



"Silent Prairie" Summary Report

SPF Holds First Secretary of Defense Strategic Policy Forum ~ Exercise Summary ~

Overview

The Institute for National Strategic Studies' (INSS) National Strategic Gaming Center (NSGC) held the first in a series of Strategic Policy Forums at the National Defense University on June 25, 2002. These crisis-simulation exercises, an initiative of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, are designed to give senior government officials insights into the nuances and complexities of policymaking in the current global security environment and to illuminate policy and organizational options. They also seek to improve dialogue between the Executive-Legislative branches of the Federal government on critical national security issues. Insights from the simulations will be shared with key policymakers.

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VADM Paul Gaffney, Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld open the first Strategic Policy Forum.

VADM Paul Gaffney, NDU President, welcomed participants to this inaugural exercise. Secretary Rumsfeld and Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman opened the classified "Silent Prairie" exercise, noting the importance of these kinds of interactions among federal, state, and local officials in addressing some of the complex security problems the Nation confronts today.

Participants included fifteen Members of Congress, senior Executive branch officials, and senior military leaders. Other participating organizations included the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Army National Guard, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the



Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Moseley discusses a point with Congressional members.

Office of the Secretary of Defense.

Addressing the Challenge of Agricultural Bioterrorism

Agricultural bioterrorism involves the deliberate introduction of disease agent either against livestock or in the food chain for purposes of undermining stability or generating fear. Exercise "Silent Prairie" provided a forum for information exchange and decision-making in the context of such a major national security crisis. Participants examined the gravity, complexity, and difficulty inherent in

responding issues that would arise in a national level agricultural bioterrorism incident coincident with a large-scale overseas deployment of U.S. Armed Forces. They also assessed the economic effects of this notional incident and how the United States might respond once the perpetrator had been identified.

After the exercise was completed, Members of Congress briefed Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jim Moseley on what they learned and offered their policy recommendations. All participants came away with a better understanding of the importance that agriculture plays in national security and how an agricultural bioterrorism attack could impact national defense efforts and economy. Participants cited the following insights:



Members of Congress and other participants watch a simulated news broadcast on the crisis.

- Agriculture is a critical national infrastructure. An agricultural bioterrorism attack could affect many Congressional districts in the country, and have ripple effects through many sectors of the national economy, including agricultural product exports, the transportation industry and the retail food industry. This exercise pointed out that we must analyze these economic interdependencies in light of potential crises.

- Response to an agricultural bioterrorism attack could require significantly more resources than the attack on the World Trade Center. Department of Defense resources could be strained by supporting

state and local government efforts to cope with the disaster.

- State and local government organizations need to be prepared to effectively use military support during such an incident. Better planning for the integration of the efforts of various state and local authorities, private businesses and the federal government, especially the military, is essential to developing effective responses to the agricultural bioterrorism threat.

- Further planning for coordinated responses to agricultural bioterrorism incidents is needed. Some states, such as North Carolina, are better prepared to deal with potential agricultural bioterrorism attacks because of their well-developed livestock management databases and proactive response mechanisms.
- A coordinated response to the consequence management of such an agricultural bioterrorism event is necessary. This requires exercise of existing partnerships between federal, state, and local agencies as well as private sector industries well in advance of a crisis.
- Determining how to identify and respond to the perpetrator of an agricultural bioterrorism attack is complicated. The players recognized that such an attack could affect many Congressional districts, and determining the proper military response would be challenging.

Deputy Secretaries Moseley and Wolfowitz reported these findings back to Secretary Veneman and Secretary Rumsfeld. They also delivered closing remarks to the group, thanking them for their participation, and their important insights. The Deputy Secretaries concluded by emphasizing the complexity of crises such as agricultural terrorism, and the need for forums like “Silent Prairie”, with which the Nation will be better prepared to face terrorism.

The bipartisan group of Members of Congress who participated in the Forum found it very worthwhile and urged their colleagues to participate in future events. *"It was a worthwhile exercise,"* said Rep. Vic Snyder, (D-Arkansas), *"Most people came away with some general observations that will be helpful with dealing with homeland defense."* Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-Florida) wrote, *"I found the Forum to be both beneficial and thought provoking. I strongly encourage you to utilize me and my colleagues in (future) forums."*

Additional Information

More Strategic Policy Forums are being planned. For further information, please contact Col Chris Goggins, USAF, Director at 202-685-4827 or e-mail at gogginsc@ndu.edu.

The Forum received considerable press coverage and commentary from Members of Congress. The following links are provided as a sample of some of the response.

[Reuters News Release in Forbes.Com: "US Conducts Mock Agriculture Bioterrorist Attack"](#)

This article also appeared in the [Food Market Exchange](#) and [Iowa Farm Bureau](#) web sites.

[Congressman Frank Lucas Press Release: "LUCAS TO PARTICIPATE IN AGRI-TERRORISM 'WAR GAME'"](#)

[Congressman To Make Recommendations Following Classified Terrorism Scenario with DoD Officials"](#)

[Congressman George Gekas Press Release: "Gekas Joins Sec. Rumsfeld in Strategic Planning Session for Responding to Bio-terrorism. Strategic exercise designed to prepare U.S. for agri-terrorism"](#)

INSS Publications on Bio-terrorism and Homeland Security:

[“Agricultural Bioterrorism: A Federal Strategy to Meet the Threat”, McNair Paper No. 65](#)

[“Homeland Security – The New Role for Defense”, Strategic Forum No. 189](#)