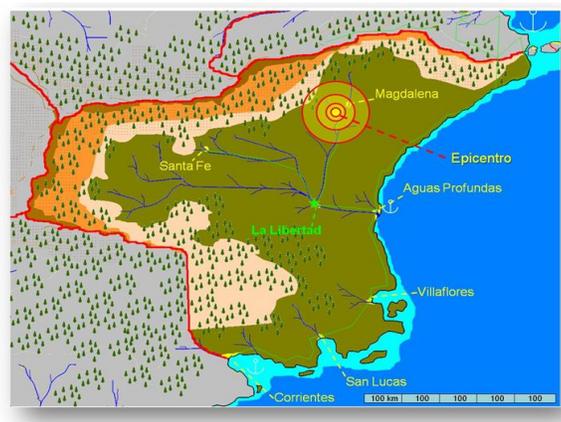


# Perspective on Homeland Security and Defense Course Offers Unique Hands-On Experience in Disaster Response

By Dr. Evan Ellis

On March 17-18, the CHDS Exercise and Gaming team conducted a simulation-based exercise in Colorado Springs for more than forty visiting security and defense professionals from across Latin America. The purpose of the exercise was to provide a hands-on experience in international and interagency coordination in disaster response for students of the CHDS course “Perspectives on Homeland Security and Defense.”

The exercise employed a unique approach, in which commercial software for simulating complex systems was used to drive a game focused on bargaining and coordination. The focus of the event was a multinational response to a humanitarian crisis produced by a major earthquake in an impoverished country. Exercise participants role-played key factors involved in the response, including foreign states with financial, logistical and human resources to provide assistance, non-governmental aid organizations (NGOs), government entities in the affected country, as well as both the population of the affected zone and criminal elements operating in the area.



*Figure 1 – Geographic Context of the Exercise*

The simulation covered a wide range of interrelated dimensions of the earthquake response, from the provision of food, water and medical supplies, to the cleanup of debris and the avoidance of contamination, to the maintenance of public security in the affected zone, to the restoration of the local economy. In the face of imperfect information and conflicting imperatives, participants in the exercise had to find ways to collaborate in order to save lives and enable the recovery of the affected area.

As participants collaborated, and occasionally competed, in the context of limited time, the software used in the simulation allowed them to see the consequences of their decisions in near-real time, and to trace the complex causes of their outcomes. For the participants, coming from a broad range of security-related professions in Latin America, from academics to military officers, to security analysts, to journalists, the event was an opportunity to put

into practice the experience gained from the PHSD course, testing and extending associated insights from the classroom as they prepared to take those skills back to their respective countries.

For more information on the PHSD wargame, and the associated system dynamics-based gaming methodology, please contact Dr. Evan Ellis, Assistant Professor of National Security Studies, Modeling, Simulation, & Wargaming. 202-685-4195. [Ellis9@ndu.edu](mailto:Ellis9@ndu.edu).

