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# Homeland Defense

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## READY AMERICA

The First 72 Hours

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# READINESS IN AMERICA

## Local Officials Need to Prepare for the First 72 Hours

By Dan Verton

A GROUP OF PROMINENT HOMELAND SECURITY THEORISTS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EXPERTS GATHERED HERE LAST MONTH AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND DEBATED WHAT ALL AGREED WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE OF THE POST-9-11 AND POST-KATRINA ERA: AMERICA'S ABILITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO THE NEXT MAJOR TERRORIST ATTACK OR NATURAL DISASTER AND THE ROLE OF LOCAL EMERGENCY MANAGERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS DURING THE FIRST 72 HOURS OF THE CRISIS.

"If you expect a Washington-based solution, don't hold your breath," said John C. Gannon, a former director of the National Intelligence Council and deputy director for intelligence at the CIA. "If Katrina was a terrorist attack, let me assure you we would have been equally ineffective," Gannon told the invitation-only gathering at Harvard. Gannon, who currently serves as vice president for global analysis at BAE Systems in McLean, Va., was one of many former national security officials and first-responder experts who expressed a high degree of skepticism about the federal government's ability to centrally manage and respond effectively to a major regional attack or disaster.

Harvard professor Jerry Mechling noted that not one of the leaders attending the conference rated the nation's readiness and preparedness as excellent. In fact, 25 percent of the attendees rated the state of America's readiness as poor, while half rated it as fair, and 25 percent as good.

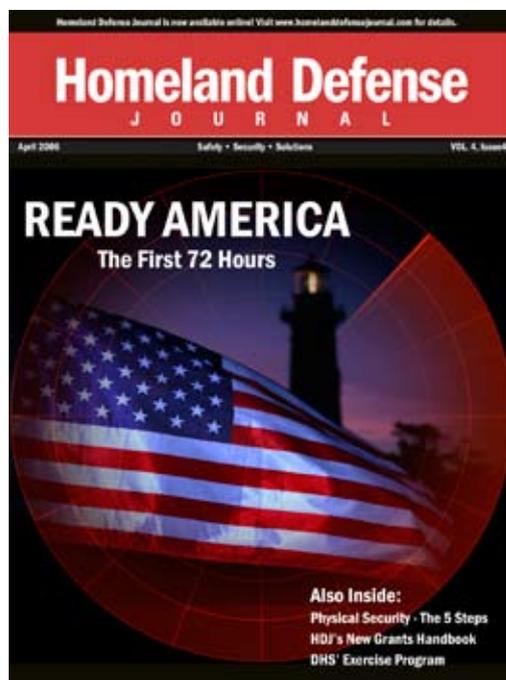
"I think we promised a lot more than we could deliver,"

said Gannon, referring to the formation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). "And then I think we delivered a lot less than citizens expected." According to Gannon, the federal government remains hamstrung from the lack of a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities.

It was the search for a clear set of roles and responsibilities, and best practices for managing emergency response during a major crisis that guided the discussion here during the three-day conference, "On The Front Line of Homeland Security: New Realities and New Solutions." The program was part of a National Council on Readiness and Preparedness (NCORP) initiative called ReadyAmerica: The First 72 Hours. The goal of the NCORP effort is to develop a national template of best practices for community preparedness and response leading up to and during the first hours of a crisis.

"Excellence is missing," said former Virginia Gov. James Gilmore, who provided a keynote presentation at the conference. "A comprehensive national plan where federal, state and local officials along with the private sector and non-profit community have education, training, communications and resources does not exist today." Gilmore, who formerly served as chairman of the Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction — known popularly as the Gilmore Commission — is now chairman of NCORP.

"It is vitally important to our country's security that we work together to develop ways that communities can prepare for and respond to attack or crisis during the first 72 hours," said Gilmore. "So far we have told ourselves that we need



Cover Design by Dan Verton

only wait, and ‘they’ will come and save us. Whether it’s an attack by a terrorist or a natural crisis, communities must know that there is no ‘they’ to look to for help during the first response.” Among the key issues discussed during the conference (to which *Homeland Defense Journal* was granted exclusive access) was who and what organizations fall under the definition of first responder. According to Mechling and others at the conference, the nation lacks a basic template for understanding the types of organizations and individual expertise offering first responder capabilities. While there is

groups and is aided by an advisory committee of 800 community leaders and practitioners from all vital infrastructure sectors.

To date, the task force has developed five policy initiatives that are designed to support the national template by providing essential resources and networks that link first responders together. A regional pilot is planned for the Tennessee Valley Corridor, and NCORP will seek federal partner grants with support of the political leadership of the four-state region to demonstrate how collaboration and mutual aid



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no working template to provide a baseline from which to build more advanced first responder capabilities and information sharing architectures, Mechling said the one thing everybody agrees upon is that first responders are those organizations (public and private) that will respond to a crisis within the first 72 hours.

“But there needs to be some level of organization and definition,” said Mechling. “We’ve got to marry the theory to the practice. Neither one will work alone,” he added. “Local communities need to get prepared and then move very aggressively to a place they know they can defend,” he said, using a military analogy. “Don’t get stuck on the beach.”

Developing a first responder template is critical to building a community or regional surge capacity. To this end, NCORP has commissioned the National Task Force on Community Preparedness and Response to collaborate with community leaders in developing this template and identifying regional pilot projects that can multiply community surge capacity during a crisis. The Task Force is organized into eight sub-

programs can work and how these initiatives help tie together and multiply community resources.

The five policy proposals that are being studied include:

**Responder Corps** – A standing reserve under the state(s) defense forces consisting of trained all-hazard responder volunteers, deployable by governors through regional mutual assistance pacts to establish immediate command, control and materiel surge triage management using national standards during the immediate hours of a crisis. Such a capability would provide military-style precision and interoperability without the deployment of federal combat troops, yet would be under the control of the adjutant general of the state in which the crisis occurs. The Responder Corps would work through the local incident commander and with jurisdiction and political leadership to back up and multiply the local capability while waiting for federal or state response support.

**Regional Surge Depots** – A micro-version of the BENS (Business Executives for National Security) model that cata-

# Living on the Edge

## RITA MAY HAVE ONLY GRAZED GALVESTON, BUT SHE UNCOVERED ONE OF THE NATION'S BEST LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANS

By Dan Verton

The city of Galveston, Texas, “lives on the edge, in the eye of the storm,” said Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas. As a result, the 32-mile-long island, home to more than 57,000 residents and a popular tourist destination for 5 million visitors a year, has, in Thomas’ words, “developed a culture whose basic tenant is survival.”

That’s because Galveston is located in southeast Texas on the Gulf of Mexico and potentially in the direct path of the various monster hurricanes that cross the Florida Keys and often enter the gulf from the southern Atlantic Ocean. And like New Orleans, Galveston knows what it is like to absorb the brunt of a major storm. The Great Storm of 1900 killed 7,000 people on the island and led to the construction of a \$1.5 million seawall. In 1983, Hurricane Alicia took aim at the island and hit west Galveston with Category 3 winds, killing 21 and causing \$2 billion in damages.

When Hurricane Rita threatened Galveston in Sept. 2005, the city’s emergency management plan had been in existence for at least 25 years. And it proved not only effective, but an important model for other local community emergency action plans around the country.

“Our model for recovery is based on 50 percent of the island being completely destroyed,” said Thomas. And while she acknowledged that Galveston’s plan “is not going to work for everybody,” the city has learned critical lessons that Thomas, speaking at a recent homeland security summit at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, said she is confident other communities can apply to their own plans.

### Responding to Rita

It was late in the evening on Sunday, Sept. 18, 2005, when the telephone rang at the home of Steve LeBlanc, a lifelong Galveston resident and the city manager. When LeBlanc answered the ringing phone, he heard the familiar, but serious, voice of Mayor Thomas on the other end. She was calling to inform him that Hurricane Rita had just been upgraded by the National Weather Service (NWS) to a Category 5 and that she was headed straight for Galveston.

“My immediate reaction was ‘Oh my God,’ and then I had visions of Katrina,” recalled LeBlanc.

The next morning, LeBlanc and Thomas assembled the

city’s emergency management team to assess the storm and its potential impact on Galveston’s citizens, businesses and critical port infrastructure. By Tuesday, Thomas had called for a voluntary evacuation of the island. And within 24 hours of that announcement, she was forced for the first time in Galveston’s history to call for a mandatory evacuation.

“On Thursday, the city of Galveston was a ghost town,” recalled LeBlanc. “That was an eerie feeling. It was very quiet — the quiet before the storm. I was convinced our lives were about to change,” he said. Rita was coming and she showed no signs of weakening.

By late Thursday, however, LeBlanc saw a “slight glimmer of hope” in a NWS report that indicated Rita had made a slight shift to the north. Taking no chances, Galveston officials continued the evacuations. Most of the evacuations were conducted via school buses that quickly became overcrowded. Citizens — the old and young, the healthy and infirm — squeezed into the busses, along with their pets. In some cases, street thugs and drug addicts added to the danger. The ride to cities in the interior of Texas was so long that some of the elderly died aboard the buses.

When Rita came ashore late on Friday, she passed 75 miles northeast of the city.

“It wasn’t pretty,” recalled LeBlanc. “But we accomplished the mission. We spent \$1 million for a storm that just grazed us. In the end, the bus ride was the disaster for us.”

### Enduring Lessons

For Mayor Thomas, “pets are the key” to getting people to evacuate. In the aftermath of Rita, all of the city’s contracts with various shelters allow for pets.

Personal incentives also proved important, she said. “All of the bus drivers were told if you will drive a bus you can take your families and pets with you,” said Thomas. “And that’s how we got our bus drivers.”

Since Rita, Galveston has upgraded and enhanced its emergency management plan, which addresses all types of threats. According to LeBlanc, all of the enhancements reflect the importance of having contracts and memorandums of agreement in place prior to a crisis. “By the start of next hurricane season (June 1, 2006), we will have a fresh new plan in place.”



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## Galveston, Texas, Emergency Management Plan Post-Rita Enhancements

- Contracted with Houston metro to provide mass transit for evacuees.
- Local agreement with city of Austin to be the official shelter for Galveston.
- Local agreement with County Emergency Medical Services for special needs patients.
- Local agreement with area schools to provide backup transportation and shelter (“refuge of last resort”).
- Local agreement with Housing Authority to provide shelter (refuge of last resort).
- Contract with Carnival Cruise Lines to use cruise ships as temporary housing.
- Local agreement with Galveston County to provide IT backup for critical data (financial, benefits, etc.).
- Agreements with local power and water utility companies to prioritize restoration of services.
- Worked through the National Communications System (NCS) to obtain priority wireless services (Wireless Government Emergency Telecommunications System, GETS) for local officials and emergency responders.
- Hold town hall meetings two to three times per year with the public to review individual readiness requirements.
- Conduct monthly stakeholder meetings with health officials, housing authorities, the U.S. Coast Guard, school officials, etc.

Jeff Sjostrom, CEO of the Galveston Economic Development Partnership, said as the 2006 hurricane season approaches, the three pre-planning priorities for Galveston include:

1. Housing
2. Labor
3. Available capital

“Forty percent of the small businesses affected by the past hurricane season are now out of business,” said Sjostrom. “Access to capital is needed immediately.” And while the Small Business Administration (SBA) in March approved more than \$6 billion in small business loans, Sjostrom said financing recovery remains a major challenge for local communities. “The SBA has only spent \$500 million of that money,” he said.

“The biggest challenge is getting the financing for the ‘shock and awe’ period right after the storm,” said Sjostrom. “We need more partnerships with the private sector.”

And that’s exactly what Galveston’s mayor has been focusing on. “Pre-arranged contracts are key,” said Thomas. “We talk about whether we have enough faith in the U.S. government, and we talk about managing these crises from the ground up. But local officials know best how to take care of their citizens,” she said. “Communications between local officials and the federal government needs to be improved” and local turf differences need to be set aside, she said. “It’s all about saving lives.”



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logs regional corporate sector resources for use during crisis, but is scalable to accommodate a variety of small, multijurisdictional arrangements. This is being developed at the Kennedy School of Government, focusing on how the BENS model can be modified to incorporate the public/private model being developed in Galveston, Texas, by Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas [See sidebar].

#### **Crisis Response Officers (CRO) –**

A CRO would be a designated primary contact in a corporation that's trained by and networked directly with the local responders to catalog corporate resources, and identify employees who can be integrated into the local preparedness and response plan. CROs would be trained by Guardian Corps members through the local college and university systems [see below].

**Guardian Corps** – Would consist of adjunct professors through the community, vocational and related colleges and universities who would train the Crisis Response Officers and their employees, creating a feeder program for Citizen Corps, CERT and similar state and federal programs. The universities of Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and Virginia Tech are examples of target universities to participate in developing the curriculum.

**Essential Public Network** – Would be a system to connect community, government, organizations and assets to multiply the response and recovery capacity of the public sector; link all community stakeholders in a secure, interoperable network that is designed to plug into the federal information sharing networks during a crisis; and serve as a secure and dependable bridge to the local responder, law enforcement and community government sectors. Collaborators here will be the National Joint Terrorism Task Force, Federal Protective Service, DHS and others. RAINS-Net, through their program of Connect and Protect, will be the local network of choice ([www.rainsnet.org](http://www.rainsnet.org)).

The concept of developing regional “virtual” surge depots in addition to real depots where emergency supplies can be stored met with significant support by conference attendees, including NCORP Chairman Gilmore. Attendees agreed that the vast majority of assets that will be required during a major crisis will not be pre-positioned government-owned assets. Mechling described the virtual depot concept as a combination of “capabilities, commodities and people.”



“This is a very interesting concept,” said Gilmore. “Depots are no longer a location for stockpiles but a vehicle for organization.”

#### **Rise of the CRO?**

One of the most important developments to come out of the NCORP initiative — but one that has yet to catch on throughout the private sector — is the concept of the corporate Crisis Response Officer or Readiness Officer. Siemens AG is one of the few large companies to employ a CRO.

Michael Wells, CRO for Siemens, said establishing a position responsible for corporate crisis readiness and response is not only good business planning but an important factor in fostering public-private cooperation and collaboration. According to Wells, Siemens is using the work done by officials in Galveston, Texas, as a model for a Crisis Readiness Officer pilot project [See sidebar].

In addition to a host of pre-arranged commercial contracts, Galveston Mayor Thomas said her city has appointed two



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individuals to serve as leaders of a Citizens Response Team. Part of that team's responsibility includes collecting information on home-bound special needs medical patients and producing registration lists of such individuals that will enable their timely evacuation in the event of another major hurricane or terrorist incident. "They go door-to-door and use the media to get the word out to those who need to register," said

## "COMMUNITY CONTINUITY EQUALS BUSINESS CONTINUITY."

—MICHAEL WELLS, CRISIS RESPONSE OFFICER (CRO) FOR SIEMENS

Thomas. Part of the answer for the private sector, said Wells, includes ensuring that major commercial service providers and manufacturers have CROs on staff to ensure those busi-

nesses are prepared and capable of contributing assistance to local governments before, during and after a crisis. "Community continuity equals business continuity," he said.

### Crisis Response Officer / Corporate Readiness Officer Roles and Responsibilities

- Develop and manage planning and supply functions for critical goods, materials and personnel needed by a corporation during a local, regional or national crisis.
- Coordinate internal procedures among human resources, operations, purchasing, logistics, security, senior management, legal and outside suppliers to execute the policy drafting and planning/replenishment process.
- Plan and coordinate participation in Regional Response Surge Depots.
- Participate in general meetings and table-top community exercises with governmental, nongovernmental and private sector organizations.
- Act as primary liaison to first responder and government organization leadership during the first 72 hours of a crisis to augment community first response.
- Train internal management and staff on preparedness and response plans through classroom, self-study and table-top exercises.
- Establish personnel and materiel goals for both the company and its employees necessary to respond and recover from a crisis.
- Identify the tools and equipment needed to help meet crisis response goals.
- Incorporate best practices and lessons learned from peers, table-top exercises and past crises to strengthen organizational response plans.
- Manage critical communications, warehouse and material services and employee triage to help speed corporate response and recovery efforts.

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