Transportation and Homeland Security: National Preparedness and Response Capabilities

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This report is based on proceedings at a one-day conference and follow-on discussions by both government and private-sector experts held in Washington, D.C. in May 2006—an event hosted by the Intermodal Transportation Institute (ITI) at the University of Denver in a collaborative effort with fellow professionals at Louisiana State University. Supporting organizations were the Denver Council on Foreign Relations (DCFR) and the Institute on Globalization and Security (IGLOS) also at the University of Denver. All proceedings were on a non-attribution basis; what was said is part of this report, not who said what. We are grateful to Page McCarley, University of Denver, who served as conference rapporteur.

"Our people remain vulnerable…. The truth is we are not prepared. We are not supporting our first responders, and our approach to securing our nation is haphazard at best…. We have relied on a myth of homeland security—a myth written in rhetoric, [with] inadequate resources, and [by] a new bureaucracy—instead of relying on good old-fashioned American ingenuity, might and muscle…. Homeland Security is not simply about reorganizing existing bureaucracies. It is about having the right attitude, focus, policy and resources, and right now we are lacking in all four."

- Sen. Hillary Clinton in a speech on January 24, 2003 at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in Manhattan, N.Y.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Five main questions must be asked in order to reform the nation’s current transportation security system:

1. What is the role of government and each specific security agency both in a preventative and a responsive capacity?
2. What are the individual responsibilities of federal and state-and-local entities?
3. What reasonable expectations can citizens anticipate their government will meet in times of disaster?
4. How can communications, accountability, and cooperation be maintained by all stakeholders?
5. How can a flexible and scalable plan be created and adopted across the country—one that brings federal, state-and-local, and private-sector capabilities together in an integrated national effort?
2. A sound theoretical or conceptual understanding of the transportation and homeland security problem is essential. In this regard we need:
   • a theoretically sound model of identification and response to appropriate security vulnerabilities;
   • empirically based, scalable strategy for public and private-sector emergency prevention and preparedness;
   • evaluation of lessons from historical experience, current international models and local incident reports; and
   • assessment of cultural attitudes essential to supporting a government-based security and emergency response plan.

3. Below are practical considerations that warrant our attention:
   • defining from a modal and intermodal transportation perspective both private-sector and governmental responsibilities—specifying each agency’s capability, role, and reporting structures;
   • creating an ideal and realistic portrait of a top-down structure and the possibility of a national reorganization to provide better transportation and homeland security;
   • addressing the financial needs and funding mechanism for such a national plan incorporating private and public contributions;
   • articulating how federal and state-and-local decision makers can synchronize their requirements and resources to form an inter-modal transportation plan addressing issues of personal, logistics, and funding;
   • addressing issues of maintenance and long-term economic viability and sustainability of a comprehensive national strategy; and
   • conducting communications training among all levels of federal and state-and-local security, preparedness, and response agencies.

4. Particular attention needs to be given to securing the country’s transportation infrastructure. We need to understand that
   • the vulnerabilities of an intermodal transportation system are what matter—a focus on particular modes is insufficient;
   • technology is not a panacea—that it can only assist in a limited capacity;
   • container security can be breached in numerous ways—simply attaching a seal (electronic or otherwise) is insufficient.
   • liability concerns continue to plague private-sector cooperation and response;
   • more emphasis needs to be placed on routine tests of security systems; and
   • Auditing of existing procedures
4. Concerning national borders and border security, we need to ask:
   - How do weakened borders affect national security?
   - What is the specific threat from porous borders?

Addendum

We take note of initial conclusions from the DHS nationwide plan review:

For States and Urban Areas:

1. The majority of the Nation’s current emergency operations plans and planning processes cannot be characterize as fully adequate, feasible, or acceptable to manage catastrophic events as defined in the National Response Plan (NRP).
2. States and urban areas are not conducting adequate collaborative planning as a part of “steady state” preparedness.
3. Assumptions in Basic Plans do not adequately address catastrophic events
4. Basic Plans do not adequately address continuity of operations and continuity of government.
5. The most common deficiency among State and urban area Direction and Control Annexes is the absence of a clearly defended command structure.
6. Many State and urban areas need to improve systems and procedures for communications among all operational components.
7. All functional annexes did not adequately address special needs populations.
8. States should design a specific State agency that is responsible for providing oversight and ensuring accountability for including people with disabilities in the shelter operations process.
9. Timely warnings requiring emergency actions are not adequately disseminated to custodial institutions, appropriate government officials, and the public.
10. The ability to give the public accurate, timely, and useful information and instructions through the emergency period should be strengthened.
11. Significant weaknesses in evacuation planning are an area of profound concern.
12. Capabilities to manage reception and care for large number so evacuees are inadequate.
13. Capabilities to track patients under emergency or disaster conditions and license of out-of-State medical personnel are limited.
14. Resource management is the “Achilles heel” of emergency planning. Resource Management Annexes do not adequately describe in detail the means, organization, and process by which States and urban areas will find, obtain, allocate, track and distribute resources to meet operational needs.
15. Plans should clearly define resources requirements, conduct resource inventories, match available resources to requirements, and identify and resolve shortfalls.

For the Federal Government:

1. Planning products, processes, tools, and technologies should be developed to facilitate a common nationwide approach to catastrophic planning in accordance
with the National Preparedness Goal’s National Priority to Strengthen Planning and Citizen Preparedness Capabilities.
2. Planning modernization should be fully integrated with other key homeland security initiatives.
3. Clear guidance should be developed on how State and local governments plan for coordinated operations with Federal partners under the NRP.
4. Existing Federal technical assistance should be used to States and urban areas address the specific issues identified during the Nationwide Plan Review.
5. Critical tasks, target capabilities, and associated performance measures, such as those identifies in the National Preparedness Goal should serve as the common reference system for planning and the language for synchronization.
6. Detailed planning assumptions and planning magnitudes for catastrophic incidents should be defined, such as has been initiated through National Planning Scenarios.
7. Current preparedness data should be readily accessible to planners.
8. Regional planned capabilities, processes, and resources should be strengthened in accordance with the National Preparedness Goal’s National Priorities to Expand Regional Collaboration and Strengthen Planning and Citizen Preparedness Capabilities.
9. Collaboration between government and non-governmental entities should be strengthened at all levels, as outlines in the National Preparedness Goal’s National Priority to Expand Regional Collaboration.
10. The Federal Government should develop a consistent definition of the term “special needs.”
11. The Federal Government should provide guidance to States and local governments on incorporation of disability-related demographic analysis into emergency planning.
12. Federal, State, and local governments should work with the private sector to identify and coordinate effective means of transporting individuals with disabilities before, during, and after an emergency.
13. Improvements in public preparedness and emergency public information should be implemented in accordance with the National Preparedness Goal’s National Priority to Strengthen Planning and Citizen Preparedness Capabilities.
14. Federal, State, and local governments should take action to better integrate non-governmental resources to meet surge capacity.
15. The Federal Government should provide the leadership, doctrine, policies, guidance, standards, and resources necessary to build a shared national homeland security planning system.
16. Identification of desired technologies, tools, and architecture(s) for the national homeland security planning community should be included in the National Priority to Strengthen Planning and Citizen Preparedness Capabilities.
17. Comprehensive national guidance on the potential consequences associated with catastrophic risks and hazards should be developed to drive risk management and operational planning.
18. Development of focused training, education, and professional development programs for homeland security planners should be included in the National Priority to Strengthen Planning and Citizen Preparedness Capabilities.

19. Collaborative planning and planning excellence should be incentivized. Funding and projects should be linked to operational readiness through a specific task or capability in a plan or plan annex.

20. Federal, State, and local governments should increase the participation of people with disabilities and disability subject-matter experts in the development and execution of plans, training, and exercises.

21. The Federal Government should provide technical assistance to clarify the extent to which emergency communication, including public information associated with emergencies, must be in accessible formats for persons with disabilities. This assistance should address all aspects of communication, including, for example, televised and other types of emergency notification and instructions, shelter announcements, and applications and forms for government and private disaster benefits.

22. The status of the Nation’s plans should be a central focus of the annual report to the President on the Nation’s preparedness required by Homeland Security Presidential directive 8 (HSPD-8).

23. Emergency Operations Plans should be a focal point for resources allocation, accountability, and assessments of operational readiness.

24. Performance management frameworks to support the National Preparedness Goal should measure the ability to:
   - Integrate a multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency response based on the intersection of tasks and capabilities in the combines plans; and
   - Maintain operations in the face of disruptions of service, damage to the environment in which operations occur, or loss of critical resources.

**DISCUSSION**

While each state and local agency has its own security and response plan, currently no comprehensive national action plan exists that delineates state, local, and federal responsibilities in preventing terrorism and responding to emergency incidents, whether caused by terrorism or natural disaster. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Plan is only an inventory of issues that must be addressed and accounted for when creating such a plan.

A formal strategy must go even further than just delineating the responsibilities within and between governmental agencies and the private sector. It must take fully into account the implications of various disasters for the economy, national and state-and-local policy, and international relations—in incorporating all of these into tactical formulations. In the absence of an effective national plan and strategy, it appears that the sole preventative measure at the government’s disposal is merely to “shut down” the transportation mode affected until the private sector can bring it back safely into operation.
Shutting down transportation modes and terminals—aviation, rail, and seaports—disadvantages not only the transportation firms affected, but also the nation as a whole. The prevailing federal approach amounts to a vague and non-strategic mandate to “protect everything.” In not specifying operational missions within all governmental agencies and assuring effective communications at all federal and state-and-local levels, no one aspect of transportation, much less the country at large, can be secure. All of these considerations must be brought to the table. DHS must be held accountable and communications must be enhanced. At the same time, of course, Americans must be made aware of the very real limits of government capacity.

Officials from both the public and private sector readily agree that all levels of government need a framework, grounded in historical analysis and quantifiable data, from which to evaluate and improve the current state of the nation’s security system and plans for disaster prevention and response. As centers of intellectual inquiry, analysis and research, universities are suitable institutions that can contribute a unique set of skills essential to devising a truly comprehensive national strategy. In the past universities have sought training dollars, but they might have even greater impact were they to seek funding for strategy development and analytical modeling.

Governmental agencies, given their political and often legislatively defined narrow focus, may not be well suited to developing the kind of overarching strategy needed for effective planning. Universities can be extremely useful in constructing intellectual models of organizational responsibility frameworks, communications strategies, meta-analyses of historically informed best practices, probability statistics on reasonable threats, and factor analysis of effective response methods.

Indeed, emphasis should be placed on statistical, empirically based recommendations rather than on abstract and highly debatable commentary. While there are numerous think tanks working on issues of public policy and economy, the questions we have identified as essential to transportation and homeland security have not been addressed adequately. The interdisciplinary resources of universities and their independent position outside of government give them a unique, cost-effective capability to assist the public sector in focusing on the “right things” in development of national strategy, plans, and effective policy on transportation and homeland security.

**Transportation and the Department of Homeland Security**

Two tragic incidents in the last five years have severely challenged the notion that Americans are safe. The events that occurred on September 11, 2001 became the undisputed catalyst for America’s security reform. And three years later in 2004 the disjointed and negligent response from federal, state, and local officials to the catastrophic destruction of New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina reminded the country that our emergency response systems are at best only incrementally better than in 2001.
In March 2003, the Federal government undertook the largest governmental reorganization since 1941. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was created by merging 22 distinct agencies and bureaus and tasked with the singular mission of protecting the America’s homeland and ameliorating communication deficiencies. Originally DHS divided the department into one of four categories—Border and Transportation Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response, Science and Technology, and Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection.

Border and Transportation Security combined major border security and transportation operations under one umbrella. This umbrella department now includes U.S. customs, immigration, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the agriculture division of Animal and Plant Inspection Services, the Federal Protective Service, and the law-enforcement training and Justice Department arm of domestic preparedness. The Emergency Preparedness and Response Department incorporated the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Strategic National Stockpile and the National Disaster Medical System (HHS), The Nuclear Incident Response Team, Domestic Emergency Support Team, and the National Domestic Preparedness Office of the FBI. Similarly the Science and Technology Department brought together countermeasures programs, the environmental measurements laboratory, national BW Defense analysis center, and Plum Island animal Disease Center. The Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection Department was tasked with synthesizing information from the major intelligence agencies such as the CIA, FBI, and NSA in order to distill and respond to specific homeland-security threats. Other agencies brought in under the umbrella include the Federal Computer Incident Response Center, the National Communications System, the National Infrastructure Protection Center, and the Energy Department’s Security and Assurance Program.

More recent organization charts suggest a less hierarchical, flatter structure than originally proposed. DHS charts show the majority of departments reporting directly to the Secretary’s office, which raises serious question of how each department and thus the overall system can be monitored effectively with so wide a span of direct central control. It must be also noted that any published chart is vague at best, identifying the various sub-departments by name and reporting position.

The goal of the reorganization was to streamline the once disparate solo organizations into a more uniform structure that would encourage an interactive and coordinated, centrally directed response system. The only two departments that remained structurally intact were the Secret Service and the Coast Guard, which merely changed their reporting structure as one of the new Secretary of DHS’s direct reportees.

The goal in creating a unified homeland security agency was to merge the various security activities conducted by the Justice and Energy departments. Many endorsed the reorganization as a necessary step to minimize overlap and facilitate inter-agency communication. At the time, however, the nation’s security system as a whole was judged to be antiquated. Built from the ground up, each agency was gradually acquired additional tasks incrementally added over many years in response to the demands of the
day. While the creation of one umbrella department with a uniform reporting structure under a new White House cabinet position appears logical, many argue this supposed consolidation has only exacerbated the confusion of DHS’s central mission—to provide for greater homeland security. Many high-ranking officials, both past and present, describe the new agency as one in organizational disarray.

On the eve of stepping down from his position as the first Secretary of Homeland Security, Tom Ridge stated: “Nobody fully understands the complexity of our task: to build a department out of 22 agencies, operate it, reorganize it, and design and build networks and systems that will defend the nation in perpetuity.” While many of the critics of DHS agree there is extreme difficulty inherent in such a merger, they identify the lack of a truly integrated department as central to the dysfunction. As is traditionally true of virtually all organizations, prior to consolidation each agency had its own very unique culture.

Officials inside DHS, as well as Washington pundits, claim that the Department of Homeland Security is in fact simply an umbrella term for 22 separately operating agencies. They describe an insular mentality within each bureaucratic faction, with such functioning enabled by each having its own budget and set of priorities. The simple logistics of designing a mechanism for coordinated communication between agencies is still unaddressed, although true consolidation is central to unraveling problems associated with bureaucratic incongruities that stemmed from decades of decentralization.

Coordination, much less collaboration, is extraordinarily difficult. Insiders claim that the absence of detailed organizational charts identifying names and job titles makes it virtually impossible to find key employees at parallel levels in other departments to contact. One DHS person described relying on his collection of business cards of personnel within DHS as the sole means he used to construct an informal structural map of responsibility and points of contact within each organization.

One key factor in the structural dysfunction is the rate of personnel retention. Many leadership positions have been titled as “acting” from the organization’s inception due to high turnover. Thus, many express a prevailing and pervasive lack of certainty among administration officials and, by extension, within the entire organization. The issue of briefing and re-briefing every 18 months was raised as yet another element stalling the due diligence needed to create an action plan. Inherent in all these matters is a level of distrust that resides in many DHS agencies as well as among agency colleagues and coworkers.

The inability to formulate a unified governmental mission originated from unidentified individual agency objectives after the reorganization. Furthermore, without dismantling reinforcing influences, like fragmented appropriations and a limited or non-existent organizational structure, the same problems persist in new forms. Many pundits argue

that in fact vast amounts of time are still spent on facilitating interagency communication, which only creates a recurring, self-perpetuating vortex of handicapping factors inhibiting the establishment of a stable security infrastructure.

Without a solid core, DHS has long been criticized for lacking a global strategy and having an action plan focused only “on the agenda of the day.” Since 2001, the homeland security agencies have seen their budgets almost double. In the first year after 9/11 the domestic security budget increased 64%. Recent reports describe a “blank check” mentality still lingering from the months after 9/11 when all government resources were focused on securing the country from terrorism. Attention to the continued lack of a clearly understood national mission, however, may result from greater executive and legislative oversight in the tighter budgetary environment within which DHS and other agencies now find themselves.

Given current structural issues it is not surprising the current status of the federal government’s security preparedness and responsiveness planning coming out of DHS can best be summarized as “making a plan to make a plan.” In fact, the most glaring evidence of this can be seen in the “Nationwide Plan Review: Phase 2” released on June 16, 2006. As part of the congressionally mandated reporting process, the report “review[s] and assesses the status of catastrophic and evacuation planning in all states and 75 of the nation’s urban areas….The second phase involved a peer review, in which teams made up of state-and-local homeland security and emergency management officials visited 1,313 governmental units in various states and urban areas. Over the course of 62 business days, these reviews validated the self assessment [from Phase 1], determined requirements for future Federal planning assistance, and drew initial conclusions for strengthening plans and the planning processes at the Federal, state, and local levels of government for catastrophic events.” (Please see addendum 1 for the report’s conclusions.)

The report validates many of the criticisms attributed to DHS in the last five years by enumerating all of the current issues that need to be addressed. What is clear from this report is that no comprehensive action plan currently exists to delineate state, local, and federal responsibilities in preventing terrorism and responding to emergency incidents. The lack of a formal strategy goes even further than governmental agencies. One element missing is an analysis of how various disasters affect the economy, national policy, and international relations as well as an assessment of the way in which to incorporate these considerations into current tactical formulations. In fact, when a threat is identified, the sole preventative measure at the government’s disposal is to “shut down” the modality or modalities affected. As transport modes, like airplanes, trains, and ports are often targets, the report states that immobilization was not advantageous economically for the affected companies or the nation, and basically contradicted the fundamental nature of transportation. The prevailing theme, as it relates to the current strategy of federal protection agencies, was a vague and non-strategic mandate to “protect everything”.

not securing the fundamental principles of communication and targeted missions within all governmental agencies, as well as the nexus of local and state organizations, not one aspect of transportation, or the country at large, is totally secure.

Katrina and New Orleans: A Model

The catastrophic events that occurred on August 29, 2005 and the days, weeks, and months afterward when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans and lower-Mississippi communities serve as an excellent model for the current state of the nation’s disaster-response capabilities. It is widely agreed that the results of the overarching lack of organization and methodology in the federal, state and local response is clearly evidenced in the stories of rescue efforts. New Orleans was a city unprepared for the scale of natural assault it experienced. Emergency responders and local officials were unaware of pre-existing response plans. Politicians, rather than trained emergency agencies and personnel, were the decision makers in command of the situation and were responsible for communicating all the various emergency needs to federal agencies and local officials. Not only were elected officials inexperienced in handling the myriad of disaster relief issues, but also they were clearly motivated more by their positions in power struggles as well as by their prospects for re-election. Multi-jurisdictional responsiveness and inner-state support was often made doubly difficult due to the personal agendas of individuals in charge.

The overwhelming scale of the disaster was a major factor in the breakdown of a coordinated emergency response. Many acknowledged that the city of New Orleans was most likely equipped to respond to a certain level of emergency disaster; however, the reach and extent of the wreckage left by the hurricane occurring in such a short period of time made the “human factor” a central issue. The approximately 2,000 emergency workers found themselves torn between assisting their own families and reporting to aid stations or participating in the rescue efforts of others. Thus, an insufficient number of workers were often even more reduced. On a basic level, when desperately needed materials were found, often the individuals within a given purchasing organization who were in charge of account numbers and pay orders were unreachable, thus halting timely relief efforts. Furthermore, many of the victims’ needs were outside the realm of what the government was prepared to handle. A perfect example of this type of need was the issue of housing and transportation for household pets (dogs, cats, snakes, etc.). Many hurricane victims were unwilling to leave their homes without their beloved animals or arrived at shelters and rescue facilities with them in tow. This illustrates a complete lack of understanding of the limited rescue capabilities versus individuals’ sense of responsibility in a time of wide-scale crisis. Failure to take into account individual concerns for the welfare of their pets is also indicative of a lack of understanding, advance planning, and communication by officials.

The events of Katrina demonstrate the essential interplay among federal, state, and local officials that must occur before, during, and after any catastrophic incident. New Orleans stands as a “poster child” of the need for greater training, not just in emergency response activities, but also in communication and command systems. While complete prevention
is impossible in the case of a natural disaster, outcomes are altered significantly when coordinated communications of an informed and unified rescue effort are sent prior to (and during) the hurricane hitting land, continuing long after the storm has passed. This type of effort requires consistent and on-going professional relationships among all relevant government and private-sector entities—not something achieved on short notice, but rather the result of sustained efforts long prior to impending disasters, natural or otherwise.

**Overview of Infrastructure**

While the events of Katrina exposed the disjointedness of governmental systems, one element played a surprising role—transportation. Media coverage ran 24/7—round-the-clock—with images and stories of clogged highways, a Superdome initially underutilized (although also undersupplied and mismanaged) due to people unable to get there, and a general lack of transport for victims fleeing the city. It became evident how essential transportation is to any response plan. As was evidenced in the 2004 blackout in the northeast, any crippling of transportation can also have wide-ranging effects. Thus infrastructure security is a crucial element of any emergency management plan.

Infrastructure is classically defined as the structure and facilities on which a society depends for operation and mobilization. Infrastructure in governmental terms usually refers to bridges, highways, railroads, air travel, and waterways—modes of transportation that bind the country together. With the release of the 9/11 report in 2004, lawmakers called for more attention to be paid to infrastructure. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) was allotting close to 90% of its budget to airline security at the time. Congress and 9/11 commissioners called for much greater emphasis to be placed on rail security, which at that time received minimal funds in comparison to airline security measures.\(^3\) Progress on the federal level has since been slow. Many acknowledge that each transportation modality is aggressively implementing security procedures and, in fact, are fairly secure as single entities. The vulnerability stems from the intermodal nature of the American transportation system. In our view, the railroad industry is seen as a leader in providing transportation security. The railroads routinely conduct security drills and plan for the most unlikely attacks; however, as a singular cog in the transportation wheel they are limited in their emergency training capabilities without participation from federal and local emergency-response agencies. On June 19, 2006, The *Christian Science Monitor* wrote the following:

One industry that has broadly taken the initiative is railroads. Companies have drawn up their own emergency response plans and have even conducted war games using their own priorities list of crucial infrastructure. Yet, without federal leadership, states have been reluctant to supply National Guard troops for practice sessions and some key infrastructure goes lightly guarded, crimping preparedness, a senior

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railroad official says.

Reports of various transportation components having difficulty organizing a coordinated drill with federal, state, and local law-enforcement agencies point to a much greater problem than to any individual threat to the system as a whole. Transportation security is clearly threatened when one mode links up with another, such as container ships docking and unloading onto trucks or rail cars and when containers are transshipped to other modes such as trucks. Thus, it appears that an equally significant threat to the nation’s security as a whole occurs when one security organization interfaces with another.

In the wake of Katrina, trains filled with food, water, and supplies sat on the tracks outside the city untouched. Not only were there not enough available people to unload the cars, but the communication chain was so unclear that there was no way to let officials in charge know of available aid. Other reports describe empty Amtrak trains sitting on the track ready to take survivors to safer ground with minimal to no use. The dramatic under-utilization of these crucial services during a time of rampant panic and destruction further emphasizes the greatest weakness in our nation’s security and response systems—the absence of leadership, particularly in a time of crisis.

At the same time, however, the arrival of trains filled with needed supplies arriving in timely fashion just outside the city also illustrates how the railroad industry was able quite remarkably to re-route trains around damaged tracks, utilizing competitors’ tracks when needed, and thus respond effectively to any damage in a matter of hours after the hurricane hit. This model of intra- and inter-organization communications and cooperation that facilitated rapid response highlights practices within the railroad industry that warrant study and perhaps emulation by other transportation modes and across all federal, state, and local agencies.

Much like each mode of the nation’s transportation infrastructure, many of the various state-and-local security and response agencies claim to be addressing security issues within their jurisdiction; however, the debate continues over the definition of jurisdiction, or, more specifically, who is responsible for which activities. When both fiduciary and operational responsibilities are at stake, state, local and federal agencies claim some and disown other roles. It is the result of this impasse that was played out dramatically during Katrina. Without clearly understood definition and allocation of roles, funding sources, leadership, preventive measures, and emergency-response procedures, the system suffers from a lack of coordination and efficiency that potentially victimizes the public as a whole. This is a significant weakness in the U.S. security structure. For any improvements to be made to the outcomes of both making the homeland more secure and providing adequate emergency response to catastrophic events when they do occur, potential remedies warrant close examination and assessment.

**Leadership**

It appears that one of the reasons for these communications breakdowns stems from a broad ambiguity with regard to responsibility and leadership during a crisis. In fact, DHS
essentially articulates the lack of documented reporting procedures during response situations in their June 2006 report (see Appendix I). Number 3 of the Initial Conclusions from the DHS National Plan Review for the Federal level states: “Clear guidance should be developed on how State and local governments plan for coordinated operations with Federal partners under the NRP.” This item makes no claim as to who should assume control in specific situations; however, item number 15 on the same list states: “The Federal Government should provide the leadership, doctrine, policies, guidance, standards, and resources necessary to build a shared national homeland security planning system.”

The June 2006 DHS report clearly indicates that the federal government views itself more as a parent in the process of providing effective disaster response—supplying advice (and hopefully contributing to funding these recommendations) rather than providing direct assistance. There appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding between federal and state agencies on this matter. Such was evident in the FEMA debacle during the Katrina relief efforts, as Mississippi expected FEMA to provide much more assistance than actually was received. Many claimed that FEMA even failed to provide substantially helpful advice. The outcome was that neither federal nor state-and-local government agencies assumed true control of the situation.

These issues again reinforce the need for a direct, transparent identification of missions, roles and responsibilities across all domestic security agencies. Furthermore, a discussion regarding capabilities of each agency is sorely needed. There must be a clear understanding as to what each faction of the chain from federal to local is and is not equipped to handle and to what extent. These conversations are essential to developing a scalable response plan. Training and preparedness activities cannot be done sufficiently without a clearer articulation of these factors.

The Responsibility of the Citizen

While structural and communications issues were identified as a clear hindrance to achieving the ideal objective of an integrative homeland-defense system, the other influencing factor as yet unaddressed is the role of appropriate expectations and responsibility of individual citizens. In addition to the story of many New Orleans residents expecting their animals’ rescue to be prioritized equally to humans, there are stories of families staying in their homes when unassisted escape was possible, assuming “the government” eventually would rescue them. Once again, Katrina illustrates important elements contributing to the difficulty in effective planning. Misunderstanding by American citizens of both the form of probable emergency scenarios and the capability of the government to protect them is a key issue. Many described the current culture as one of a “false sense of security” with the blame falling on issues of public relations from both government officials and media. Reshaping public perception of security and the limits of federal protection should be a highly prioritized issue that requires substantial attention.
Insiders describe a “Spielberg mentality” as a factor in determining priorities and promulgating unreal expectations. The pervasive influence on the public discourse provided by Hollywood movies creates a mentality rich in such images of epic and apocalyptic scenarios as a globally destructive meteor shower and, as a result, tends to divert attention from better preparedness for the real threats that challenge us. These discrepancies between perception and reality result in misallocation resources—not expending them cost effectively in relation to public education or on security and emergency-management preparedness. Similarly, these fictional threats only contribute to the public’s complacency, rather then the very real fact that survival depends ultimately on individual ability and willingness to assume responsibility and take appropriate actions.

In order for public perception to change, the discourse must be a clear message encouraging personal emergency preparedness. In doing this, the distinction between vulnerabilities and threats finally become part of the public forum, not just left to the government. Unless government addresses the importance of personal responsibility—that citizens have to do their part, government agencies are doomed to fail. Indeed, government cannot assume exclusive responsibility for what is an unrealistic and impossible mission of protecting all citizens from all conceivable threats. The government and citizenry need to work together; only then can effective responses be crafted and effectively implemented.

The country’s leaders, both elected and appointed, must be held accountable for their leadership with respect to the population’s expectations for protection. Along with citizen culpability, a greater understanding of the realistic inevitabilities of another terrorist attack or natural disaster must enter the public discourse. If officials at all levels, most particularly politicians, engage in a public relations battle with the expectation of zero casualties in instances of catastrophe, that essentially unwinnable battle becomes the primary objective. By contrast, the reality of “acceptable losses” is part of the public consciousness in almost every other country except the United States. Changing this rhetoric must be incorporated as part of DHS’s overall plan. Realistic expectations are an essential part of the planning process.

**Preparedness vs. Emergency Response**

In many ways, the understanding of roles and responsibilities of citizens and of governmental and non-governmental agencies is integral to unraveling the barriers to achieving an integrated security and response matrix. While this fact is well acknowledged by DHS in its recent report and in quotes in the media, it appears that the delineation between preparedness and emergency-response activities still has not been set. In fact, educating the public about what to expect from local, state, and federal response agencies in addition to what not to expect would be an effective springboard for a national discussion. This step would force all levels of government to define clearly their own limitations and come to grips with their responsibilities as well.
This lack of common understanding clearly needs attention. There is need for more policy-oriented research on preparedness and personal responsibility. In this regard, private-sector cooperation is important to facilitating both preparedness and response efforts. While the DHS has gone to great lengths to incorporate the private sector in technology acquisition and planning for emergencies, there appears to be no effective intermediary or discernable communication conduit facilitating training and response efforts between public and private entities to the level that private industry does internally. In fact, the effectiveness of communications in times of catastrophe among competing rail-line companies, as mentioned above, is exactly what is called for on a grander, national scale involving all transportation modes.

**Assessing Threat and the Integration of the Private Sector**

One of the recent criticisms of DHS is that the department is unable to quantify and assess adequately the nation’s security threats and specify the locations of greatest vulnerability. With a majority of the nation’s infrastructure under private ownership, it has been difficult to prepare, prioritize, and allocate the limited resources available to address adequately many of the vulnerabilities that persist.

The DHS came under fire when it was publicized that their prioritized list of at-risk targets included “77,000 facilities, assets, and systems across the nation.”4 The list of sites included local farmer festivals and parades, ice cream parlors, and check cashing stores. In response to this criticism, DHS Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection Robert Stephan wrote: “Because today's terrorist targets are not necessarily tomorrow's targets, the database must be broad and inclusive. In a natural disaster, our ability to access data on this wide array of facilities can help us provide adequate assistance and response.”

While DHS has utilized private firms in creating security-related technology, it has not done enough to integrate the private sector within the process of threat assessment, prevention, and intelligence acquisition. The private sector sits in a unique position of independence that allows it to contribute innovatively to the overall security of the country. A partnership between government and the private sector is a requisite step to strengthening the country’s defenses. A more robust government-private sector dialogue must occur without fear of negative repercussions for private-sector firms engaged in this process.

**Transportation Security**

The transportation industry with its mostly privately owned railroads and shipping companies is a highly vulnerable target. Many within the industry have described a culture where there is no incentive to share intelligence and security information for fear that the government will impose restrictions, or worse—security regulations requiring

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unaffordable accommodations. Thus inter-organizational and governmental relationships are not made and communications are, as a result, decentralized and disconnected.

With the exception of the airline industry, transportation and infrastructure security considerations have suffered substantially in the creation of DHS and the reorganization of government and private-sector relations that entailed. The system as a whole, much like DHS itself, still reflects a singularly minded approach within each transportation mode. Greater intermodal integration has been elusive.

Efforts to connect both passenger and freight travel with other modes have proven to be an arduous process. Indeed, only a small percentage of airports have public transportation connections directly to terminals. Similarly, much of the freight travel by which the majority of American goods are distributed is disjointed. Many containers entering American ports must be trucked across the ground to be loaded on to the rails rather than rail and shipping yards being integrated. Although it remains highly vulnerable to terrorist threat, the nation’s transportation system likely will become increasingly intermodal as the most logical and economical direction for it to take.

The argument is that each mode can take fairly stringent measures to secure cargo during transport, but it is the open transit between modes that is more difficult to secure from terrorist threat. In theory the container or cargo is safe within the system and is only weakened as it passes from one system to another.

Past and present terrorist attacks, both at home and abroad, reinforce national transportation as a primary target for those that wish to do the most harm with minimal effort. Similarly, a natural disaster can cause catastrophic economic effects regionally and nationally when the infrastructure is debilitated.

Some could argue that the transportation system and infrastructure have suffered the most from the effects of the creation of DHS. In recent years TSA and DHS have been involved in paralyzing turf wars impacting many of the security decisions crucial to strengthening America’s transportation infrastructure. Furthermore, the office of intermodalism has been reduced to a total of just three people buried deeply within the reporting hierarchy. This de-emphasis is a clear sign of the reduced priority status of an extremely important aspect of not only our nation’s security but also its overall mobility. Several years after the reorganization there is still no clear overarching view of the entire transportation system. Without a broad framework that integrates all modes of transportation, there is no effective communications-and-response capability to deal effectively with either terrorist attack or catastrophe due to natural disaster.