guard for some unique equipment items that focus on homeland security, homeland support roles. Cell towers, for example, that we can rapidly pull into an area and put in place if you lose cell coverage. In fact we did that in Galveston.

So we then advocate in the joint requirements process the funding process within the department for those unique pieces of equipment. And so far, we've had great support from the Secretary and the department to fund those things.

Now you know, they take a little time to get in place but we are actively working that. So I think that GAO report was probably accurate two and a half to three years ago. It's not at all accurate today.

Q: The Mumbai attacks. How has that changed your calculation? And is law enforcement really capable of handling a military [inaudible] attack?

A: I think, and we don't know all the lessons of this just yet but we're continuing to learn more. But I think the circumstances in our country with respect to trained and equipped counter-terrorism SWAT-type teams. Those reside in cities. In fact New York has probably one of the most sophisticated counter-terrorism response capabilities in the world, maybe, but certainly that I've seen. Other cities are modeling that and continuing to grow that capability. But even in smaller communities, their ability to respond to that kind of event is something people are paying attention to.

Certainly the Mumbai attacks ought to be understood clearly down to the local level. The speed to which a small group of people could begin to hold a fairly large city hostage. But I think the circumstances in our intelligence information sharing, in our collaborative planning efforts, in the funding that has been provided to states and to municipalities for these kinds of response-- [recording ends at this point].

END TEXT