

USNORTHCOM Completes Determined Promise E3

Press Release

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PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE,

Colo – Dozens die when terrorists release pneumonic plague in Las Vegas. Quickly thereafter, a hurricane wreaks havoc in Florida, wildland fires scorch thousands of acres in the Northwest, and a train carrying munitions derails in Kentucky.



It's a nightmare, worst-case scenario in the post-Sept. 11 world. But that's what officials with U.S. Northern Command intended for Determined Promise '03, a major exercise for the Department of Defense's newest combatant command, to test NORTHCOM's ability to respond to multiple, simultaneous homeland defense and federal relief events.

While the multi-level exercise focused primarily on the simulated plague in Nevada, it also involved NORTHCOM's response to the hurricane, fires, train derailment and other scenarios. And rather than simulating the movement of troops, the exercise involved the actual deployment of more than 1,400 people to the various locations.

"We want to capture and kill if necessary the terrorists in the away game" in Afghanistan and Iraq," said Gen. Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart, NORTHCOM commander. "But we have to be prepared to play the home game, and that's what this exercise is all about."

The general's comments came during a press conference with Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Richard Myers in Las Vegas Aug. 26.

Although DP '03 ended Aug. 26, training for NORTHCOM personnel won't stop there. The command has already planned a minimum of two major exercises each year through 2008 to hone its skills and continue to build interagency relationships throughout the nation.

"We still need to develop exercises like DP '03 in other areas of the country," said Mike Perini, director of Public Affairs for NORTHCOM. "We must refine our processes and continue to build relationships across other areas of America like we did here in Clark County and Nevada."

Left Gen. Ralph E. Ed Eberhart, Commander in Chief, NORAD and Commander USNORTHCOM at Peterson Air Force Base, Colo. and Gen. Richard B. Myers, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, principal military advisor to the President, the Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council. Both four star Generals are in Las Vegas for the Determined Promise exercise involving a mock bio-terrorist attack, major flooding and rioting. Photo credit: Sgt. Lisa Kent, Nevada Army Guard

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Marine Col. Gene Pino, NORTHCOM's director of training and exercises, also stressed the importance of relationship building, saying exercises like DP 03 are possible only with local and state participation, and interaction with other federal agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security.

DP 03, which began Aug. 18, was touted as NORTHCOM's graduation exercise to reach full operational capability. The command stood up Oct. 1, 2002 in response to the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

"We haven't handed out the diplomas yet, but we have them printed," said Eberhart. "So there is no doubt in mind that I will certify through the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to the secretary of defense, that Northern Command is ready for what we call full operational capability."

According to the general, commencement might be a better term than graduation.

"This is not an end state. This is, in fact, part of a journey," Eberhart said. "We'll never truly reach full operational capability. We are always going to be striving to be better."

General Myers said everybody at NORTHCOM did a good job designing an exercise that really tests the command's ability to respond to a very severe incident.

"All we have to do is look back at last week at the bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad to know that there are folks out there who are trying their best to do away with our way of life and the things we hold dear," Myers said. "This is one of the things we can do to be better prepared to respond."

NORTHCOM's mission is two-fold: homeland defense and civil support. Specifically, it conducts operations to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests within the assigned area of responsibility. Additionally, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, the command provides military assistance to civil authorities, including consequence management operations, to help mitigate crisis situations.