

## FIREFIGHTERS' DEVELOPING ROLE IN COUNTERTERRORISM

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CENTER FOR POLICING TERRORISM  
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# FIREFIGHTERS' DEVELOPING ROLE IN COUNTERTERRORISM

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## INTRODUCTION

The 9/11 attacks sounded an alarm in fire departments across the country: suddenly, they would need to decide whether they had a role to play in preparing for, and preventing, terrorist attacks. A growing number of fire departments concluded that they did, and are now leveraging their existing capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of local counterterrorism operations. State and local political leaders should encourage this trend; rather than relinquishing counterterrorism to local law enforcement and the federal government, they should seek to integrate their fire departments, which have unique capabilities for safeguarding the homeland, into overall security planning. Such integration should improve public safety across the board.

Nationally, fire departments have impressive manpower and capabilities. According to the National Fire Protection Association, total employment in firefighting occupations was 1,141,900 in 2006, of which more than 823,950 were part-time volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Of the 30,635 fire departments in the United States, 4,052 are career departments, while 26,583 are mostly staffed by volunteers. Firefighters are frequently the first personnel at the scene of an accident or medical emergency, where they perform a wide range of vital functions. Locations range from residential neighborhoods to airports, chemical plants, grasslands, and forests.<sup>2</sup>

Many of the core competencies that fire departments draw on in responding to, mitigating, and preventing natural or man-made disasters can be directed toward preventing terrorist incidents. For example, the Fire Department of the City of New York (FDNY) enforces compliance with fire prevention codes and conducts more than 400,000 building inspections each year.<sup>3</sup> These activities put it in a unique position to notice signs that a violent attack is being planned.

Every firefighter is by law a “peace officer” and duty-bound to report anything unseemly that he or she comes across.<sup>4</sup> However, a role in intelligence-gathering beyond identifying actual and potential hazards would represent an expansion of fire departments’ traditional mission. With their access to private property, their contacts in the local community, and the levels of trust they enjoy there, firefighters can do more than simply identify prospectively, or respond to, situations posing physical danger. They can actually gather, make sense of, and report on circumstances that might hint at terrorist involvement and intent, helped in part by community networks they construct to recognize risks. But if they assume this new mission, they must be wary of encroaching on traditional law-enforcement functions, avoid violating citizens’ civil liberties and retain the trust they now enjoy. In any event, a new relationship with law-enforcement and intelligence agencies would have to be forged. There is every reason to think that fire departments can operate effectively within such constraints.

## FIRE DEPARTMENTS’ CORE COMPETENCIES

At first glance, fire departments are focused on the core competencies of prevention, protection, and response to natural and man-made disasters and other emergencies. For example, in a recent strategic document, the FDNY identified its core competencies as fire suppression, pre-hospital emergency medical care, structural evacuation, search and rescue, dealing with chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear hazardous materials (CBRN/hazmat), life safety, decontamination, and arson investigation—all of which it characterizes as response-oriented.<sup>5</sup>

However, a closer inspection reveals that these core competencies also position fire departments to perform preventive functions. These include building community awareness, identifying signs of terrorist activities, information sharing, and providing relevant subject-matter expertise. Most career fire departments, for example, have teams of highly trained hazardous-materials and explosives experts. These firefighters can inform public-awareness campaigns focusing on signs of improvised explosive or incendiary devices, and they can develop programs to train fellow firefighters and public safety officers to notice warning signs. They can also improve pre-incident planning by articulating and listing potential threats in order of seriousness and likelihood, and aligning collective capabilities accordingly.

In exploring the application of a fire department’s core competencies to prevention-oriented counterterrorism, fire departments must guard against drifting into law-enforcement activities—namely, investigating crimes and apprehending criminals. This division of responsibilities should not preclude fire departments from strengthening their role in counterterrorism. As a general rule, to the extent that counterterrorism involves investigating and apprehending dangerous people, it is the province of law enforcement; to the extent that it involves identifying, preventing, and protecting against dangerous situations, it is the firefighters’.

## COUNTERTERRORISM FUNCTIONS OF FIRE DEPARTMENTS

There are three broad ways in which fire departments can contribute to counterterrorism efforts: as intelligence collectors, users and sharers; as developers of community networks; and as organizers of joint planning, preparedness, and response.

### Intelligence Functions of Fire Departments

Fire departments can serve as both collectors and consumers of intelligence before, during, and after a terrorist attack. They may serve a collection function

## FDNY'S STRATEGIC OUTLOOK ON INTELLIGENCE<sup>6</sup>

According to the FDNY, intelligence has a place in all three of its missions: prevention, preparedness, and response.<sup>7</sup> For example, advance intelligence (foreknowledge) can alert firefighters responding to an incident to the proximity of volatile chemicals or potentially dangerous activities already under surveillance. Familiarity with surroundings increases firefighters' situational awareness, improves their operational efficiency, and increases the safety of first responders and the public. Intelligence can also tell fire departments where best to deploy their limited resources on the basis of where threats are most likely to arise. And intelligence can help departments anticipate an event and thereby improve its chances of preventing it.

### Collectors of Intelligence

The FDNY has identified the following as ways in which it can produce operational intelligence. Many of them can also be adopted by fire departments across the United States. Increased coordination, integration, and communication with other public-safety agencies enhance a fire department's ability to fulfill its core mission of protecting life.

- **Access to venues.** During the course of routine building inspections, arson investigations, and responses to fire and medical emergencies, fire department personnel enjoy access to buildings generally denied outsiders. These firefighters are passive collectors, who are positioned in the normal course of their duties to observe the signs of terrorist activity and, assuming that the firefighters are properly trained, to recognize them as such. When properly shared with local law enforcement and local and national intelligence centers, this information can fill critical intelligence gaps and generate leads. In addition, fire inspectors and fire personnel are often present to ensure public safety at high-profile events—such as athletic contests, political rallies, and concerts—that can be attractive targets for terrorists.
- **Access to, and knowledge of, premises storing hazardous materials.** Fire department personnel regularly inspect buildings and sites where hazardous materials are stored. Being familiar with such materials and their destructive potential, fire department personnel are in a privileged position to observe and report on suspicious or unusual conditions and to educate facility managers to do the same.
- **Observation of suspicious activity.** Firefighters may observe possible terrorist materials, such as equipment and planning documents, in the course of responding to an incident.
- **Detection of possible weapons of mass destruction (WMD).** Because many fire department units carry equipment, including radiation detectors, capable of identifying hazardous materials, fire departments can assist in discovering materials used in a WMD or dirty bomb. With proper training, firefighters and emergency responders can become alert to physical symptoms in humans that might indicate the occurrence of a biological or chemical attack.<sup>8</sup>
- **Protecting critical infrastructure.** Fire departments already play an important role in assessing critical infrastructure's vulnerability to a variety of dangers, including terrorism. While police departments evaluate the security of structures, fire departments evaluate their physical integrity, unique operational challenges, and avenues of rescue and escape.

## Users of Intelligence

Intelligence provided to fire departments can be a force and awareness multiplier in a heightened threat environment. Having access to intelligence about current threats allows fire departments to focus their limited resources on increasing their training and readiness for particular scenarios. The FDNY is, for example, the only agency with knowledge of the exact location and configuration of a fuel line at New York City's John F. Kennedy Airport,<sup>9</sup> and for a long time it has been carrying out inspections of it and conducting drills for dealing with the consequences of a rupture. The department's intelligence capability proved its value when it learned of the possibility that a suspected terrorist operation had targeted the line. The acquisition of this intelligence was followed by an arrest.

## Intelligence Training and Sharing

The FDNY has conducted classes in identifying suspicious behavior and recognizing what might be indicators of terrorist planning.<sup>10</sup> Using faculty from the Combating Terrorism Center at the United States Military Academy, the FDNY has created a graduate-level executive-education program—the first of its kind in the nation—to educate fire and EMS officers (who are under FDNY supervision) about the threat terrorists pose to first responders and the cities they protect. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is currently testing a program with the FDNY in sharing intelligence information and training firefighters to recognize terrorist activity, with the hope of expanding the program to other jurisdictions if it is successful. According to a recent Associated Press article, when entering a private residence, FDNY firefighters now consider the implications of encountering an individual who is hostile, uncooperative, or expressing hatred toward or discontent with the United States, as well as the implications of encountering ammunition, firearms, surveillance equipment, training or flight manuals, chemicals that seem out of place, and the absence of furniture.<sup>11</sup> FDNY Chief Salvatore Cassano is quoted as saying that some terrorism-related information has been passed along to law-enforcement officers since terrorist training began three years ago.<sup>12</sup> The FDNY is part of the Joint Terrorism Task Force for New York, which is run by the FBI, and two fire marshals are assigned to the JTTF.<sup>13</sup> DHS has issued security clearances to several New York fire chiefs,<sup>14</sup> and a small number of firefighters have access to intelligence that is typically shared with the FBI, state and local law enforcement, and the Coast Guard.<sup>15</sup>

## Key Innovations

The FDNY has launched a number of innovations incorporating intelligence into its operations. For example, the FDNY is now authorized to receive classified information as part of its Fire Department Operation Center.<sup>16</sup> In addition, in 2006 the FDNY created a Center for Counterterrorism and Disaster Preparedness containing four functional units: a strategic management unit for organizing and reporting preparedness activities and drafting FDNY strategic documents; a risk assessment and target hazards unit for gathering information on critical infrastructure and then developing profiles of buildings; an exercise design unit that designs and conducts exercises and then evaluates the hazards; and an emergency response-plans unit, which drafts and updates emergency response plans for all hazards.<sup>17</sup>



by reporting warning signs encountered during their normal routines. The modern firefighter is also a subject-matter expert who can use intelligence to assess the likelihood of a threat and to prepare a response in the event of an attack. Following an attack, firefighters are capable of classifying and distributing vital information to other first responders and then to appropriate agencies. Finally, fire departments may be involved in post-incident investigations leading to arrests or new prevention and response policies.

Of all these functions, the use of intelligence to prevent attacks is the least familiar to fire departments.

### ***1. Preventive Intelligence***

Fire departments' ability to serve a preventive intelligence role comes from both the access to houses and other buildings they are afforded in the course of duty and from the relationship they enjoy with the local community. Firefighters may enter a building to conduct a fire inspection, for example, and come across something out of the ordinary. Charles Jennings, the deputy commissioner of public safety for the City of White Plains, New York, said that he believed most firefighters "would raise a flag" if they came across something suggesting terrorist involvement during the course of an inspection.<sup>18</sup>

With regard to generating, evaluating, and distributing passive intelligence, firefighters should:

- Receive training and education in recognizing indicators of suspicious circumstances or people.
- Transfer this knowledge to citizen volunteers and community groups.
- Accept tips and leads from the community.
- Share passively collected information with law enforcement in compliance with established mechanisms.
- Avoid shifting from passive to active intelligence gathering.

In addition, fire departments can act as gathering points for tips and leads from the community. Members of the

public may feel more comfortable reporting suspicious activities to the fire department than to the police, with which they sometimes have a more adversarial relationship. This is especially true of volunteer fire departments, which are, of course, staffed by local citizens. When the public reports something suspicious, more than just a counterterrorism purpose may be served: more communication may yield better public safety in general. For example, an unusually large accumulation of boxes that a community member notices and reports may have no relation to terrorism but could present a fire hazard.

To perform a preventive-intelligence role, fire departments must make their communities aware that they will accept information and pass it on to the appropriate authorities. Even if they decide not to serve as an alternative channel for community members who might be hesitant to contact law enforcement, fire departments at a minimum can direct community members to established tip lines (e.g., 888-NYC-SAFE, or the local FBI field office).

But to perform in these ways, fire departments must establish protocols for sharing the information that they receive with law-enforcement and intelligence agencies. The typical department, however, has neither developed a program for alerting the community that it can transmit pertinent information nor established mechanisms for relaying such information. For example, the Boston Fire Department's public information officer stated that the department considers tips of this kind to be more appropriately handled by the police.<sup>19</sup> The District of Columbia Fire Department's public information officer told us that the department views such tips as the province of law enforcement.<sup>20</sup>

Though such caution is understandable, firefighters do receive information from the public and observe all kinds of occurrences in the course of their normal duties. Frequently missing is the systemic capability to recognize what is important from a counterterrorism perspective, how to report it, and how to manage information in a multiagency context. The receiving agency, in turn, should have officers designated to accept and process information that the fire department transmits.

## 2. Subject-Matter Experts

As first responders, firefighters can provide operational intelligence to emergency-response agencies that have not yet arrived at the scene. They can determine the gravity of a situation and decide what resources are required, whether it be bomb squads, Hazmat teams, local law enforcement, or the FBI. They can also determine whether a situation has been stabilized, or if there is the risk of a “sucker punch” or follow-on attack.<sup>21</sup> Such real-time insight can save lives.

Firefighters are also professionals knowledgeable about structural engineering and hazardous materials. In a 2006 article in the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, Worcester district fire chief Frank Diliddo said, “The average firefighter nowadays learns about structural components, has a chemistry background and has a medical background. . . . All of these components put together make a smarter, more efficient firefighter to handle these situations.”<sup>22</sup> Much of this knowledge is useful in preventing and responding to terrorist attacks as well. For example, almost all fire departments require firefighters to be certified emergency medical technicians.<sup>23</sup> With this skill set, firefighters can be trained to recognize the first signs of a chemical, biological, or radiological attack.

Fire departments can also play an important role in the criminal investigation following a terrorist attack, especially if there was structural damage to a building or evidence of arson. In one such incident, in Arizona, the Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Rural Metro fire departments cooperated with the Phoenix Joint Terrorism Task Force in an investigation of an ecoterrorist who had been setting fire to luxury homes in a misguided effort to arrest suburban sprawl.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, in New York City, fire marshals work closely with the FBI’s Joint Terrorism Task Force on threat analysis and complex incident investigations.<sup>25</sup> These marshals have full police powers and played an important role in the investigations following the attacks on the World Trade Center in 1993 and 2001.

Finally, as consumers of intelligence, fire departments can better prepare for the possibility of a terrorist attack. For example, fire departments can use threat intelligence to revise attack scenarios that are part of

their training programs. Fire departments can also play a deterrent role by using intelligence to determine the size of potential terrorists’ presence at locations vulnerable to attack, such as large sporting events and political rallies.

## 3. Preventing Abuse of Intelligence by Fire Departments

Given the broad license that firefighters have to enter all kinds of buildings without a search warrant, the question arises: should firefighters actively serve as the eyes and ears of counterterrorism efforts—that is, go beyond their normal responsibilities of inspection and actually search for evidence of possible terrorist activity? None of the fire department officials whom we interviewed for this paper agreed with this idea: everyone felt that it would be best to tread lightly to avoid confusing fire departments’ public-safety mission with law enforcement.<sup>26</sup> A major reason that firefighters enjoy a less contentious relationship with the community than do police is precisely that they do not serve a law-enforcement function. Detroit’s deputy fire commissioner stated: “I don’t want our folks to be put in a position where they’re reporting something that . . . was really no problem in the first place.”<sup>27</sup>

Civil liberties advocates have already voiced concerns about increasing firefighters’ counterterrorism role. Mike German, a former FBI agent who is now national security policy counsel to the American Civil Liberties Union, said, “If in the conduct of doing their jobs [firefighters] come across evidence of a crime, of course they should report that to the police. But you don’t want them being intelligence agents. Do we want [communities] to fear the fire department as well as the police?”<sup>28</sup>

It is possible that some firefighters would exceed their charge in this area. All should be taught that they are not to serve as active intelligence gatherers who go out of their way to look for incriminating material but rather as passive collectors of information. It would be misguided and probably a violation of the U.S. Constitution’s Fourth Amendment for a firefighter to conduct a safety inspection of the home of a person whom the department had been told was a suspected criminal or terrorist, if the reason that a firefighter

undertook the inspection was chiefly to circumvent the requirement of a search warrant. Fire safety officials with whom we spoke said that they take care not to use their powers inappropriately.<sup>29</sup> Firefighters can be trained to report information without skirting the law or jeopardizing community relations. At the same time, some could interpret their mission to be one of generating some minimum volume of findings, as professional intelligence agents are expected to do, even in the absence of legitimate grounds for suspicion. Although such evidence may not lead anywhere, simply reporting it could, in certain circumstances, amount to a violation of someone's civil liberties. Department officials must make clear that heightened awareness is a goal, not an enforceable mandate.

## Creation of Community Networks

Fire departments typically enjoy excellent community relations. Many of them keep their doors open around the clock, allow children to climb onto fire trucks when they are not responding to an emergency, and cooperate with local residents staging parades, fund-raisers, and school visits. This rapport with the community places fire departments in a unique position to build dialogue. Departments can teach citizens to recognize the signs of suspicious activity and encourage them to report them. Departments can also involve community members in the business of emergency response.

### ***1. Involving the Public in Emergency Response***

Community members can be involved in responding to and preventing catastrophes, whether natural or man-made, even when the latter are not the result of terrorism. The capacities of American citizens, if harnessed, can go a long way toward mitigating the impact of a catastrophe.

One such program is the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The CERT concept was developed by the Los Angeles Fire Department in 1985, was later adopted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and is now managed by the Citizen Corps within the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>30</sup> The program teaches citizens

how to prepare for a disaster and serve as auxiliary responders when one occurs. This program has been adopted throughout the United States.

The program of Phoenix's fire department is highly developed. As Deputy Chief John Maldonado explains, the Phoenix department would be overwhelmed by a major catastrophe because the city is so sprawling: "[W]e only have fifty-two stations in 550 square miles."<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the department has focused on teaching community members how to assist it and themselves in disaster situations, and established CERT there for that purpose. If a major emergency strikes the Phoenix area, CERT members are expected to "give critical support to first responders, provide immediate assistance to victims, and organize spontaneous volunteers at a disaster site."<sup>32</sup>

CERT members can take a train-the-trainer course (conducted by FEMA or the state training office for emergency management) and then conduct training sessions of over twenty hours in length for other volunteers, who upon completion become CERT members themselves. The training includes "disaster preparedness, disaster fire suppression, basic disaster medical operations, light search and rescue operations and terrorism awareness."<sup>33</sup> Such CERT training may also cover past incidents, warning signs, how to communicate relevant information, and where it should be sent.

The value of CERT volunteers was demonstrated during the response to Hurricane Katrina, when the state of Arizona deployed a team of them to set up Phoenix's Veterans Memorial Coliseum as a shelter to receive victims from Louisiana.<sup>34</sup> In what was dubbed Operation Good Neighbor, CERT volunteers helped transport and register evacuees and assisted in delivering meals to them. The Phoenix Citizen Corps Committee credits the mission's relative success to CERT members' familiarity with its command structure: "Although many church and volunteer groups helped with activities ..., it was clear that CERT members had an understanding of *how* an incident is structured and assigned."<sup>35</sup>

This level of understanding does not have to be limited to emergency response. These same volunteers can be trained to spot warning signs of an act of terrorism in the making, and report them.

## 2. Building Community Networks

The importance of community involvement extends beyond the capacity to respond to an incident. James Forest, director of terrorism studies at the United States Military Academy at West Point, has observed: “The current threat to America requires greater engagement with the public, as the necessary eyes and ears of the nation’s homeland security infrastructure.”<sup>36</sup> Two elements of increasing public involvement are expanding public knowledge of potential threats and ensuring that members of the public know how to report them to the appropriate authorities.

No one can observe everything with equal attention and comprehension. Therefore, the kind of awareness being emphasized will depend on a trainee’s vocation and background. For instance, mechanics would be in a position to notice vehicle modifications to

accommodate a heavy load; counterterrorism training should make the mechanics suspicious and perhaps ready to report the modifications to the appropriate authorities. Likewise, the manager of a storage facility should be able to recognize suspicious items on premises; and distributors of chemicals, body armor, propane, ammonium nitrate fertilizer, weapons, or prepaid cell phones can usually tell when the purchasers of these items don’t seem like the people who would normally use them.<sup>37</sup>

Forest notes that “to be effective, the public must be equipped with the knowledge of where and why specific locations and activities may be a terrorist target, what is being done to protect those targets, and how they can help.”<sup>38</sup> Since fire departments are already involved in community education efforts, they are well-placed to build community networks.

### WHITE PLAINS, NEW YORK

#### *Joint Planning and Preparedness*

The city of White Plains is located in Westchester County, about 22 miles north of midtown Manhattan. Until 9/11, the White Plains police and fire services were largely disengaged from each other. However, after the 9/11 attacks highlighted “the hubris of this disengagement,” White Plains became committed to integrating them.<sup>39</sup>

One way that the city did so was by holding weekly Compstat meetings,<sup>40</sup> which were chaired by the commissioner of public safety and attended by senior commanders from the police and fire departments. In these meetings, “operational data of both bureaus is statistically analyzed and presented for review and comment.”<sup>41</sup> The agencies work together in these meetings “to seek solutions that are comprehensive, holistic, and utilize joint resources.”<sup>42</sup> While the police department may present the past week’s crime activity in statistical form, the fire department may present the techniques and methods it used to fight recent fires. Although the Compstat meetings are not geared toward the threat of terrorism per se, they are a forum for sharing working methods, and they represent an institutional process for jointly addressing challenges.

White Plains has also implemented a system of joint training and planning. Firefighters and police officers train each other in areas such as operations, CPR, awareness of weapons of mass destruction, and Hazmat transportation.<sup>43</sup> In 2004, White Plains police and fire performed together a full-scale hazardous-materials exercise in conjunction with the Con Edison Office of Emergency Planning and area ambulance services. The scenario involved a criminal apprehension, rescue of an injured non-ambulatory Con Edison employee in a hazardous atmosphere, and the use of protective equipment in isolating and decontaminating a substation.<sup>44</sup>

## Joint Planning, Preparedness, and Response

As the Homeland Security Council's 2007 "National Strategy for Homeland Security" stated, first responders "will always play a prominent, frontline role in helping to prevent terrorist attacks as well as in preparing for and responding to a range of natural and man-made emergencies."<sup>45</sup> Fire departments and other law-enforcement and emergency-response agencies need to plan and prepare for terrorist attacks as an integrated body, particularly for the kinds of attacks likely to produce high numbers of casualties. Information sharing and joint training are critical.

Much has recently been written about the National Incident Management System (NIMS), under which unified command structures are created. A Department of Homeland Security fact sheet states: "NIMS establishes standardized incident management processes, protocols, and procedures that all responders—federal, state, tribal, and local—will use to coordinate and conduct response actions."<sup>46</sup> NIMS calls for an incident command system as the standard response for all major incidents; interoperable communications systems; preparedness measures; an information-sharing system; and an integration center that can assess proposed changes to NIMS. What is perhaps missing from the recent discussion of NIMS is acknowledgment that NIMS's principles and guidelines can establish standard operational procedures for dealing with nonemergency situations, not simply serious, discrete incidents.

The federal government mandated NIMS across the country after the 9/11 attacks. It is in turn based upon the Incident Command System (ICS), a methodology for coordinating multiple agency response situations, which was developed in California.<sup>47</sup> The ICS was a reaction to the complete breakdown in communication and coordination among firefighting agencies in California during the disastrous wildfires of 1970. Dana Cole, assistant chief of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, described those conditions: "[A]s fires burned across and out of one jurisdiction to another, individual jurisdictions were often 'flying blind' and forced to improvise management response with no clear organization of authority between departments, no predetermined rules for collective

decision-making, and no coordination of even the most basic communications."<sup>48</sup> This breakdown forced California agencies to "develop a template that would allow the emergency responders to create a temporary, ad hoc organization at an incident scene that could provide for consolidated management and incorporate in a coordinated manner the assistance that neighboring jurisdictions and departments offered."<sup>49</sup> By 1982, the ICS had been adopted as the centerpiece of a federal plan designed to improve coordination among federal and state agencies when large-scale emergencies arose.

In the tradition of local responsibility for coping with emergencies, the Arlington County, Virginia, Fire Department (ACFD) directed the emergency response to the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11. Following ICS procedures, Assistant Chief for Operations James Schwartz oversaw the efforts of his own department, as well as those of nearby fire departments, the Pentagon's internal police force, the FBI, and FEMA. The ICS called for a clear chain of command, only one supervisor per responder, and a limited and specified span of control for every supervisor. It also called for the establishment of a single recognizable incident command post, incident bases for support activities, camps for storage, and staging areas, where responders and equipment could be located just before deployment.<sup>50</sup>

According to the Arlington County "After-Action Report on the Response to the September 11 Terrorist Attack on the Pentagon," "Surviving seriously injured building occupants were rescued, and hundreds of additional potential victims escaped safely."<sup>51</sup> The *9/11 Commission Report* affirmed the ICS's centrality to emergency rescue efforts, stating that the ACFD was able to overcome "the inherent complications of a response across jurisdictions because the Incident Command System, a formalized management structure for emergency response, was in place in the National Capital Region on 9/11."<sup>52</sup>

It was crucial that multiple agencies had collaborated prior to the incident. The Pentagon police force, for example, had exercised with the ACFD, as had nearby fire departments. Fortunately, the FBI representative to the Unified Team, the successor

to the Unified Command, had been a New York City firefighter. Critical to the ICS's success as well was the fact that it had created relationships of trust between response agencies, allowing for the kind of frank communication between decision makers that is necessary for avoiding major mistakes. Former Arlington County Police Chief Ed Flynn, whose department participated in the ICS-based response to the Pentagon attack, explained: "You are exposed in these situations. So ... you need to know and trust each other so you can talk to each other frankly in a crisis without worrying about having to repair relations later."<sup>53</sup> It is significant that the Unified Command had trouble coordinating with the Washington, D.C., fire department and the firefighters it sent on its own initiative. Unlike other nearby departments, it had not exercised with the ACFD.<sup>54</sup>

Preparedness is a continuous process involving all levels of government as well as nongovernmental organizations. Even at the local level, unity of command, joint sourcing and logistics, and multiagency collaboration need to be planned, practiced, and mastered. This involves developing guidelines, protocols, and standards for planning, training, personnel qualification, equipment, and communication.

Counterterrorism training, for example, should be standardized and open to a broad array of first preventers. Toward that end, the Manhattan Institute partnered with the Los Angeles Police Department in developing a pilot program for a National Counter-Terrorism Academy (NCTA). Launched in March 2008, the NCTA will educate first preventers about emerging threats in the new security environment and effective operational responses. The pilot program includes seventy students representing almost thirty agencies—including police, fire, federal agencies—as well as the private sector. Similarly, the state of New York has announced the opening of the New York State Preparedness Training Center, which is designed to coordinate training of firefighters and other first responders throughout the state in dealing with weapons of mass destruction and terrorism.<sup>55</sup>

New technologies can enhance education and training initiatives. For example, the Homeland Security Management Institute at Long Island University offers,

via the Internet, a master's degree in Homeland Security Management for public safety executives.<sup>56</sup> On the training side, the Entertainment Technology Center at Carnegie Mellon University is collaborating with the FDNY to develop a simulation called *Hazmat: Hotzone*<sup>57</sup> for teaching firefighters the techniques to deal with hazardous materials or terrorist attacks. Lieutenant Tony Mussorfiti stated that *Hazmat: Hotzone* can "create a scenario from scratch, run it in real time, and change things as we go. We can give [firefighters] complete sensory overload, the way it can get in real life, with all the sights and sounds."<sup>58</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Successful domestic counterterrorism is best achieved by involving fire departments at the strategic as well as the operating level. While it goes without saying that not all fire departments are created equal—they have different resources, different kinds of relations with their communities, and different risk profiles—the following recommendations should broadly apply.

**1. Become collectors, consumers, and distributors of intelligence.** In following their normal rounds with a bit more attention to their surroundings and a heightened understanding of what they see, firefighters can vastly expand the reach of traditional intelligence and law-enforcement professionals. By consuming intelligence, fire departments acquire the raw material from which to distill training and planning scenarios and from which to provide expert advice on structural risks and hazardous materials. Finally, fire departments can develop the means and methods to share this information with law-enforcement and intelligence agencies.

**2. Create community networks.** Fire departments should take advantage of the excellent relations they enjoy with their communities by organizing volunteer emergency response programs and raising public awareness of how to recognize and report suspicious activity. Firefighters should also be trained in how to manage information from the local community and establish liaisons with law enforcement to ensure that any resulting information is properly investigated.



## CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

### *Joint Training and Response*

Charlotte is home to the Bank of America and Wachovia, two of the country's largest commercial banks.<sup>59</sup> It is served by a major airport, two nuclear power plants, a major transcontinental pipeline, and a lake in the northern part of the county that supplies Charlotte-Mecklenburg County with water. In 2004, Charlotte had a population of approximately 625,000 and uniformed forces of about 1,000 firefighters and 1,500 police officers.<sup>60</sup>

The most noteworthy aspect of Charlotte's emergency services is the degree of police and fire integration at the operational level. Referring to the city's joint police/fire training academy, which was founded in the mid-1970s, a report issued by the Michaelian Institute for Public Policy and Management at Pace University states: "The recruits commingle frequently, encouraging good relations between the two divisions," which are housed in the same building.<sup>61</sup>

The centerpiece of this cooperative model is called the Mobile Command Unit. It has employed since 1987 a joint-use incident command vehicle with chairs for police and fire, EMS and emergency management, and public works officials.<sup>62</sup> It also fields an Advanced Local Emergency Response Team (ALERT), which was "the first local task force that incorporated firefighters, law-enforcement officers, EMS, physicians, federal, and state partners into one response team."<sup>63</sup> Emergency responders are issued a thousand-page book that lists all imaginable disasters and describes the responsibilities of each department. In addition, responders are equipped with a co-800 MHz radio system enabling all response personnel to communicate with one another in the event of an emergency or disaster.

### ***3. Plan for disasters and prepare ways to respond.***

Proper planning and preparedness have a deterrent as well as a mitigating effect on terrorism. To begin with, terrorists are less likely to attack if they expect their efforts to be thwarted, or if injury to themselves, capture, and punishment are likely to result. Even if defensive planning merely delays or diverts an attack that is inevitable, firefighters have won for themselves more time to prepare measures that should reduce harm.

***4. More closely integrate fire and police.*** These two uniformed services have distinct missions that suddenly overlap amid a crisis. Working backward from the kind of communication, coordination, mutual respect, and delineation and delegation of tasks needed at such times, fire and police need to embark on joint planning, training, and exercises without further delay.

Most of this paper's recommendations address public safety issues that arise from natural disasters as well

as man-made ones unconnected to terrorism. White Plains, New York, for example, has adapted its terrorism planning to such important public-safety issues as the relationship between safe housing and bar/cabaret enforcement and fire safety.<sup>64</sup>

Some fire departments have already taken the lead in adopting innovative programs that greatly enhance the safety of their communities. More departments need to become involved. Emergency response has been debated, deliberated, planned, and implemented at every level. So, too, should the role of fire departments in counterterrorism efforts. We do not know when terrorists will strike again, but taking steps now to deter them will push any such attack further into the future and diminish its impact.

## ENDNOTES

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3. Fire Department City of New York, *Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness Strategy* (2007), p. 21 (hereinafter *Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness Strategy*).
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid., p. 15.
6. Much of the information in this section on the FDNY's strategic outlook comes from its publication *Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness Strategy*, cited above.
7. Interview with Joseph Pfeifer, chief of Counter Terrorism and Emergency Preparedness, FDNY, and Michael J. Puzziferri, acting chief of Counter Terrorism and Emergency Preparedness, Jan. 31, 2008.
8. For a general discussion, see Graham Allison, *Nuclear Terrorism: The Ultimate Preventable Catastrophe* (New York: Times Books, 2004); and Judith Miller et al., *Germes: Biological Weapons and America's Secret War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001). See also "Hard-Won Lessons: Policing Terrorism in the United States" (July 2005), [http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/scr\\_03.pdf](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/pdf/scr_03.pdf), pp. 13–17 (noting that one of the 9/11 hijackers sought medical attention in Florida for a leg wound that had some of the signs of anthrax infection).
9. Interview with Pfeifer and Puzziferri.
10. Ibid.
811. Eileen Sullivan, "FDNY Could Take on New Role as Anti-Terrorism Eyes of Government," *Associated Press*, Nov. 23, 2007.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Interview with Pfeifer and Puzziferri.
16. Sullivan, "FDNY Could Take on New Role as Anti-Terrorism Eyes of Government," *Associated Press*, Nov. 23, 2007.
17. "FDNY Terrorism Preparedness Fiscal Year 2006," n.d., from [http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/publications/annual\\_reports/2006/ctdp.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/fdny/pdf/publications/annual_reports/2006/ctdp.pdf).
18. Telephone interview with Charles Jennings, deputy commissioner of public safety, White Plains, New York (interviewed by Kyle Dabruzzi, Oct. 11, 2006).
19. Telephone interview with Steve McDonnell, public information officer, Boston Fire Department (interviewed by Kyle Dabruzzi, Oct. 5, 2006).
20. Telephone interview with Alan Etter, public information officer, District of Columbia Fire Department (interviewed by Kyle Dabruzzi, Oct. 6, 2006). However, D.C.'s fire department does have liaisons with the Joint Terrorism Task Force.
21. FEMA/USFA/NFA, *Emergency Response to Terrorism: Self-Study* (June 1999), pp. 22–23.



22. Scott J. Croteau, "As Skills and Equipment Change, Mass. Firefighters' Valor Remains Constant," *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* (Worcester, Mass.), May 8, 2006.
23. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Fire Fighting Occupations."
24. See testimony of Ray P. Churay, assistant special agent in charge of the FBI's Phoenix division, *Terrorism Preparedness*, House Committee on Governmental Reform, Subcommittee on Government Efficiency, Financial Management and Intergovernmental Relations, Mar. 22, 2002.
25. *Terrorism and Disaster Preparedness Strategy*, p. 19.
26. E.g., telephone interview with Jennings ("It's one of those 'tread-lightly' things where you don't want this to turn into an issue where one minute a firefighter is doing a fire inspection, and then the next he's performing a law-enforcement function"); telephone interview with Phoenix Fire Department deputy chief John Maldonado (expressing concern about undermining community trust) (interviewed by Kyle Dabruzzi, Oct. 11, 2006).
27. Sullivan, "FDNY Could Take on New Role as Anti-Terrorism Eyes of Government."
28. *Ibid.*
29. Telephone interview with Etter; telephone interview with McDonnell ("We don't go in and specifically look for things of that nature").
30. "About CERT," <https://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/about.shtm> (accessed Apr. 17, 2008).
31. Telephone interview with Maldonado.
32. Phoenix official website, "What is CERT?," <http://www.phoenix.gov/CERT/whatis.html> (accessed Oct. 21, 2006).
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34. *The Newsletter of the Phoenix Citizen Corps Committee*, vol. 1 (Sept.–Oct. 2005), [http://www.phoenix.gov/CERT/cert\\_1005.pdf](http://www.phoenix.gov/CERT/cert_1005.pdf).
35. *Ibid.*
36. James Forest, "The Role of Everyday Citizens in Homeland Security," *Nieman Watchdog* (Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University), Sept. 6, 2006, [http://www.niemanwatchdog.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ask\\_this.view&askthisid=00232](http://www.niemanwatchdog.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=ask_this.view&askthisid=00232). As noted in the Center for Policing Terrorism's Safe Cities Series, "[t]he emphasis is not on encouraging people to become spies, but rather making them more aware of the signals they encounter in their normal daily activities. "Hard-Won Lessons," p. 21.
37. See Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Warning Signs of Terrorist Events: Pocket Guide for Law Enforcement," Institute for Intergovernmental Research (2007).
38. Forest, "The Role of Everyday Citizens in Homeland Security."
39. Richard L. Lyman and James M. Bradley, "Integrated Police and Fire Services: The Public Safety Model in White Plains, New York," in *Building Sound Homeland Security Foundations: Enhancing Local Police-Fire Cooperation*, ed. Brian J. Nickerson and Frank G. Straub, Pace University, 2004, <http://www.pace.edu/emplibrary/emergencysummitproceed053106.pdf>, p. 41.
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44. Ibid., p. 49.
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49. Varley, *Command Performance*, p. 7.
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## FELLOWS

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