



SILENTVECTOR

17-18 OCTOBER 2002



PURPOSE OF EXERCISE

To explore the difficulties of coping with a credible warning of a terrorist attack, without sufficient information for effective prevention.

ORGANIZATION

Andrews Air Force Base
17-18 October 2002

- Simulated National Security Council meeting at Camp David.
- All role players were either former or current government officials with relevant experience.

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ROLE PLAYERS

President - *Sam Nunn*

Governor of Virginia –
James S. Gilmore

Secretary of State - *Fred C. Iklé*

Secretary of Defense - *John P. White*

Secretary of Homeland Security -
James M. Loy

Secretary of Energy -
Charles B. Curtis

Attorney General -
George J. Terwilliger III

National Security Advisor -
R. James Woolsey

Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff -
Wesley K. Clark

Director, CIA - *Winston Wiley*

Director, FBI - *William S. Sessions*

Deputy Director, FBI - *Dale Watson*

Director, FEMA - *James Lee Witt*

Director, NRC - *Shirley Ann Jackson*

Director, Homeland Security -
Jerome M. Hauer

President's Press Secretary -
Dee Dee Myers

Director, National Economic Council -
Stephen Friedman

KEY QUESTIONS AT OPENING SESSION

- It this attack real? How credible is the intelligence?
- What is likely to be attacked?
- What should our priorities be?
- Can anything be done to prevent an attack?

THREAT/VULNERABILITY INTEGRATION

Means of Attack

Aviation

Ground

Sea

Facility Type

Heavy

Medium

Light

Vehicle Bomb

Tanker Truck

Ground assault

Large Vessel

Small Craft

Swimmer

Nuclear Power
Plants

Refineries

LPG/LNG
Storage

Pipelines

Petroleum
Terminals

Chemical
Operations

Dams

Facility Type	Heavy	Medium	Light	Vehicle Bomb	Tanker Truck	Ground assault	Large Vessel	Small Craft	Swimmer
Nuclear Power Plants									
Refineries									
LPG/LNG Storage									
Pipelines									
Petroleum Terminals									
Chemical Operations									
Dams									

Terrorist Capabilities



Known or Implied



Unknown

Vulnerability to Attack Means



High



Moderate



Low

Physical Effect of Attack



Mass casualties/
Widespread damage outside
facility

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OUTCOME OF INITIAL SESSION

- Leaders determined the threat too vague to formulate direct, specific protective measures.
- Leaders ordered general protective measures.
 - Raised color-coded chart alert level.

NSC CONFRONTS NEW DILEMMA

- Word of potential attack leaks to press.
- Subsequent scenario developments confirm the risk and date of attack.
- Communities predisposed to panic (those close to nuclear power plants) assume the worst.
- Evacuations ordered in one location because of likely threat.
- Leaders debate how to manage panic while contemplating more extreme protective measures.

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FURTHER NSC ACTIONS

- General aviation and cargo air traffic are grounded.
- Leaders plea for calm in the citizenry.

THE DAY AFTER - SILENCE

- Nothing happened. Why?
- Although not known at the time, bad luck and the grounding of general aviation have disrupted the terrorists' plans.
- Leaders questioned whether the attack was foiled, deterred, or a hoax?

KEY LESSON #1: When governments can't say what is happening, rumors become facts.

- Governments naturally resist reporting what they do not know.
- Communities primed for panic will assume the worst.
- News media will attempt to create coherence, even where there is none.

KEY LESSON #2: Central dilemma: Reacting to ambiguous warning.

- Government reaction to ambiguous warnings effectively help terrorists achieve their goals.
- Terrorist goal likely to damage the U.S. economy.
- Protective steps against uncertain threats cause widespread economic disruption.

KEY LESSON #3: Relaxing protective measures is more difficult than imposing them.

- Leaders likely will take dramatic steps to block terrorists as warnings become more credible.
- If steps are effective, we won't see the attack.
- Silence creates ambiguity.
 - Were we successful or was it a hoax?
 - Did we disrupt the attack or is this a pre-set pause in the terrorists' plan?
- When is it safe to return to normal life?

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KEY LESSON #4: How do we avoid 20 years of economic disruption?

- It is relatively easy for terrorists to create credible threats which government leaders cannot ignore.
- How do we avoid “cheap” terrorism where our reactions actually help the terrorists achieve their goals?
- We need a 20 year strategy, not a one-time strategy.

KEY LESSON #5: Intelligence no longer neatly falls into “foreign” and “domestic” categories.

- Modern terrorism is trans-border, however America’s intelligence operations are border-bound.
- Coordination has improved, but it is still inadequate.
- New Department of Homeland Security will have difficulty fixing the problem.

KEY LESSON #6: Alert system is not reliable for the private sector.

- Government color-coded system reliable only for federal government.
- State and local governments have different alerting concepts.
- Not reliable for private sector preparations that are entirely voluntary.
- No effective “report-back” system outside federal response.

KEY LESSON #7: Aviation security remains a problem.

- Enormous progress in securing commercial passenger aviation.
- Limited security improvement in general aviation.
- Security improvements for air cargo/air charter operations are inadequate.

KEY LESSON #8: Chemical industry is a key area of concern.

- Wide use of chemicals in American industry/society.
- Security procedures are not necessarily designed to guard against terrorism.
- Very complex control problem.
 - Multiple producers
 - Multiple transportation methods
 - Widely distributed storage locations controlled by many different public and private organizations.

KEY LESSON #9: Federal-State government interface is insufficient.

- State and local governments are indispensable response element.
- Widespread misunderstanding and distrust between federal and state/local levels.
- Current communication channels are insufficient to deal with a serious crisis.
 - Need a “classification” system to share sensitive information but without public disclosure.



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