

## Threat Of Attack Means Business As Usual For USNORTHCOM

Press Release

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Posted May 27, 2004 at 3:30:PM MDT

PETERSON AFB, Colo. ? While Attorney General John Ashcroft alerted Americans to possible terrorist attacks over the next few months, U.S. Northern Command officials said the command is continuing business as usual.

?We're not changing anything as of now,? said Col. Michael Bradley, chief of homeland defense in USNORTHCOM's policy and planning division at Peterson AFB. However, the colonel added, the command is ready to increase its efforts ?if the threat drives us to a higher alert posture.?

According to Bradley, USNORTHCOM has already identified and prepared forces to respond to a possible terrorist attack. And, he said, those forces would respond rapidly. ?We have executive orders ready if we have to go,? said Bradley.

Ashcroft and Robert Muller, FBI director, held a joint news conference May 26 to tell Americans they had received ?credible intelligence? from multiple sources indicating that al Qaeda plans to ?hit the United States hard? within the next few months.

The attorney general urged Americans to remain vigilant and report any suspicious activity to law enforcement or local FBI officials. He said several upcoming events in the United States ?may present especially attractive targets? for an al Qaeda attack. Those events include the opening of the World War II memorial this weekend, the Group of Eight Summit meetings in June at Sea Island, Ga., Fourth of July celebrations, Democratic and Republican party conventions, and the November elections. He asked Americans to report any suspicious activity to local law enforcement agencies or to the FBI.

While the U.S. officials have not been able to say what form a terrorist attack may take, Bradley said ??there will be heightened awareness? for ?high profile? events such as the G-8 summit meeting.

?The warnings obviously were for all Americans to continue to watch for threats,? said Bradley. However, he said, vigilance is a ?24/7? operation for people assigned to USNORTHCOM since the command's No. 1 priority is defending the homeland.

?We have the option of increasing alert periods and we will if required,? said Bradley. And if the Department of Homeland Security does increase the threat level ? which is currently at yellow ? he said Gen. Ed Eberhart, commander of both USNORTHCOM and North American Aerospace Defense Command, can increase ?air coverage, especially in high profile areas.?

In the meantime, both NORAD and USNORTHCOM will continue daily operations as normal, said Bradley. He said USNORTHCOM continues to work with the DHS and other agencies across the nation ?to provide the best defense we can.?

Bradley also said that five people in his division recently spent three weeks in Washington D.C. working with DHS to develop ?complimentary plans? to defend the nation against attacks.

Although USNORTHCOM and DHS staffs have previously worked together on disaster exercises, this was the first time the two agencies had coordinated efforts in preparation for an emergency or disaster event, Bradley said.

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