

NORAD And USNORTHCOM Tap Academia To Answer Questions

Press Release

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?What would be the political and economic impact of a catastrophic attack on the United States and what capabilities does the Department of Defense need to respond to such an attack??

?What medical support, training and equipment would the U.S. military need to respond to a national incident such as the employment of a weapon of mass destruction, terrorist attack or natural disaster??

North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command officials hope to answer these and similar questions with the help of more than a dozen U.S. universities, colleges, and military institutions that joined the command's homeland security-homeland defense education consortium, said Stan Supinski, Ph.D., deputy of education and training.

He said the group's mission includes ensuring that NORAD and USNORTHCOM's role and perspective on homeland security are adequately and accurately reflected in national educational initiatives. Consortium members also promise to develop and promote educational programs related to homeland security. The University of Denver, a charter member of the consortium, is already making plans to offer a master's degree in homeland security in about a year, Dr. Supinski said.

The consortium met for the first time in December to develop a charter, establish membership procedures, discuss opportunities for cooperation, and develop and discuss critical issues that can be answered through academic research, said Dr. Supinski.

?There was much spirited debate and the command clearly benefited from the expertise the academics brought to the table,? said Dr. Supinski. He said the debates allowed command leadership to work with academia to develop a list of 29 major research topics, including questions on maritime security policy, transnational health threats, command and control structure, leadership education, information sharing, and ground-based ballistic missile defense.

Graduate students from each consortium member institute, along with DOD officials, will research the topics and USNORTHCOM will use the findings to further develop its practices, said Dr. Supinski. ?There are an awful lot of smart people out there who want to help us. We're trying to let them,? he said.

As the newest combatant command in DOD, USNORTHCOM is charting a course through virgin territory. Command officials hope academia can help level the playing field for homeland security and homeland defense the same way it leveled the field during the Cold War,? said Dr. Supinski.

?When you think back to the Cold War,? said Dr. Supinski, ?who knew more about the Soviets, their government and political policies than academia?? He said it was academics that predicted how the Communist would fight.

?And, as Gen. (Ed) Eberhart points out, ?it's academia that is now tackling terrorist issues and the best way to counter such attacks,?? Dr. Supinski said. General Eberhart is commander of NORAD and USNORTHCOM.

Consortium members also will help educate Americans about NORAD and USNORTHCOM. ?The role of this group is to reach as many people as possible who are involved in homeland security and homeland defense and tell them what we do, what our capabilities are, and when we can get involved

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with civil authorities. Clearly we can more effectively accomplish our mission when everyone understands our role.?

Command officials also believe the organization will do a better job if its troops establish relationships with as many state and local disaster response agencies as possible, before the need arises.

?General Eberhart has stated on several occasions that he does not want us to arrive at a disaster or emergency site and exchange business cards,? said Dr. Supinski.

To date, about 50 other universities and colleges have expressed interest in joining the command?s education consortium. If they join, ?we?ll have even more experts across the country,? said Dr. Supinski.

Schools already members are: University of Denver, Pikes Peak Community College, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, National Defense University, Air War College, Air Force Institute for National Security Studies, Joint Forces Staff College, Old Dominion University, University of North Carolina, U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command, Metropolitan College of New York, U.S. Naval Post-Graduate Command, University of Texas Health Science Center, Saint Mary?s University, Uniformed Service University for the Health Sciences, and New York University.

USNORTHCOM was activated in October 2002 and declared fully operational in September 2003. The command is the result of concerns about which military command would have the leading role if the United States, or its territories, was attacked again as was the case Sept. 11, 2001.

Following the terrorist attacks, the president and secretary of defense called for the creation of one organization to unify defense of this nation and to coordinate military assistance to civil authorities. In July 2002, President George W. Bush signed the National Strategy for Homeland Security giving birth to both homeland defense and homeland security operations.

Although USNORTHCOM does not have a direct relationship with the Department of Homeland Security, it coordinates with the agency to train or plan USNORTHCOM missions. And if tasked, USNORTHCOM would support homeland security agencies during a presidential declared disaster or emergency situation.