

Chapter Three



*Creating a State and Local Preparedness
Revolution*



Foreword

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How ironic it is that during the Cold War, we thought that if we contain the spread of Communism and promote peace, there would be a more wonderful world. The events that took place not too many years after the end of the Cold War demonstrated that this was not to be the case. Today there are great challenges to the security and lives of the American people; a new threat by international movements that use individuals to potentially infiltrate our communities, to strike at us in stealth attacks using modern weapons and technology, which threaten our very homes and families.

Today's generation is left to cope with this new concept of terrorism. The transformation of the National Guard and Reserves in light of the War on Terror will have to be based upon how we are going to define our society. How the society of the United States responds to these challenges will decide what America will look like in the future. Right now, with respect to the issue of using the military in the homeland, there is tension between American instinct to confront challenges and to fix them. This tension has come up in our "managerial society" many times. The great American instinct is to fix a problem, no matter what the cost. The challenges we have to face are the conflicts between the values of our traditional freedoms, and how they will change in the wake of the War on Terror.

The only way to approach this challenge is to analyze exactly how we should structure a program for using the military in the homeland. This issue is very near and dear to my heart. There are some great, major policy issues before us today due to the attacks of 9/11 and the War on Terror. The War is a major conflict that in its nature is one of culture and civilization. We can only dimly see the direction in which

we should be heading, which leaves us tied up when it comes to doing what is needed to face the current challenges and crises. There needs to be more national attention on preparedness and readiness, so that we do not fail as a society when we take appropriate response within the homeland.

I was Chairman of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, which is impossible to create an acronym for, so it was just called the Gilmore Commission. This was a three-year Commission that was required by law to respond to Congress every December. The Commission's reports were published by the RAND Corporation, and have so far stood the test of time. Also, many of the Commission's recommendations have been adopted.

In our first year, we assessed the threat and found it to be very grave. We sensed that there was likely an attack on the United States coming. The second year, we defined what needed to be done to establish a national strategy in the likelihood of such an attack. The third year, which was 2001, we observed that there was still no national strategy which could help to prevent an attack, nor any process to deal with it.

We suggested five key components that would help to shape a national strategy. The first was how to use state and local authorities; next, we looked at the health care system in the country to see if the public health care program was prepared to handle a major attack. The third area we noted was that U.S. border control was far too porous, making it easier for individuals to sneak across our southern border. Cyber-security was the fourth area we analyzed.

The most important aspect was the fifth, which was the use of the military within the homeland. The questions that confronted us were 'How do you use it?' and 'How don't you?' The philosophy of the Commission was that we should be very cautious when using the regular military within the homeland. The use of the military has proven to be dangerous historically, and so must be treated with the utmost respect.

Instead of the regular military, we must rely on state and local responders—police, fire, and rescue units—to deal with catastrophes. We must help them get equipped, trained and prepared to deal with any circumstances that arise. These are the individuals who, in fact, respond after catastrophe strikes. Second, only when these elements are unable to control the situation, should the Reserve components be called in; particularly the National Guard, since their control lies in the hands of the state governor. We should focus along the lines of a civil response, in order to support the local authorities. The only time the regular military should be called in is when there is a need for specialty units who are already trained and equipped to handle nuclear, chemical, or biological attacks. Control of the situation should not be turned over to the military except as a last resort. During the time the Commission met, the Department of Defense agreed with the finding that the focus should be upon the local elements.

I helped establish the National Council on Readiness and Preparedness because of my abiding sense that the country was not focused upon the challenges that we face of preparing state and local responders. Individuals would say to me ‘Get real Jim, you can’t depend on state and local responders. They’re local cops. They’re local fireman. You can’t really depend on that in a time of a national crisis. You’re going to have to use the 101st Airborne when the crunch really comes. That’s the reality.’ My response to that has been that we are then failing ourselves as a society to prepare ourselves with what I feel is an appropriate response. That response should be one that relies more on the local community than upon the military.

At the Department of Homeland Security, there is currently an attempt to develop a Citizens’ Corps to engage regular citizens in national emergency response. Individuals like local current and former health care providers or anyone with an ability to contribute, would be employed in the emergency response process, to provide support during a mass crisis. There also needs to be representative in every corporation; not only for business continuity purposes, but to fit into the larger response plan for the community. There also needs to be a build-up of state and local responders, as well as intense training, to enable communities to be able to respond using this type of system.

The challenge we face today is how to make policy decisions and how we deal with potential disasters as they occur. We need to find an answer as to how we make sure we're prepared to respond appropriately and to prepare to any crisis that we may face. That is what we are here to discuss and analyze today. The military does have a role to play in this process. The question is how do we define it?

Today's guerrilla-type warfare against terrorism calls for us to use all the elements of national power—soft, economic, military and diplomatic—to remain ahead of those who intend to cause fear and harm within the country. During the Cold War, we were considered righteous in our actions. We have an obligation to the people of the United States to be as prepared as we can be. Only then will Americans understand what their role is, and begin to define the challenge they face from overseas. When that is done, only then will the people of the United States be prepared mentally to understand the challenges they face. This is a necessary element to begin removing the fear and anxiety within our society, and to get citizens to begin to feel secure. Only through this change in mentality will we be able to maintain the freedom and liberties of the American people.