

On the Inside - Vigilant Guard Exercise

**“The penalty good men pay for indifference to public affairs, is to be ruled by evil men.”
Plato**

Earlier this month I participated in a large-scale National Level Exercise (NLE) 3 day preparedness training exercise called “Vigilant Guard” which occurred at multiple venues all across the state. (Last year I did a paper on Vigilant Guard that you can read @ http://formerlynmurbanhomesteader.weebly.com/uploads/2/2/5/0/22509786/perspective_operation_vigilant_guard_aug_2012_new_site.pdf)



In our case it consisted of (per the state press release) *“National Guard Soldiers and Airmen, local and state first responders, local, county and state emergency managers, voluntary agencies and multi-national participants and observers” ... “will begin with a simulated ice storm, followed by simulated blizzard conditions and frigid temperatures. Then other training scenarios will unfold all over the State, including simulated bus accidents, potential intruders, bomb threats and other possible terrorist threats, hazardous materials incidents, collapsed structures and cyber security breaches. ... Just as in real life, these simulated events will create consequences that will require emergency intervention. In addition, public health officials will test their plans to distribute and dispense of emergency medications, and the American Red Cross will be exercising some of their critical emergency functions.”*



The preparedness group I am with obviously only participated in one venue location. Our 3 scenarios consisted of a nor'easter (ice storm, blizzard, frigid temps), a dirty bomb at a public venue and a simultaneous (across all participating locations in the state) large east coast grid failure.



Now I have to say that besides the participants listed by the “official” press release there were also civilian RACES, CERT, RSVP, Southern Baptist Relief, Salvation Army, Red Cross, and the like volunteers, as well as, local military NEST, CBER, RTR and such specialty units too. Local law enforcement was also “supplemented” with military police (MP’s) from the local bases.



Just having the military, *any* active duty military unit, involved kinda smacked of Project Urban Shield which is one of many “programs” prescribed in the Patriot Act for National Security Planning (NSP) and by various executive directives, proclamations and initiatives (by both Bush and Obama), including the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI).



The UASI is one of those government/military “things” that has very little info about it on the net or in any of the large university libraries that I have gone to in the past 6 months. Because of this I can’t tell you too much about it. (Rest assured that before I leave the eastern US I will be making a trip to the Library of Congress and see if anything is there on this particular subject.) However I did get a convoluted explanation when I queried a couple of “officers” in charge of the event on why there were US active duty military personnel involved in a non-combatant civilian NLE (national level exercise) event on US soil:



“To strengthen the defense support of civilian authorities in compliance with provisions in the Patriot Act and several other presidential directives or initiatives; and to ensure that communications, supplies, man-power and other specialty and non-specialty needs are quickly available.”



I can say this about the 3-day event I participated in: In ANY large scale emergency or disaster it will take assistance from civilians (individual and groups) and ALL levels of government (and military), along with a tremendous amount of planning, coordination, equipment, supplies and man-power to assist in the reduction and or prevention of trials, tribulations, causalities, mortalities and damage. This is not something that can be anywhere near effective or efficient if done on the fly - So yes, practice makes sense!



“They that are on their guard and appear ready to receive their adversaries, are in much less danger of being attacked than the supine, secure and negligent.”
Benjamin Franklin



For instance, in the nor'easter scenario we had people without electricity, without water, trapped in homes with roofs collapsed and trapped in vehicles due to fallen trees. There were people suffering from CO2 poisoning; people without enough food or medication; there were some boiler fires (most homes in my area are heated by oil with electric pilots). Town folk couldn't get to any of their cash and the stores couldn't ring up any transactions without the electricity, nor could water wells pump water. Food stuffs that are normally shipped every 3 days were depleting quickly with no new shipments in sight due to road conditions and volunteer relief organizations couldn't get their supplies in fast enough with the road conditions. Jails were becoming overcrowded and dangerous. Police, Fire and Rescue were hampered. The National Guard and Military supplied ATV's and helicopters to help transport people and supplies, as well as for rescue, EMT and fire needs. Without them more people would have been injured and or died.



For the grid failure, it was much like the nor'easter but without the bad travel conditions. There was plenty of simulated road congestion and much more crime in the black-out scenario.



With the "dirty bomb" although there was a smaller area and number of people impacted, it involved identifying anyone who might have been remotely exposed to the radiation and treating those injured, as well as, determining who or what was behind the bomb, were there any more bombs (if yes, where) and of course finding the bastard(s) responsible.



Place any of these scenarios into a densely populated area and you can quickly see the complexity required to be of any effective assistance to anyone.



I learned quite a bit during these 3 days. For instance did you know that those tracking anklets that parolees, etc. wear are non-functional in a large power failure? (Scary isn't it.) I learned how to utilize several communication systems, how to get around the "red tape", how to do emergency triage and that politics is a liability in an emergency. At least the politicians involved had the good sense to admit it during each debrief session, their red faces showed their shame.



Although I didn't have time to take any pictures during the event (I was way too busy, but did find some from local news and new archives and they are in this article), there was an "official" photographer who was. I assume that eventually these photos will be made available at some point – on the state's web site maybe.



Were there black helicopters? Yes! (red, purple, white, blue, green and yellow too.) **Were there men in black? Yes!** (all kinds of uniforms and colors too) **Were there military transports and police SWAT? Yes! Were there make-shift jails? Yes! Was there a "refugee camp"? Yes! Was there a lot of shouting and yelling? Yes! And Were they all needed? YES!**



I can honestly say that although I was a bit unnerved by all the active duty military involved, I can see the need for each and every one of them being there. I can understand the necessity of these kinds

of large scale training exercises and as a result I have no immediate fear of “Vigilant Guard” exercises.



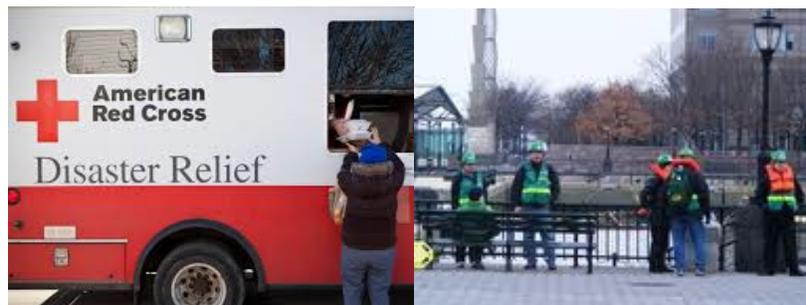
**“Government is not reason, it is not eloquence, it is force;
like fire, a troublesome servant and a fearful master.
Never for a moment should it be left to irresponsible action.”
George Washington**



Can any of these cross-jurisdiction, cross-functional, multi-agency “training exercises” become a tool for tyranny? You betChya!



Bottom Line: I may not fear Vigilant Guard, however, I too, am vigilant, as since the Patriot Act, it only takes one crazy, brazen SFB in the Department of Homeland Security to “*perceive an immediate threat to national security*” to then bypass the executive, judicial and legislative branches of our government.



“As nightfall does not come all at once, neither does oppression. In both instances, there is a twilight when everything remains seemingly unchanged. And it is in such

twilight that we all must be most aware of change in the air - however slight - lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness.”

Justice William O. Douglas



Stay aware, stay vigilant, after all **We The People** are the *last* line of defense against a government of tyranny.

“Today is the Tomorrow that you worried about Yesterday”

TNT

