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Press Release

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"No one knows how long this war is going to last. No one knows what resources will ultimately be required, but we do know that transnational terrorism will be defeated and Americans will once again be able to live unhurt in peace."

These were the words Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Paul McHale used to summarize his keynote address to more than 600 in attendance at the First Homeland Defense Symposium held Sept. 25 at the Broadmoor International Center in Colorado Springs, Colo.

The symposium, hosted by U.S. Northern Command, the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Council and the Rocky Mountain Chapter National Defense Industrial Association, brought together senior government officials, military leaders and key industry representatives to discuss critical homeland defense issues and topics.

In addition to welcoming remarks from Colorado Lt. Gov. Jane Norton, keynote addresses from McHale, USNORTHCOM Commander Gen. Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart and Deputy Commander Lt. Gen. Ed Anderson, the symposium also featured four panel sessions centering on the event's four key themes. Those themes were: educating the audience on the status of USNORTHCOM by addressing its vision, mission, and component roles; describing the relationships between local, state, and federal agencies required to conduct military support to civil authorities; showcasing the role of the first responder in homeland security and defense; and discussing emerging trends and technology that could support homeland defense.

"There is no doubt we have the advantage in the away game ... and that's the game we want to play," Eberhart said. "We want to take the fight to the terrorist ... we want to take the fight to those who threaten what we stand for, our way of life, our freedoms and those things we hold so near to us."

He also stressed the value of building relationships and the importance of technology and teamwork.

"We must continue building those relationships that will serve us so well in the coming months, years and decades in homeland defense and homeland security," Eberhart said. "We (can't) be exchanging business cards at the scene of the incident ... we need to know each other, know what (each other is) capable of doing and you achieve that by operating and exercising together."

Eberhart stressed the need to take a closer look at technology, to include using today's technology in different ways and finding ways to incorporate equipment being designed for use outside the nation's borders into homeland defense.

"We must think differently ... and (we must determine) what we will need for the future in the global war on terrorism and what is the best way to prevent, develop, test, maintain and sustain it," Eberhart said. "It's a different challenge ... one that there's no doubt in my mind that we are up to, but only if we do it as a team, we do it together."

Gen. Ralph E. "Ed" Eberhart, commander, U.S. Northern Command, addresses media following the first Homeland Defense Symposium Sept. 25. Photo credit: Tech Sgt Devin Fisher, USAF

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And speaking of teamwork, the general noted, "This military industrial complex that has served this nation so superbly will enable us to win another war we cannot afford to lose — the global war on terrorism."

McHale assured those in attendance that the Department of Defense is prepared to do whatever is necessary to succeed in this fight.

"With courage and tenacity the men and women of the Department of Defense will pursue our enemies wherever they might hide and defeat them wherever they might attack — overseas or here at home," McHale said.

The USNORTHCOM deputy commander echoed the commitment.

"Each day we continue to redefine jointness, expand upon and strengthen the relationships, train and (conduct) exercises to refine our skills," Anderson said. "We are committed all day, every day to the defense of this great nation. So let our enemies beware — we are ready, we are prepared."

One avenue that will help promote the effort is the Second Annual Homeland Defense Symposium, which USNORTHCOM officials have already begun planning.

"This event far exceeded our expectations," said Mike Perini, director of USNORTHCOM Public Affairs and master moderator. "The synergy displayed throughout this symposium demonstrated the value of the venue and has paved the way for making Colorado Springs a center of excellence for homeland defense in the years ahead."