

CHAPTER 7

Summary, Shortfalls, and Recommendations

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The specter of agroterrorism is on the rise across the United States. Many organizations and governmental agencies are gaining a better understanding of the vulnerabilities of our nation, potential capabilities of our adversaries, and the catastrophic effects of a well executed agroterrorist attack. Because of this expanding awareness, many agencies are considering the role the Department of Defense would play in such an event.

Many questions must be answered quickly so the United States is not caught unprepared and so the DoD can use its resources and capabilities most effectively. Should the Department of Defense step forward in a more aggressive fashion to prepare for an agroterrorist event? Are there other governmental agencies or resources that are better suited or fully capable of handling the mission without the assistance of the DoD? Would the Department of Defense's involvement in pre-attack preparations hinder responsible agencies from building truly independent capabilities to deal with a national agroterrorist event? Or, is the threat so insignificant that it has little effect on the national security of the United States? If the Department of Defense is needed to respond to an agroterrorist event at the national level, how can it prepare now and what will be expected from the DoD when it does respond?

Agroterrorism is a threat to U.S. national security, as clearly detailed in the introductory chapter, yet the DoD has not gotten more involved in agro-defense or the planning to manage the aftermath of an agroterrorist event. Multiple reasons likely have driven the DoD to place this threat low on its list of concerns. The Department's increasingly global commitments, coupled with trends toward down-sizing and "homeland defense," stretch available forces and resources. Traditionally, the Department of Defense viewed its area of responsibility primarily as abroad and only recently has this focus shifted toward the continental

United States. The historic rarity of foreign incursions on U.S. soil and the *Posse Comitatus Act*, enacted after the American Civil War, have helped to root this foreign focus philosophy deeply in the mores of all military services.¹ The DoD defers to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Homeland Security, and others as more appropriately suited to handle an agroterrorist event. Some in the DoD hold the opinion that supporting agroterrorism is simply “a kind of mission we have never done and is not our job.” Others in the Department of Defense, however, assume that we are already capable of contributing to the response to an agroterrorist event. In our experience, leaders in other federal agencies expect DoD to provide support, however unspecified, following such an event. This is the crux of this report: Will the Department of Defense be prepared and able to provide such support if and when it is needed?

Is DoD’s Role Mandated in an Agroterrorist Event?

The National Response Plan, released in 2004 by the Department of Homeland Security, provides an all-hazards approach to national catastrophes (man-made or natural). Using the National Incident Management System, it provides much-needed clarity to tactical, operational, and strategic leaders as they prepare their respective agencies. To a certain extent it also defines how the Department of Defense is to be involved in various responses. In the incident annexes dealing with biological, catastrophic, and terrorism incidents, the DoD is listed as a “cooperating [support] agency.” Although the annex on food and agriculture incident has not yet been released, a similar role for Department of Defense is expected.²

Additionally, the DoD has a memorandum of understanding regarding veterinary services with the United States Department of Agriculture and the General Services Administration (GSA) – further detailed in Chapters 2 and 4 of this report. In this Memorandum of Understanding, the DoD has agreed to assist in developing contingency plans and exercises as well as participate in other missions such as pest control, laboratory support, vaccine development, and providing a wide range of medical specialists.³

In 2003, the Department of Defense established the U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), headquartered at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado Springs, Colorado. It was established as a single unified

command with an area of responsibility encompassing Canada, the United States (excluding Hawaii), Mexico, and the surrounding waters out to approximately 500 miles. It also includes the Gulf of Mexico and several islands in the Atlantic and Caribbean.⁴ Although NORTHCOM would provide the key military support in the event of a major agroterrorist event in the continental United States (as detailed in Chapter 3) there is only one person assigned to NORTHCOM who is tasked to plan for such a response.⁵ However motivated and qualified, a single individual faces a truly mammoth task.

Although traditionally trained to seize, secure, or destroy by force, U.S. military forces have increasingly shifted to peacemaking and peacekeeping operations. If a major agroterrorist event occurred and the military was called upon to enforce an animal quarantine, they might be perceived as law enforcement agents in our homeland. Are U.S. forces sufficiently trained for such a mission—and in sufficient numbers? The military's ability to integrate with state and local government agencies will be honed only through meticulous planning and realistic exercises.

Another concern centers on the number of military personnel potentially available to respond to a domestic incident. With significant operations on-going in Iraq and Afghanistan, will the military be available to help domestically with an agroterrorist event? Clearly, iterative planning efforts should include an estimation of the forces required for various contingencies, the appropriateness of existing interagency agreements, and clear lines of communication between respective offices within DoD, the Department of Homeland Security, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Health and Human Services.

Shortfalls within DoD to augment a National Level Agroterrorist Event

This study has identified at least four categorical deficiencies within the DoD regarding readiness for an agroterrorism event.

1. **Planning.** As yet, there is no clear plan for integrating specific military capabilities into the overall response effort. While the Army maintains communication with USDA regarding animal diseases, this has not resulted in an integrated response plan.

2. **Personnel.** NORTHCOM has only a single planner focused on this contingency. Moreover, although there are significant numbers of trained and experienced veterinarians, laboratory technicians, epidemiologists, and specialized technicians in the military, there is no centralized mechanism for tracking their locations and availability in an agroterrorist event.
3. **Liaison.** Although the Department of Defense has a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture and the Food and Drug Administration, these relationships should be further solidified by creating permanent liaison positions.
4. **Mission.** Perhaps most importantly, the DoD has not specifically acknowledged the mission of providing forces and/or resources following an agroterrorism event. Although this may be included by implication under the rubric of “homeland defense,” these shortfalls could be more easily remedied by senior-level commitment to this mission.

Recommendations for Action

This focused effort identified issues regarding the DoD’s preparedness to contribute to the response to a major agroterrorist event. Senior leaders within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, NORTHCOM, and the Army should commission a more complete analysis of what should be the military’s involvement following a major national agroterrorist event. The following milestones are offered as a template of action in determining the optimum military participation in response to the agroterrorism threat and ensuring its readiness.

1. Determine if this is a valid mission, at least in part, for the DoD. This likely is a NORTHCOM action, in coordination with the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff, and could be initiated by an extensive literature review of previous military involvement in agricultural disease outbreaks.
2. Identify categorical capabilities that the DoD might be called upon to provide. This could be facilitated by a series of interagency

tabletop and field exercises with participation from all levels (e.g., state, local, national, academic).

3. Evaluate the current capability of the Department of Defense to meet those identified requirements.
4. Assuming there is a delta between requirements and current capability, close the gap by fine-tuning military force structure, if possible, and/or military responsibilities as outlined in interagency agreements.

The recent questions raised concerning the use of the military for quarantine operations in the event of an avian influenza outbreak in the United States demonstrate that the roles of the military in an agricultural event are not clearly established. The capabilities of the military are broad, and can be easily adapted to enhance an effective response to an agroterror attack. This project provided local, state, federal, and DoD policy makers detailed information about current capabilities and future potential roles for the Department of Defense in helping the nation prepare for, respond to, and recover from a terrorist attack on U.S. agriculture.

Notes

1. John R. Brinkerhoff, "The Posse Comitatus Act and Homeland Security," *Journal of Homeland Security*, February 2002, On-line, Internet, 22 June 2005, Available from <http://www.homelandsecurity.org/journal/articles/displayArticle.asp?article=30>.

2. National Response Plan, *Department of Homeland Security*, On-line, Internet, 25 October 2005, Available from <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=15&content=4269>.

3. Robert Newberry, 1999, Statement by Robert Newberry, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Combating Terrorism Policy and Support Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, 27 October 1999, On-line, Internet, 23 June 2005, <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/1999/991027rn.pdf>.

4. U.S. Northern Command, On-line, Internet, no date, Available from http://www.northcom.mil/index.cfm?fuseaction=s.who_homefront.

5. "Army veterinarian is military's man with the plan," *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, 1 February 2004, Volume 224, Number 3, 349.