

Command Surgeon Boldly Goes Where None Have Gone Before

Press Release

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PETERSON AFB, Colo. ? Medicine: It may not be the final frontier but the North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command Surgeon?s office here really is on a mission ?to boldly go where no one has gone before.?

Primarily, the command surgeon (SG) coordinates federal military assistance to civil authorities and advises the NORAD and USNORTHCOM commander on health and environmental issues that could impact command forces. However, SG also attempts to anticipate possible health threats ? from natural and man-made causes ? to come up with solutions that would reduce the nation?s vulnerability to attack.

?If we do our jobs, people will live ? maybe a lot of people,? said Air Force Brig. Gen. (Dr.) Lloyd Dodd, command surgeon.

Since the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is responsible for the health of U.S. citizens, SG is working with the department at various levels. For example, SG assigned a senior medical liaison officer to Washington, D.C., to advise HHS on Department of Defense medical capabilities and the resources available during a presidential declared emergency.

If terrorists were to launch an anthrax attack against the nation, SG could provide everything from medical personnel to augment civilian medical staffs to deployable field hospitals, which could be used for additional bed space or as alternate treatment facilities.

SG could also identify thousands of medics for deployment to assist the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in tracing the anthrax and provide transportation to move victims of the attack from overwhelmed areas to those with more capacity, Dodd said.

In the area of bioterrorism, SG and HHS are collaborating to defend the nation?s borders against attack, including those involving plague and disease.

?Diseases don?t respect borders,? Dodd said. ?A disease can rampage Detroit (Michigan) and Windsor (Canada) in a heartbeat,? which makes it extremely important ?to build relationships with border nations ahead of time.?

Although the United States and Canada have a long-standing relationship, SG plans to send several staff members to the northern frontier ?to learn more about Health Canada,? which Dodd said is the equivalent of the CDC in Atlanta. ?The goal is to learn more about one another so we can support each other,? he said.

The command surgeon also hopes to develop deeper ties with Mexico. According to Dodd, the command sent several people to Mexico last year to participate in a national disaster planning exercise.

Additionally, the command, DOD and the Mexican authorities are working to establish a medical officer exchange program. The program could benefit both countries, especially since the Mexican military has more experience handling disaster situations, Dodd said.

?We (the United States and Mexico) want to identify cost effective methods to improve

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public health and border health security," said Dodd. Both countries also want to improve communications between agencies that would respond to emergencies along the southern border, he said.

Agroterrorism is another area of exploration. SG, health and human services and the Department of Homeland Security are looking at ways to protect the agricultural and food supplies from terrorist attack. Dodd said the Army has "loaned" a veterinarian to USNORTHCOM to study agroterrorism as well as the outbreak of animal diseases.

"We want to be able to anticipate threats and prevent or deter them," said Dodd. "We want to take control of a situation away from the bad guys. We want to take away their options," Dodd said.