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Report to Congressional Requesters

March 2000

COMBATING TERRORISM

Need to Eliminate Duplicate Federal Weapons of Mass Destruction Training

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Abbreviations

FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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Congressional Requesters

The bombings of the World Trade Center in New York City in 1993 and the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in Oklahoma City in 1995, along with the release of a nerve agent in the Tokyo, Japan, subway in 1995, have raised concerns about terrorism in the United States. Local emergency responders such as firefighters and hazardous materials, law enforcement, and emergency medical personnel will be the first to respond to terrorist incidents. Concerned that terrorists might use weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear devices—and that local first responders would not be prepared to effectively deal with incidents involving such weapons, in 1996 Congress authorized programs to provide these responders training in dealing with such incidents. In a prior report and testimony,[1] we raised concerns about the potential for duplicative weapons of mass destruction training. Because of these concerns, you asked us to determine (1) the principal federal organizations that provide weapons of mass destruction training to first responders, (2) whether the training is well coordinated among federal organizations, and (3) actions being taken to improve the federal government's role in weapons of mass destruction training.

Results in Brief

The Departments of Defense and Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are the principal federal organizations that provide weapons of mass destruction training to first responders. Defense provides this training through its Domestic Preparedness Program, which will be provided in the 120 largest U.S. cities by mid-2001. Justice provides training primarily through its Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program, which will be provided to individuals in 255 cities and counties.[2] Both programs were authorized and funded by Congress and specifically developed to provide training in cities and counties primarily to

[1] *Combating Terrorism: Opportunities to Improve Domestic Preparedness Program Focus and Efficiency* (GAO/NSIAD-99-3, Nov. 12, 1998) and *Combating Terrorism: Observations on the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Preparedness Program* (GAO/T-NSIAD-99-16, Oct. 2, 1998).

[2] Justice had not determined the completion date for this training.

individuals who would train others in their communities (train the trainer). Through fiscal year 1999, Defense had received about $67 million and Justice $10 million for their training programs. Defense had trained about 19,000 individuals and Justice had trained about 44,000 individuals. Justice also provides training through the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium.[3] In 1998, Congress directed that Justice use to the fullest extent possible the capabilities of the Consortium to achieve cost-effective weapons of mass destruction training. The members of this Consortium received about $24 million during fiscal years 1998-99 and trained about 3,000 individuals during fiscal year 1999. The Federal Emergency Management Agency provides weapons of mass destruction courses at its National Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute in Maryland. In addition, the Academy and Institute provide weapons of mass destruction course materials to local and state organizations for their use in training first responders. Several of these are train-the-trainer courses. Funding for the Agency's weapons of mass destruction training totaled about $3 million for fiscal years 1998-99. About 71,000 students participated in the Fire Academy's offerings from October 1, 1997, through September 30, 1999.

Federal training programs on weapons of mass destruction are not well coordinated, resulting in inefficiencies in the federal effort and concerns in the first responder communities. The Departments of Defense and Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are providing similar awareness courses as part of their train-the-trainer programs. Defense and Justice plan to deliver their programs to individuals in the same 120 cities, and Justice also plans to train individuals in 135 additional jurisdictions. Through September 1999, Defense had trained individuals in 67 cities, and through mid-November 1999 Justice had trained individuals in 95 cities and metropolitan areas. Training from both agencies' programs was provided to individuals in 16 common cities. State and local officials and representatives of various responder organizations expressed concerns about duplication and overlap among the two federal training programs, courses offered by the Consortium, and other courses such as hazardous

[3]Members of the Consortium are the Center for Domestic Preparedness, Fort McClellan, Alabama; the National Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology; the National Center for Bio-Medical Research and Training, Louisiana State University; the National Emergency Response and Rescue Training Center, Texas A&M University; and the National Exercise, Test, and Training Center, Nevada Test Site. The Consortium was formed in 1997 to take advantage of existing institutions for training first responders.

materials and other specialized training that first responders are required to complete. Some officials said that the number of federal organizations involved in weapons of mass destruction training creates confusion about which federal organization is in charge of that training. Officials were concerned that the Defense and Justice programs offered to cities and counties had bypassed the states' emergency management and training structures. As a result, some responders, such as state police, had been missed. And some officials were concerned that the Defense and Justice programs will not train responders in smaller communities. They pointed out the potential to reach responders in smaller communities through the use of state and local training organizations and the use of training tools such as video transmission of instructional materials to existing facilities at firehouses and National Guard armories. The responders' concerns are consistent with the conclusions reached by a forum of over 200 state and local responders in August 1998[4] and a June 1999 Justice report.[5] Common themes included the need for a single focal point for information about federal programs, a centrally coordinated and standardized national training program to ensure an effective and integrated response and to minimize redundancy in training programs, and the need to incorporate training related to terrorist incidents involving weapons of mass destruction into existing training delivery mechanisms for the emergency responder communities.

Efforts are under way to improve the federal government's role in weapons of mass destruction training, but more actions are needed to eliminate duplicative training and improve the efficiency of the Defense and Justice programs. Although Defense plans to transfer its Domestic Preparedness Program to Justice on October 1, 2000, and Justice was to provide Congress with a comprehensive plan for the transfer no later than December 15, 1999, that plan had not been issued as of March 1, 2000.[6] According to Justice officials, Justice will complete Domestic Preparedness training in the 120 cities to honor Defense's commitments to those cities. It also still plans to deliver its Metropolitan Firefighters program to individuals in

[4]Justice convened the forum in Washington, D.C., to discuss federal efforts and make recommendations to improve those efforts.

[5]*Responding to Incidents of Domestic Terrorism: Assessing the Needs of State and Local Jurisdictions*, Phase I Report, June 2, 1999.

[6]Justice officials said they were revising the plan in response to concerns raised by congressional staff. They also said that the revisions would not affect our description of the plan.

255 cities and counties. Thus, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses under both programs. Justice officials said that in the longer term, they will assess the need to continue the Domestic Preparedness Program beyond the 120 cities based on a number of factors, including comprehensive needs assessments to be completed by the states and inputs from the first responder communities. In response to requests from the first responder community, Justice has established the interagency National Domestic Preparedness Office. The Office, recently funded under the Consolidated Appropriation Act for Fiscal Year 2000, is just getting organized. According to its draft action plan, it will provide an interagency forum for coordinating federal weapons of mass destruction assistance to state and local emergency responders. The Office has identified an ambitious list of tasks directed at many of the training concerns expressed by first responders.

To improve the efficiency of federal programs, we are recommending that the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General eliminate duplicative training in the same metropolitan areas. We are also recommending that if the Department of Justice provides Domestic Preparedness Program training in more than the currently planned 120 cities, it integrate the program with the Metropolitan Firefighters Program to capitalize on the strengths of each program and eliminate duplication and overlap.

Background

Concerned that weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are increasingly available to terrorists, Congress passed the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996, commonly known as the Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Act.[7] The act designates the Department of Defense as the lead agency to enhance domestic preparedness for responding to and managing the consequences of terrorists' use of WMD. Under the act, Defense established the Domestic Preparedness Program to provide first responder training focused on terrorist incidents involving chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. Congress also passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996,[8] which authorizes the Attorney General, in consultation with the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to provide specialized training and equipment for enhancing the capabilities of metropolitan fire and

[7]National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1997 (P.L. 104-201, Sept. 23, 1996).

[8]Section 819 of P.L. 104-132, Apr. 24, 1996.

emergency service departments to respond to terrorist attacks. In response, Justice established the Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program.

The Conference Committee Report on Justice's fiscal year 1998 appropriation act directed Justice to use the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium to achieve its WMD training objectives. Specifically, the report directed the Attorney General to provide funding support to operations of the state and local training center for first responders at Fort McClellan, Alabama, and similar operations at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology.[9] The report also urged the use of existing institutions, including those at Texas A&M University and the Nevada Test Site. The conference committee report accompanying Justice's fiscal year 1999 appropriations act[10] directed Justice to use the Consortium to the fullest extent possible and specified that $24 million be specifically provided to its members. Congress directed the use of the Consortium to take advantage of existing facilities and resources and to maximize training accessibility by using multiple facilities.

Three Principal Federal Organizations Provide WMD Training to First Responders

Three principal federal organizations provide WMD training to first responders: the Departments of Defense and Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Defense provides training through its Domestic Preparedness Program, and Justice provides training primarily through its Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program. Both programs were specifically developed to train local first responders who would then instruct others in their local communities. Justice also uses the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium to provide WMD training to first responders. FEMA provides WMD courses at its National Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute in Maryland. The Academy and Institute also provide WMD course materials directly to individuals or to local and state organizations for their use in training first responders. Several of these are train-the-trainer courses. In addition, the Academy, Institute, and other federal organizations such as the Departments of Energy and Health and Human Services and the Environmental Protection Agency offer training that can assist first responders in dealing with WMD incidents.

[9]House Report 105–405, Nov. 13, 1997.

[10]House Report 105-825, Oct. 19, 1998.

Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program

Defense developed the Domestic Preparedness Program to build on the existing knowledge and capabilities of those who would first deal with a WMD incident locally: fire, law enforcement, hazardous materials, and medical personnel.[11] Defense planned to provide personnel in the 120 largest U.S. cities (based on city population) with training and expert advice regarding emergency responses to the use or threatened use of weapons of mass destruction or related materials.[12] Defense targeted cities for the training because it wanted to deal with a single government entity that could choose the most appropriate personnel to be trained and to receive training equipment.[13] Defense trains city personnel, who then provide similar instruction to their emergency responder communities.

The training is generally a week long and comprises six separate courses–emergency responder awareness, emergency responder operations, technician-hazardous materials, technician-emergency medical services, technician-hospital provider, and incident command. The awareness and operations courses, each 4-hour segments, generally train responders in how to recognize a WMD incident and how to protect themselves and their communities during such incidents. The technician courses vary in length from 8 to 16 hours and are primarily for individuals in those specialties. The incident command course, 8 hours in length, focuses on the management of an incident and includes an exercise during which participants role-play their responses. Figure 1 shows students in Louisville, Kentucky, taking part in the hazardous materials course of Defense's WMD training program.

[11]Because of its subject matter expertise, the Army's Soldier and Biological Chemical Command is the organization responsible for carrying out Defense's WMD training program.

[12]The 120 largest cities were based on the 1990 census revised in April 1995.

[13]As part of the program, each city can request $300,000 of equipment, which is lent by Defense.

Figure 1: Domestic Preparedness Program Training at Louisville, Kentucky, June 1999

Source: U.S. Army.

As of September 30, 1999, Defense had completed training in 67 cities and trained approximately 19,000 individuals. This includes only those individuals directly trained by Defense instructors. Table 1 provides the number of responders, by profession, that received Defense training.

Table 1: First Responders Trained Through Domestic Preparedness Program (from program's inception in fiscal year 1997 through fiscal year 1999)

Responder community	Number trained
Firefighter	5,100
Law enforcement	4,300
Emergency medical services[a]	1,600
Hospital provider	2,800
Military	850
Other[b]	4,350
Total	**19,000**

[a]Some emergency medical service participants are included with firefighters because of the way some cities reported their data.

[b]Participants from organizations such as public works, mass transit authorities, and airport fire and rescue services.

Source: Defense.

Total funding for the program during fiscal years 1997-99 was $66.9 million.[14] Funding for fiscal year 2000 is $12.6 million.

Justice's Training Programs

Justice provides WMD training to first responders primarily through its Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program but also uses the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium to provide such training. Justice, with assistance from FEMA's National Fire Academy, designed the metropolitan program to prepare first responders for terrorist incidents involving WMD. Justice designed the program to be presented in the largest 120 metropolitan municipalities, which includes cities and counties. In September 1999, Justice increased the number of jurisdictions targeted for the program from 120 to 255. According to Justice officials, the additions were to make the program more responsive to the needs of local responders by providing training to the 120 cities included in Defense's program as well as each state capital and/or the largest city in each state previously excluded from both Justice's and Defense's training programs. Justice either trains-the-trainer or directly trains fire, emergency medical services, and hazardous materials personnel in local communities. Justice

[14]Includes planning visits, training exercises, and equipment loans in addition to the week's training.

received $5 million in each year of fiscal years 1998 and 1999 to carry out the training segment of its program. For fiscal year 2000, Congress appropriated $8 million to Justice for training firefighters, emergency services personnel, and state and local law enforcement personnel. The fiscal year 2000 appropriation also provided $2 million for Justice to work with Defense in developing distance learning instructional tools such as interactive computer software and video transmission of WMD-related instructional materials.

The training lasts 16 hours and comprises five modules: understanding and recognizing terrorism, implementing self-protective measures, scene security, tactical considerations, and incident command overview. The overall objective of the course is to enable the participants to recognize the circumstances that indicate a potential terrorist act and to take precautionary measures. Through mid-November 1999, 44,000 participants in 95 cities and counties had received the training. This total includes those trained directly by Justice's instructors and the students later trained by the instructors.

The Consortium offers a variety of WMD courses to first responders within certain specialties, as shown in table 2.

Table 2: Consortium Training Courses Provided to First Responders

Consortium member	WMD specialty	Total trained in fiscal year 1999[a]	Courses	Course duration (days)
Fort McClellan, Ala.	Chemical explosive agents	1,498	First responder[b]	4
			Hazardous materials technician	3
			Incident command	3
New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology	Bombs and explosive devices	396	Explosive/incendiary[c]	3
Texas A&M University	Emergency medical services	1,013	Emergency medical service operations and planning[c]	3
			Tactical emergency medical services[c]	5
			WMD incident management[c]	5
			Threat assessment[c]	3
Nevada Test Site	Radiological agents	40	Responder operations[c]	4
			Radiological/nuclear agents[c]	3
			WMD incident operations[c]	3
Louisiana State University	Law enforcement/ biological events	64	Emergency response to terrorism/basic concepts[c,d]	2
			Emergency response to domestic biological events	[e]

[a]As of Sept. 14, 1999.

[b]Course is being discontinued.

[c]Courses were being piloted.

[d]Course is an adaptation of the Metropolitan Firefighters course for law enforcement personnel.

[e]Course is under development as a 2 ½-day course.

Source: Justice.

Figure 2 shows law enforcement and hazardous materials personnel and firefighters recovering victims of a terrorist incident during a training exercise at Texas A&M University's fire protection training facility.

Figure 2: Recovering Casualties From a Terrorist Incident Scene During a Training Exercise

Source: Texas Engineering Extension Service/Fire Protection Training Division, Texas A&M University.

The Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan received $2 million and $8 million in fiscal years 1998 and 1999, respectively, as part of the Justice appropriations and is budgeted to receive $13 million in fiscal year 2000. The other four members of the Consortium received a total of $2 million in fiscal year 1998 and $12 million in fiscal year 1999 and are budgeted to receive $14 million in fiscal year 2000 to develop and carry out WMD training.

FEMA's Training Programs

FEMA provides WMD training to first responders through its National Fire Academy and its Emergency Management Institute. These organizations offer training at their combined residence campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and provide course materials to individuals for self-study or to state and local training organizations for their use. In addition, they offer courses that were not developed specifically for dealing with WMD incidents but would assist first responders with those incidents.

The Fire Academy offers six courses to prepare first responders to manage the consequences of a terrorist WMD incident. It provides the training at its campus and also provides training materials for use by individuals and state and local training organizations. One course, its 6-day incident management course, is offered on campus and to state and local training organizations for their use. The other five courses are offered off campus using Academy-developed materials. These courses train individuals in emergency response to terrorism through (1) a self-paced, self-study course; (2) a basic concepts course, the same 16-hour course offered by Justice in its Metropolitan Firefighters program;[15] (3) a 2-day more advanced course for the first on-scene supervisor; (4) a 2-day more advanced course for the first on-scene emergency medical services personnel; and (5) a 2-day more advanced course for the first on-scene hazardous materials personnel. Many of these are train-the-trainer courses. About 71,000 students have participated in the Fire Academy's offerings from October 1, 1997, through September 30, 1999. This includes students trained by Academy instructors and by student instructors.

The Emergency Management Institute also offers several courses related to the use of WMD. It offers a 5-day course, integrated emergency management consequences of terrorism, on campus. Off campus, it offers a 1-day course, senior officials workshop on terrorism, and a series of courses involving specific WMD scenarios, such as an anthrax incident, to aid senior officials to respond to and manage a WMD event.

Figure 3 shows firefighters in Minneapolis, Minnesota decontaminating members of the city's bomb squad during a training exercise.

[15]In a 1997 statement of understanding, Justice and FEMA agreed that Justice would concentrate its training on responders in the 120 largest metropolitan areas while FEMA would make its training available throughout the United States.

Figure 3: Firefighters Decontaminating Bomb Squad Members During a WMD Exercise in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Source: Sheriff's Office, Hennepin County, Minnesota.

Both organizations also offer courses on and off campus that are not specifically WMD related but that can help first responders deal with WMD incidents. For example, the Institute has a 5½-day radiological emergency response operations course that provides training on response and management of radiological incidents.

Funding for FEMA's first responder training totaled $4 million in fiscal year 1998 and $3.6 million in fiscal year 1999 and is projected at about $6.4 million in fiscal year 2000. Included are small, antiterrorism training grants that FEMA makes available to the states, either directly or through its Fire Academy. FEMA's direct grants totaled about $1.2 million in fiscal years 1998 and 1999, or about $23,000 per state. The states can use these grants for a variety of purposes. For example, officials we met with in North Carolina and Virginia said that they have used FEMA grant money to help fund training in their community college and fire academy systems. The Academy's grants totaled about $2 million in fiscal year 1998 and $4 million in fiscal year 1999 and are budgeted for $4 million for fiscal year 2000. The states have to apply for the grants and can use the funds to pay for instructor travel, training equipment, and the use of facilities.

Other Federal Agencies Offer Training That Can Assist First Responders

Other federal agencies offer courses that are not specifically directed at responding to WMD incidents but can provide skills and knowledge that would be useful to first responders in those incidents. Many of these courses relate to the agencies' basic functions. For example, the Environmental Protection Agency offers several courses in how to deal with incidents involving hazardous materials. Also, the Department of Energy offers several courses aimed at handling the consequences of radiation incidents. Moreover, Health and Human Services' National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health offers training to the health community in areas such as hazardous materials.[16]

Federal Programs Are Not Well Coordinated

Federal training programs are not well coordinated, resulting in inefficiencies in the federal effort and concerns in the first responder communities. For example, Defense and Justice courses have been offered in some of the same communities around the country, while many other large communities have not yet received training. Also, the 16-hour course presented by Justice to local jurisdictions is also offered by the National Fire Academy to state and local training facilities throughout the country. State and local officials with whom we met expressed their concerns over the duplication and overlap among the federal WMD training programs. Some also expressed confusion about which federal organization is in charge of WMD training. Some of the concerns have been previously expressed in first responder forums and studies.

Overlap in Federal Courses

According to Defense and Justice officials, at the inception of Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program and Justice's Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program, the course content and locations to be visited were not coordinated. Both programs were established under specific legislation aimed at increasing first responders' abilities to recognize and respond to WMD incidents. FEMA also responded to perceived needs in the first responder communities when its Fire Academy and Emergency Management Institute began offering courses similar to those offered by Defense and Justice. While these training efforts

[16]The fiscal year 1999 Departments of Labor and Health and Human Services appropriation act provided funding to renovate and modernize the Nobel Army Hospital at Fort McClellan for the purpose of providing training to health responders to bioterrorism (Section 101 (f) of Division A, P.L. 105-277, Oct. 21,1998).

have helped fill a void and should better prepare first responders to deal with possible WMD incidents, the lack of coordination of individual federal efforts has led to overlapping courses being offered to some of the same communities.

Defense's and Justice's primary training programs represent the most obvious example of training overlap, both in terms of locations visited and course content. Of the 67 cities that received Defense training and 95 metropolitan areas that received Justice training, 16 cities had received training from both through November 1999, and other large cities such as Richmond, Virginia, and Dayton, Ohio, had not yet received training. Eventually, Defense and Justice plan to visit the same 120 cities, and Justice also plans to visit 135 additional jurisdictions. Both programs are primarily for first responders in those cities and metropolitan areas that would be expected to train others in their communities. (App. I identifies the 120 cities that both Defense and Justice plan to visit, and app. II identifies the additional 135 jurisdictions Justice plans to visit.) In addition, both courses have some similar objectives. For example, Defense's awareness and operations courses and Justice's program make responders aware of (1) the terrorist threat, (2) ways to identify a WMD incident, (3) personal protective measures to be taken, and (4) scene control and incident management measures. These are the same objectives of the National Fire Academy's basic concepts course that is also available to responders and state and local training facilities throughout the country.

Training offered by Consortium members also overlaps with the Defense, Justice, and FEMA courses. For example, the Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan, Alabama, offers a 4-day responder training course that is designed to provide basic instruction to first responders on how to respond to, and operate in, a WMD environment.[17] The course introduces chemical, biological, and radiological threats and provides hands-on familiarization training with specialized protective clothing and equipment. This is similar to the instruction offered by the Domestic Preparedness Program, the Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program, and FEMA's basics concepts course. However, because of the Center's location and facilities,[18] its training incorporates the

[17]According to Justice, this course is being discontinued.

[18]The Center occupies facilities that were part of the U.S. Army Chemical School before the school was relocated.

use of actual chemical agents that cannot be included in the other programs.

State and Local Officials' Concerns

Many state and local officials and representatives of various responder organizations that we met with expressed concerns about duplication and overlap among the federal WMD training programs and other training that first responders are required to complete. Some cited duplication in the Defense and Justice programs and specifically cited the awareness portion of the two programs as being the most duplicative. Other officials commented that the courses offered by Justice's Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan had the same basic content as the Defense and Justice courses. Also, other officials noted that the hazardous materials and incident command courses many responders are already required to take as part of the specialized training in their fields contain much of the same material presented in Defense's and Justice's primary training programs. Some officials we met with did not believe that duplication was a problem. For example, one official commented that the more sources for training the better.

State and local officials expressed other concerns about the federal WMD training effort. For example, some officials were concerned that Defense and Justice are not training responders in smaller communities. While acknowledging that the training is projected to cover jurisdictions where the majority of the U.S. population lives, the officials pointed out that those jurisdictions cover only a small portion of the land area. Considering factors such as the extensive presence of hazardous materials throughout the United States, they believed that threats in smaller and rural areas could not be discounted. The officials pointed out the potential for WMD training to reach emergency responders in smaller cities and rural areas through the use of distance-learning techniques such as video transmissions of instructional materials and interactive computer compact disks at existing facilities such as firehouses and National Guard armories. Justice has received $2 million to work with Defense in developing distance-learning instructional tools such as interactive computer software and video transmission of WMD-related instructional materials.

Officials were also concerned that the Defense and Justice training programs offered to cities and metropolitan areas had bypassed the states' emergency management and training structures. As a result, some responders, such as state police, had been missed. According to Justice, Congress did not provide funds prior to fiscal year 2000 to develop training

for state police. According to Defense, the directors of emergency management, within the states that have received Defense's training, have received instructional materials that can be disseminated throughout their statewide emergency management structures.

Some officials said the closeness of neighboring cities was not considered when training was scheduled. For example, even though Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota, work closely together and would do so in the event of a major incident, St. Paul received its Domestic Preparedness Program training about 6 months after Minneapolis received its training. An official said that scheduling both cities for training at the same time would have made more sense, since the cities are only separated by the Mississippi River. The official added that, since those were the only cities in Minnesota to receive Domestic Preparedness training, combining the training could have allowed Defense to train another city in Minnesota. According to Defense, officials from the two cities were offered the opportunity to train together but opted to train separately. Defense said such joint training has occurred and cited the Hampton Roads, Virginia, area, where the cities decided that it would be most effective for Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Newport News to train together during a 2-week period.

Some officials said that the number of federal organizations involved in WMD training creates confusion about which organization is in charge of WMD training at the federal level. Since several agencies offer WMD-related training and other assistance, it was unclear to local responders who they should approach for that training.

Many officials said that training in dealing with a WMD incident should be incorporated into regular training programs for first responders (for example, fire-fighting courses for firefighters). This would make the training part of the responders' certification process, which would help ensure the continuation of WMD training when federal programs end.[19] Also, according to the individuals, the time taken from their regular duties would be lessened if WMD training were part of the responders' normal training requirements because all training could be better coordinated and better take into account the needs of the specific responders. Additionally, some believed the overall training burden would be lessened if the WMD

[19]According to Defense's schedule, all 120 cities will have received the Domestic Preparedness Program training by mid-2001. Justice has not projected a completion date for its Metropolitan Firefighters Program training.

training was incorporated into the hazardous materials and incident command training responders already receive. Several commented about the training burden already placed on first responders. Responders already must meet extensive training requirements that limit their availability for their duties. This is a particularly acute problem for volunteer firefighters whose availability is much more limited than that of full-time firefighters.

Some state and local officials we spoke with believed that the federal government has a continuing role in training. They cited the need to (1) establish WMD training goals and national training standards for each first responder community to ensure consistency in training; (2) research and disseminate information on new equipment, technologies, and changing threats; (3) develop sophisticated tabletop exercises and scenarios based on identified local threats; and (4) funnel federal funds to state and local organizations for them to provide WMD training to first responders.

Prior Forums and Studies Have Surfaced Similar Concerns

Some of the concerns and suggestions expressed by officials we interviewed are similar to those previously identified in forums and studies. Problems with federal efforts to train first responders began to surface during the latter half of the 1990s, when several needs assessments and studies were conducted to determine how best to prepare the nation's first responders to manage the response to and consequences of a terrorist attack involving WMD. Common themes included the need for a single focal point for information about federal programs, a centrally coordinated and standardized national training program, and the need to incorporate training related to terrorist incidents involving WMD into the existing training delivery mechanisms for the emergency responder communities.

In August 1998, the State and Local Domestic Stakeholders Forum met at the request of the Attorney General to identify the needs of emergency responders, and to recommend ways to structure a cooperative approach for first responders in dealing with acts of terrorism involving WMD. The forum, which consisted of more than 200 state and local responders and emergency response planners, recommended, among other things, that first responder WMD training be improved by (1) developing a single, integrated federal training program based on responders' needs assessments and using existing training delivery mechanism when available; (2) ensuring sustained training and exercises using periodically updated material; (3) establishing a single-source clearinghouse to

disseminate information on new technologies and response techniques; and (4) reducing redundancy in and prioritizing training.

In 1998, Justice undertook a congressionally directed comprehensive assessment of the needs of state and local emergency response agencies to handle incidents of domestic terrorism involving chemical and biological agents; radiological, nuclear, and explosive devices; and other weapons of mass destruction.[20] The assessment was to frame future federal training efforts. Justice reported on its assessment to Congress in June 1999, acknowledging, among other things, (1) the lack of a centrally coordinated and standardized national WMD program to ensure an effective, integrated response and to minimize redundancy in training; (2) the need for a single source of information on federal training related to WMD; (3) the redundancy among the various WMD courses provided to first responders; and (4) the advantages of using existing methods for delivering WMD training to first responders.[21]

In a November 1998 report on Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program, we noted the program had increased cities' awareness of potential chemical or biological terrorist incidents and should better prepare them to deal with such incidents.[22] However, we also stated that the program could have been better designed and implemented. For example, we noted that by dealing directly with cities, Defense did not build upon the states' existing emergency management and training structures. Had it done so, Defense could have consolidated training to cover more jurisdictions in fewer locations than presently planned, at less cost. We also noted that no threat and risk assessments were done to help determine cities' requirements or needs or to establish a roadmap or defined end state of preparedness. We recommended actions to improve the program, such as using existing state and local emergency management response systems or arrangements to select locations and training structures to deliver courses and consider the geographical proximity of program cities. We also recommended a review of the growing number of WMD training programs to ensure that agencies' separate efforts take advantage of existing state

[20]House Report 105-636, July 20, 1998.

[21]*Responding to Incidents of Domestic Terrorism: Assessing the Needs of State and Local Jurisdictions*, June 2, 1999.

[22]*Combating Terrorism: Opportunities to Improve Domestic Preparedness Program Focus and Efficiency* (GAO/NSIAD-99-3, Nov. 12,1998).

and local emergency management systems and are coordinated, unduplicated, and focused toward achieving a clearly defined end state.

According to Defense officials, based upon feedback from participants, key improvements have been made to the Domestic Preparedness Program. For example, representatives from all levels of the state, county, and local emergency management structures are now fully integrated into the program. This allows the program to leverage existing emergency management structures and experiences. Also, the instructional materials from the program are sent to the directors of emergency management in each state trained under the program for them to disseminate throughout their emergency management structure.

Efforts Are Under Way to Improve Coordination, but More Actions Are Needed

Federal agencies recognize that they have problems in their programs for training first responders and have initiatives under way that could lead to improvements in the training they provide. The Nunn-Lugar-Domenici Act, which directed Defense to establish the Domestic Preparedness Program, also authorized its transfer to another agency, like Justice. Justice plans to replace Defense on October 1, 2000, as the lead agency for the program and will be responsible for its program and the Defense program. Concerned about possible duplication in the training and the inefficient use of limited resources, the Conference Committee Report on Justice's fiscal year 2000 appropriation act directed Justice to provide, no later than December 15, 1999, a comprehensive plan for integrating Defense's program into ongoing Justice and other federal agency programs in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.[23]

However, as of March 1, 2000, Justice's plan for the transfer had not been issued.[24] Justice officials discussed their draft plan with us and let us review the plan. According to the officials, Justice will complete the Domestic Preparedness training in the 120 cities to honor Defense's commitments to those cities. Justice also still plans to deliver its Metropolitan Firefighters program to individuals in 255 cities and counties. Thus, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses

[23]House Report 106-479, Nov. 18, 1999.

[24]Justice officials said they were revising the plan in response to concerns raised by staff of the Appropriations Committees. They also said that the revisions would not affect our discussion of the plan.

under both programs. In the longer term, according to Justice officials, they will assess the need to continue the Domestic Preparedness Program beyond the 120 cities based on a number of factors, including comprehensive needs assessments to be completed by the states and inputs from the first responder communities.

In response to requests from the first responder community for a single federal focal point, Justice has established the interagency National Domestic Preparedness Office. The Office, which was recently funded in the Consolidated Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2000, is just getting organized.[25] Located within the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office is to be staffed with representatives of the Departments of Justice, Defense, Energy, and Health and Human Services; the Environmental Protection Agency; the Federal Emergency Management Agency; and state and local responder organizations that possess recognized skills and experiences. It is to coordinate and serve as an information clearinghouse for federal programs devoted to supporting state and local emergency responder communities in the area of WMD-related domestic preparedness planning, training, exercises, and equipment research and development.

According to the Preparedness Office's draft action plan, the Office will function as an interagency forum to coordinate federal policy and program assistance for state and local emergency responders. For instance, the Office will assess federal training programs to eliminate duplication and ensure that the training adheres to minimum national standards. However, the Office will not have veto power over any agency's programs. According to the plan, the Office will first focus on the following tasks:

- Identify existing needs assessment tools for finding gaps or duplication in training and coordinate and facilitate the consolidation of existing tools or the development of any necessary new tools by the appropriate agency.
- Catalogue all federal domestic preparedness training in the "Compendium of Weapons of Mass Destruction Courses"; with the assistance of state and local representatives, identify shortfalls in existing federal training; and work with the federal interagency community to identify the most appropriate agency to develop curriculums to eliminate shortfalls.

[25]House Report 106-479, Nov. 18, 1999.

- Verify that federal domestic preparedness training initiatives meet the applicable standards established through the National Fire Protection Association, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and other pertinent regulatory entities.
- Identify existing training delivery systems and coordinate among federal departments and agencies the development and implementation of additional systems, such as video presentations and other distance training technologies, that state and local jurisdictions can use.
- Coordinate the development of sustainment WMD training for emergency responders, including the means to fully integrate the training with existing entry core curriculums and with certification and recertification processes of, for example, existing local fire and police academies, medical schools, and other emergency responder training facilities.
- Facilitate the incorporation of lessons learned into appropriate training curriculums.

The Attorney General is to provide oversight of the Office's activities as chair of the Domestic Preparedness Leadership Group, a cabinet-level group that will be a forum for strategic guidance and the resolution of policy issues. The Group will comprise the Secretaries of Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services; the Directors of the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; and the National Security Council's Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism. According to the draft plan, the Group will resolve policy issues that may arise and provide strategic guidance consistent with each agency's mission.

Conclusions

According to Justice officials, Justice will complete the Domestic Preparedness Program in the 120 cities to honor Defense's commitments to those cities. It also still plans to deliver its Metropolitan Firefighters Program to individuals in 255 cities and counties. Thus, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses under both programs, which results in the inefficient use of limited resources. In the longer term, according to Justice officials, they will assess the need to extend the Domestic Preparedness Program to more than the 120 cities planned. If Justice continues the program without integrating it with the firefighters program, this inefficient use of limited resources would continue.

Recommendations

To improve the efficiency of federal training programs on weapons of mass destruction, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General eliminate duplicative training to the same metropolitan areas. We also recommend that if the Department of Justice extends the Domestic Preparedness Program to more than the currently planned 120 cities, it integrate the program with the Metropolitan Firefighters Program to capitalize on the strengths of each program and eliminate duplication and overlap.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to Defense, Justice, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency for their review and comment. Defense generally agreed with the report. Justice did not agree with our finding that the programs were duplicative and our recommendation that the duplication be eliminated. However, Justice stated that, if the Domestic Preparedness Program is provided to more than the original 120 cities, it will be evaluated, modified as necessary based on input from other federal agencies and the state and local emergency response community, and fully integrated with the Metropolitan Firefighters Program. The Federal Emergency Management Agency said that it had no significant comments on our draft report. Comments by Defense, Justice, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency are included as appendixes IV, V, and VI, respectively. In addition, we have incorporated technical comments provided by these organizations, as appropriate.

Defense stated that our draft report reiterated many of the same concerns included in our November 1998 report on the Domestic Preparedness Program and did not consider the positive changes that had been made since then. Defense also cited specific examples of improvements. Our report includes examples of program improvements that Defense has made since 1998. For example, we noted that representatives from all levels of the state, county, and local emergency management structures are now fully integrated into the program. However, program participants that we contacted during the current review cited some of the same concerns that were raised during our prior work in 1998. Thus, we believe Defense and Justice should take additional steps to improve coordination of their training programs and eliminate inefficiencies.

Justice did not agree that its training is similar to Defense's training and therefore did not agree with our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General eliminate duplicative training to the

same metropolitan jurisdictions. Justice said that it provides a 16-hour awareness course for fire and emergency medical services personnel, while Defense provides a 4-hour nondiscipline-specific, general awareness course under its program. Additionally, it said that local jurisdictions could choose not to participate in the Justice program, if they preferred to receive only Defense's training. Our analysis shows that Defense's 4-hour awareness and 4-hour operations courses have objectives similar to those of Justice's awareness course for fire and emergency medical services personnel. Both programs have the objective of training first responders, who would be expected to train other responders in their communities. Moreover, some state and local officials specifically cited the awareness portion of the two programs as being duplicative. While jurisdictions and individuals can choose not to participate in the Justice program, we believe that weapons of mass destruction awareness training could be more efficiently provided to trainers in a city or metropolitan area as part of a single, integrated, and comprehensive program rather than through separate programs. This would comply with the approach recommended by the State and Local Domestic Stakeholders Forum held in August 1998. Such a federal program could train instructors, who could tailor the material to the needs of specific local audiences.

Defense and Justice also provided comments on the report's discussion of the draft transition plan to transfer Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program to Justice. Defense noted that it has been working with Justice for the past year to develop a transition plan for the Program and that the transfer, combined with the development of the National Domestic Preparedness Office within Justice, will make important strides in eliminating duplication that we believe exists among federal training programs. Justice said that our comments regarding the plan were accurate, but not comprehensive, and gave the impression that Justice is making no effort to integrate the Domestic Preparedness Program into its existing programs or to improve the program. Justice further noted that the draft plan clearly identifies Justice's plan to integrate training. However, on the basis of our review of the draft plan, we noted that Justice planned to continue to offer both the Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program training as well as the Domestic Preparedness Program training until the 120 cities originally scheduled for Defense's program have completed the training. As a result, notwithstanding other improvements in the draft transition plan, we believe our recommendation that the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General eliminate duplicative training to the same metropolitan areas is still valid.

Scope and Methodology

To determine the principal federal organizations that provide training to first responders that would deal with incidents involving weapons of mass destruction, we used our prior reports and reviewed legislation that formed the basis for recent efforts to train emergency responders, including the Defense Against Weapons of Mass Destruction Act of 1996 and the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996. In addition, we interviewed officials from the Departments of Justice, Defense, Energy, Treasury, Veterans' Affairs, and Health and Human Services as well as the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Environmental Protection Agency.

To assess the adequacy of the coordination of federal WMD training, we interviewed officials in the federal agencies responsible for providing such training to first responders. In addition, we analyzed information they provided concerning the scope of their training programs, the material and topics covered in their courses, the cities in which training was provided, and the responder communities they targeted for training. Moreover, we interviewed various responders, including firefighters and law enforcement, hazardous material, and emergency medical personnel at the state, county, and city levels in the states of Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, and Virginia. Finally, we talked with national organizations for responders. See appendix III for a detailed list of the locations we visited.

To identify actions the federal government could take to improve its provision of WMD training, we interviewed responders who had attended both the Department of Justice's Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program and the Department of Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program. We asked for their views on the training and on the qualifications training normally required by their responder communities. As mentioned above, we also interviewed representatives of the various emergency responder communities at the state, county, and city levels and national organizations for the responder communities. Moreover, we reviewed various studies and reports pertaining to first responders' views on federal training efforts.

Our review was conducted from March through December 1999 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from its issue date. At that time, we will send copies of this report to other appropriate congressional committees; the Honorable William Cohen, Secretary of Defense; the Honorable Janet Reno, Attorney General; and the Honorable James Lee Witt, Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency. We will also make copies available to other interested parties upon request.

If you have any questions about this report, please call Robert Pelletier on (202) 512-4032. Key contributors to this report were Tim Stone, Ronald Leporati, and W. Bennett Quade.

Norman J. Rabkin
Director, National Security
Preparedness

List of Requesters

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
The Honorable Robert Byrd
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate

The Honorable Christopher S. Bond
Chairman
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on VA, HUD,
and Independent Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Unites States Senate

The Honorable Ike Skelton
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Honorable Christopher Shays
Chairman, Subcommittee on National
Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations
Committee on Government Reform
House of Representatives

Cities Selected for Training Provided by the Departments of Defense and Justice

Akron, Ohio	Detroit, Mich.	Los Angeles, Calif.	Riverside, Calif.
Albuquerque, N.Mex.	El Paso, Tex.	Louisville, Ky.	Rochester, N.Y.
Amarillo, Tex.	Fort Wayne, Ind.	Lubbock, Tex.	Sacramento, Calif.
Anaheim, Calif.	Fort Worth, Tex.	Madison, Wis.	Salt Lake City, Utah
Anchorage, Alaska	Fremont, Calif.	Memphis, Tenn.	San Antonio, Tex.
Arlington, Tex.	Fresno, Calif.	Mesa, Ariz.	San Bernardino, Calif.
Arlington, Va.[a]	Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.	Metairie, La.[a]	San Diego, Calif.
Atlanta, Ga.	Garland, Tex.	Miami, Fla.	San Francisco, Calif.
Aurora, Colo.	Glendale, Ariz.	Milwaukee, Wis.	San Jose, Calif.
Austin, Tex.	Glendale, Calif.	Minneapolis, Minn.	Santa Ana, Calif.
Bakersfield, Calif.	Grand Rapids, Mich.	Mobile, Ala.	Seattle, Wash.
Baltimore, Md.	Greensboro, N.C.	Modesto, Calif.	Shreveport, La.
Baton Rouge, La.	Hialeah, Fla.	Montgomery, Ala.	Spokane, Wash.
Birmingham, Ala.	Honolulu, Hawaii	Nashville, Tenn.	Springfield, Mass.
Boston, Mass.	Houston, Tex.	New Orleans, La.	St. Louis, Mo.
Buffalo, N.Y.	Huntington Beach, Calif.	New York, N.Y.	St. Paul, Minn.
Charlotte, N.C.	Huntsville, Ala.	Newark, N.J.	St. Petersburg, Fla.
Chattanooga, Tenn.	Indianapolis, Ind.	Newport News, Va.	Stockton, Calif.
Chesapeake, Va.	Irving, Tex.	Norfolk, Va.	Syracuse, N.Y.
Chicago, Ill.	Jackson, Miss.	Oakland, Calif.	Tacoma, Wash.
Cincinnati, Ohio	Jacksonville, Fla.	Oklahoma City, Okla.	Tampa, Fla.
Cleveland, Ohio	Jersey City, N.J.	Omaha, Nebr.	Toledo, Ohio
Colorado Springs, Colo.	Kansas City, Kans.	Orlando, Fla.	Tucson, Ariz.
Columbus, Ga.	Kansas City, Mo.	Philadelphia, Pa.	Tulsa, Okla.
Columbus, Ohio	Knoxville, Tenn.	Phoenix, Ariz.	Virginia Beach, Va.
Corpus Christi, Tex.	Las Vegas, Nev.	Pittsburgh, Pa.	Warren, Mich.
Dallas, Tex.	Lexington, Ky.[a]	Portland, Oreg.	Washington, D.C.
Dayton, Ohio	Lincoln, Nebr.	Providence, R.I.	Wichita, Kans.
Denver, Colo.	Little Rock, Ark.	Raleigh, N.C.	Worcester County, Mass.[a]
Des Moines, Iowa	Long Beach, Calif.	Richmond, Va.	Yonkers, N.Y.

[a]Not a city government.

Jurisdictions Exclusively Selected to Receive Justice Department Training

Alameda County, Calif.
Allegheny County, Pa.
Baltimore County, Md.
Bernalillo County, N.Mex.
Bergen County, N.J.
Bexar County, Tex.
Bristol County, Mass.
Broward County, Fla.
Bucks County, Pa.
Camden County, N.J.
Carson City, Nev.
City/Borough of Juneau, Alaska
City of Albany, N.Y.
City of Annapolis, Md.
City of Augusta, Maine
City of Billings, Mont.
City of Biloxi, Miss.
City of Bismarck, N.Dak.
City of Boise, Idaho
City of Burlington, Vt.
City of Casper, Wyo.
City of Cedar Rapids, Iowa
City of Charleston, S.C.
City of Charleston, W.Va.
City of Cheyenne, Wyo.
City of Columbia, S.C.
City of Concord, N.H.
City of Dover, Del.
City of Fargo, N.Dak.
City of Fort Smith, Ark.
City of Frankfort, Ky.
City of Harrisburg, Pa.
City of Hartford, Conn.
City of Helena, Mont.
City of Huntington, W.Va.
City of Lansing, Mich.
City of Manchester, N.H.
City of Montpelier, Vt.
City of New Haven, Conn.
City of Olympia, Wash.
City of Pierre, S.Dak.
City of Pocatello, Idaho
City of Portland, Maine
City of Salem, Oreg.
City of Santa Fe, N.Mex.
City of Sioux Falls, S.Dak.
City of Springfield, Ill.
City of Tallahassee, Fla.
City of Topeka, Kans.
City of Trenton, N.J.
City of Warwick, R.I.
City of Wilmington, Del.
Clark County, Nev.
Cobb County, Ga.
Contra Costa County, Calif.
Cook County, Ill.
Cuyahoga County, Ohio
Dade County, Fla.
Dallas County, Tex.
De Kalb County, Ga.
Delaware County, Pa.
DuPage County, Ill.
El Paso County, Tex.
Erie County, N.Y.
Essex County, Mass.
Essex County, N.J.
Fairfax County, Va.
Franklin County, Ohio
Fresno County, Calif.
Fulton County, Ga.
Hamilton County, Ohio
Harris County, Tex.
Hennepin County, Minn.
Hillsborough County, Fla.
Hudson County, N.J.
Jackson County, Mo.
Jefferson City, Mo.
Jefferson County, Ala.
Jefferson County, Colo.
Jefferson County, Ky.
Jefferson Parish, La.
Kent County, Mich.
Kern County, Calif.
King County, Wash.
Lake County, Ill.
Lake County, Ind.
Los Angeles County, Calif.
Lucas County, Ohio
Macomb County, Mich.
Mancopa County, Ariz.
Mecklenburg County, N.C.
Middlesex County, Mass.
Middlesex County, N.J.
Milwaukee County, Wis.
Monmouth County, N.J.
Monroe County, N.Y.
Montgomery County, Md.
Montgomery County, Ohio
Montgomery County, Pa.
Multnomah County, Oreg.
Nassau County, N.Y.
Norfolk County, Mass.
Oakland County, Mich.
Oklahoma County, Okla.
Onondaga County, N.Y.
Orange County, Calif.
Orange County, Fla.
Palm Beach County, Fla.
Passaic County, N.J.
Pierce County, Wash.
Pima County, Ariz.
Pinellas County, Fla.
Prince George's County, Md.
Ramsey County, Minn.
Riverside County, Calif.
Sacramento County, Calif.
Salt Lake County, Utah
San Bernardino County, Calif.
San Diego County, Calif.
San Joaquin County, Calif.
San Mateo County, Calif.
Santa Clara County, Calif.
Shelby County, Tenn.
Snohomish County, Wash.
St. Louis County, Mo.
Suffolk County, N.Y.
Summit County, Ohio
Tarrant County, Tex.
Travis County, Tex.
Tulsa County, Okla.
Union County, N.J.
Ventura County, Calif.
Wake County, N.C.
Wayne County, Mich.
Westchester County, N.Y.

Organizations and Locations Visited

During the course of our review, we met with officials from the following organizations:

Department of Defense

- National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C.
- Office of Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C.
- U.S. Army Soldier and Biological Chemical Command, Aberdeen, Md.

Department of Energy

- Headquarters, Department of Energy, Washington, D.C.

Environmental Protection Agency

- Headquarters, Washington, D.C.
- Environmental Response Team, Cincinnati, Ohio

Federal Emergency Management Agency

- Headquarters, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Washington, D.C.
- Emergency Management Institute, Emmitsburg, Md.
- U.S. National Fire Academy, Emmitsburg, Md.

Department of Health and Human Services

- U.S. Public Health Service, Rockville, Md.

Department of Justice

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
  - Charlotte, N.C. Field Office
  - Minneapolis, Minn. Field Office
  - National Domestic Preparedness Office, Washington, D.C.
- Office of Justice Programs, Office for State and Local Domestic Preparedness Support, Washington, D.C.

Department of the Treasury

- Headquarters, Department of Treasury, Washington, D.C.
- Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, Glynco, Ga.

Department of Veterans Affairs

- Office of Emergency Medical Preparedness, Martinsburg, W.Va.

State of Maryland

- Baltimore County Fire Department, Towson, Md.
- Maryland Emergency Management Agency, Reisterstown, Md.
- Montgomery County Fire Department, Rockville, Md.

State of Minnesota

- St. Paul
- State Department of Emergency Management, St. Paul, Minn.
- Hennepin County

State of North Carolina

- Charlotte
- Greensboro
- Raleigh
- State Division of Emergency Management, Raleigh, N.C.
- Mecklenburg Emergency Management Services Agency, Charlotte, N.C.
- State Bureau of Investigation, Raleigh, N.C.
- Wake County

State of Virginia

- Department of Emergency Services, Richmond, Va.

Other Organizations

- National Sheriff's Association, Alexandria, Va.
- National Volunteer Fire Council, Washington, D.C.
- Special Operations Response Team, Winston-Salem, N.C.
- Texas Engineering Extension Service, Texas A&M University, College Station, Tex.

Comments From the Department of Defense

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
1500 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1500

RESERVE AFFAIRS

22 FEB 2000

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin
Director, National Security Preparedness Issues
National Security and International Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the GAO draft report, "COMBATING TERRORISM: More Actions Needed to Improve Federal Training Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction," dated January 27, 2000, (GAO Code 701157/OSD Case 1939).

The Department appreciates the opportunity to comment on GAO's draft report on improving federal training programs for weapons of mass destruction (WMD). DoD concurs, with comment, on the draft report. As was noted in the report, the Department of Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program (DPP) and the Department of Justice's (DoJ) Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program were established under separate legislative initiatives. When the city training element of the DPP was developed, comprehensive WMD training courses integrating several emergency functional areas did not exist. Since the proliferation of WMD training courses during the last three years, DoD has been actively seeking to integrate other agencies' WMD training programs into the DPP. The interagency community collectively continues to plan, coordinate, and execute the DPP.

See comment 1.

Many of the observations made in the draft report were first cited in the November 1998 GAO Report, "COMBATING TERRORISM: Opportunities to Improve Domestic Preparedness Program Focus and Efficiency." And, as was true in the November 1998 report, many of the GAO conclusions were based on opinions of state and local responders. A thorough look at the program, as it exists today, would have answered many of those concerns. The current draft simply does not take into consideration the changes made since that time. Key improvements, based on the stakeholder feedback cited in the draft report, have been and continue to be made in the program. All levels of the nation's emergency management structure, from the state to the county to the local metropolitan area, are now integrated into the program. The Regional Kickoff Meetings, for example, build on existing emergency training networks, and communities are encouraged to involve potential mutual aid organizations in their training.

See comment 2.

There are several specific discrepancies between the draft report and the current execution of the DPP that should be mentioned. The draft report cites an official in St. Paul/Minneapolis as saying that it would have made more sense to train the two cities together. In fact, officials from the two cities were offered the opportunity to train together and opted to train separately. The draft report also fails to cite, as an example of cross-jurisdictional training,

the DPP process that was initiated in the Hampton Roads area where the cities decided that it would be most effective for Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Newport News to train together during a two-week period.

See comment 3.

The report states that the DPP bypassed existing emergency management and training structures. The DPP courses, videos, and CD-ROMs have been sent to the directors of emergency management within the states that have been trained, enabling them to disseminate the program throughout their statewide emergency management structure. There is no mention of this in the report. Additionally, the DPP now offers follow-on training opportunities through the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium, a consortium formed to take advantage of existing institutions for training first responders. The authors of the report express concern about overlap in DPP courses and the Consortium. Rather than relying on opinions, a look at current program information would have alleviated that concern.

See comment 4.

The draft report "Table 1: Funding and Student Data for Federal Organizations" is also misleading as written. It leaves the impression that DoD has spent 64% of the funds allocated for WMD training, yet trained only 14% of the participants. The 44,000 participants trained by the DoJ include those trained by their trainers; the Federal Emergency Management Agency's numbers also include those trained by trainers, as well as those participating in a self-paced study course. DoD's numbers include only those trained in the week-long city training event and do not account for the cascading effect that these trainers have in training additional members of their organizations. Further, the $66.9 million is for the entire city training program. For the DPP, it includes: the regional kickoff meeting, the senior officials' workshop, the initial city visit, all planning meetings, the chemical tabletop exercise, the chemical functional exercise, the biological tabletop exercise, course materials, instructors with training tools, instructor validation, participation from the federal partners, and training equipment loans.

The DoD and DoJ have worked together for the past year to develop a transition plan for the DPP. Under this plan, the DoJ will be designated as the lead federal agency for the DPP beginning October 1, 2000. That transfer, combined with the development of the National Domestic Preparedness Office within the DoJ, will make important strides in eliminating the duplicative efforts that the GAO feels exist among many of the WMD federal training programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. DoD has provided suggested technical changes for clarification and accuracy separately.

Sincerely,

Charles L. Cragin
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary

The following are our comments on the Department of Defense's letter dated February 22, 2000.

GAO Comments

1. Program participants that we contacted in performing the current review cited some of the same concerns that were cited in our November 1998 report. Our report discusses those concerns but also provides Defense's position on the concerns and includes examples of program improvements.

2. We revised our report to reflect Defense's position that officials from Minneapolis and St. Paul opted to have separate training sessions. We have also noted that in the Hampton Roads area, the cities decided it would be most effective for Virginia Beach, Norfolk, Chesapeake, and Newport News to train together during a 2-week period rather than in separate sessions for each city.

3. We note in the report that providing instructional materials to the directors of emergency management in each state trained under the program is among the improvements Defense has instituted in the Domestic Preparedness Program. However, our concern centered on the fact that by originally bypassing state-level agencies, state officials were unable to coordinate the training offered by Defense, Justice, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency within their states to ensure that the appropriate individuals were trained. We agree with Defense that the regional kickoff meetings now part of the program could alleviate this concern.

4. We have revised the report to clearly indicate the differences in student data provided by Defense, Justice, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Specifically, Defense's number of students trained includes only individuals trained by Defense, whereas Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency numbers include individuals trained by Justice and the Federal Emergency Management Agency instructors as well as by student instructors. We have also noted that the $66.9 million includes planning visits, training exercises, and equipment loans.

Comments From the Department of Justice

Note: GAO comments supplementing those in the report text appear at the end of this appendix.

U.S. Department of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Office of the Assistant Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20531

February 22, 2000

Norman J. Rabkin
Director
National Security Preparedness Issues
General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Room 4390
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

This letter provides the Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of State and Local Domestic Preparedness Support's (OSLDPS') comments to the GAO draft report entitled "Combating Terrorism: More Actions Needed to Improve Federal Training Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction." In addition, the report was reviewed by the Department of Justice Criminal Division, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Neither component had comments to the draft report.

Page 2, First Sentence

See comment 1.

OSLDPS Comment: After the word "county" at the end of the sentence, add: "and the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium." This more accurately reflects the programs of OSLDPS, which are significantly greater than just the Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program.

Page 2, Paragraph 2

See p. 4.

GAO states: Defense and Justice plan to deliver their programs to individuals in the same 120 cities, and Justice also plans to train individuals in 135 additional jurisdictions.

See comment 2.

OSLDPS Comment: This statement is misleading, in that it implies that the training is duplicative. OSLDPS provides a 16-hour awareness course for fire and emergency medical services personnel, while the Department of Defense's (DOD's) program provides a 4-hour non-discipline specific, general awareness course under its program. Additionally, OSLDPS does not send training teams to specific sites, but invites trainers from targeted jurisdictions to attend a train the trainer program. The choice to participate in the OSLDPS training is left to the targeted

1

jurisdiction. If they feel that the OSLDPS 16 hour course in needed, they participate. If they are satisfied with the 4-hour general awareness course provided by DOD, they can choose not to participate in the OSLDPS program.

Page 3, Paragraph 2

See p. 6.

GAO States: Thus, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses under both programs.

See comment 2.

OSLDPS Comment: Again, the OJP program is offered to the jurisdiction and they choose whether or not to participate in the train the trainer program. In OSLDPS' opinion, the 16-hour course for fire and emergency medical (EM) personnel is far superior to the general 4 hour awareness course offered under the DOD program. In most instances, the participating jurisdictions agree and choose to participate in the OSLDPS program because it is tailored to the critical fire and EM disciplines, and provides a more in-depth coverage of the subject matter. To state that the programs are similar does not indicate a recognition of the distinct differences of the two curricula.

Page 4, Paragraph 2

See p. 6.

GAO recommends that: "To improve the efficiency of Federal programs, this report recommends that the Secretary of Defense and the Attorney General eliminate duplicative training to the same metropolitan jurisdictions."

See comment 3.

OSLDPS Response: We disagree with this recommendation. As indicated in the previous comment, the two programs are substantially and substantively different. The fact that both are entitled an awareness level course does not mean they are duplicative. The OSLDPS program targets the key fire and EM disciplines in much more depth, is optional for the targeted jurisdiction, and provides extensive support in terms of OSLDPS' provision of a student guide and a complete instructor kit, much more extensive than that provided in DOD's 4-hour general awareness course.

See p. 6.

GAO recommends that: "If the Department of Justice extends the Domestic Preparedness Program beyond the currently planned 120 cities, Justice should integrate that program with the Metropolitan Firefighter program to capitalize on the strengths of each program and eliminate duplication and overlap."

OSLDPS Comment: In meetings with GAO and in the transition plan developed for the transfer of the Domestic Preparedness Program from the Department of Defense to the Department of Justice, OSLDPS has stated that if the Domestic Preparedness Program is continued beyond the original 120 cities, the program will be evaluated, modified as necessary based on input from other Federal agencies and the state and local emergency response community, and fully integrated with all existing OSLDPS training programs, including the Metropolitan Firefighter program.

2

Page 15, last paragraph

See p. 17.

GAO states that: "The Center for Domestic Preparedness at Fort McClellan, Alabama, offers a 4-day responder training course that is designed to provide basic instruction to first responders on how to respond to, and operate in a WMD environment. The course introduces chemical, biological, and radiological threats and provides hands-on familiarization training with specialized protective clothing and equipment. This is similar to the instruction offered by the Domestic Preparedness Program, the Metropolitan Firefighter and Emergency Medical Services Program, and FEMA's basic concepts course."

See comment 4.

OSLDPS Comment: In order to most effectively carry out its mission to provide advanced, specialized training to the Nation's emergency response community, the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) focuses its training efforts on maximizing the provision of live agent training. For example, awareness level training is classroom-based training that can be more efficiently conducted through OJP's "field delivered" train-the-trainer WMD basic awareness courses, while other advanced WMD training in areas such as Radiation/Nuclear Agents, etc. are the specialties of other National Domestic Preparedness Consortium (NDPC) members. The CDP, therefore, focuses on providing what no other U.S. civilian training facility can provide: the opportunity to train in a live chemical agent environment. Specifically, the CDP provides two three-day, advanced-level training courses for state and local emergency responders: WMD HAZMAT Technicians and WMD Incident Command, both involving live agent training. The CDP may also be directed by OSLDPS to develop future course curricula as needed, using guidance provided by the state and local emergency response communities. The 4-Day First Responder training course to which GAO refers is being discontinued.

Page 16, Paragraph 2

See p. 18.

GAO states that: "The [state and local] officials pointed out the potential for WMD training to reach emergency responders in smaller cities and rural areas through the use of distance-learning techniques such as video transmissions of instructional materials and interactive computer compact disks that could utilize existing facilities at firehouses and National Guard Armories."

See comment 5.

OSLDPS Comment: While GAO mentions elsewhere in the report that OJP is currently working on a $2 million distance learning initiative with the National Guard Bureau, GAO never links this initiative to the comments of state and local officials calling for just such an initiative. The report, as it now reads, seems to imply that distance learning is another short-fall in the Federal effort, and that nothing is being done to address it. To the contrary, OJP is actively involved in the development of a distance learning program to provide video transmission of training videos and instructional materials, as well as interactive training CD-ROMs, etc., to reach emergency responders nation-wide. This effort should be made clear in the report, and linked to the comments of state and local officials.

3

Page 16, Paragraph 2

See p. 18.

GAO states: Officials were also concerned that the Defense and Justice training programs offered to cities and metropolitan areas had bypassed the states' emergency management and training structures. As a result, some responders, such as state police, had been missed.

See comment 6.

OSLDPS Comment: The statutory direction for OSLDPS's Fire and EM training program was clear, and the course was developed for the fire and EM audience. It was not intentionally done to "miss" state police, but the training for a state police audience is significantly different than that for a local fire response element. State police weren't missed; no funding was provided by Congress prior to Fiscal Year 2000 to OSLDPS to develop training for that audience.

Page 20, Paragraph 1

See p. 22.

GAO states that: "Justice officials discussed their draft plan for the transfer [of the Domestic Preparedness Program] with us. According to the officials, Justice will complete the Domestic Preparedness training in the 120 cities because they believe Justice should honor Defense's commitments to those cities. It also still plans to deliver its Metropolitan Firefighter program to individuals in 255 cities and counties. Thus, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses under both programs. In the longer term, according to Justice officials, they will assess the need to continue to [sic] Domestic Preparedness Program beyond the 120 cities based on a number of factors, including comprehensive needs assessments to be completed by the states and inputs from the first responder communities."

See comment 7.

OSLDPS Comments: GAO's comments regarding the draft transition plan are accurate, but not comprehensive. They leave the reader with the impression that Justice is making no effort to integrate the Domestic Preparedness Program (DPP) with its existing programs or to improve the program. This impression is inaccurate; the draft transition plan clearly lays out Justice's intention to fully integrate advanced-level training offered through the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium into the DPP training process, integrate other training courses currently being developed by Consortium members, and explore options for integrating DPP course materials into the distance learning program currently being developed jointly with the National Guard Bureau. Additionally, the transition plan details how Justice will respond to criticisms of the DPP made by GAO, program participants, and the state and local emergency response community by replacing the equipment loans currently provided by Defense with direct grants provided by Justice; improving the coordination of the DPP with the Department of Health and Human Services' Metropolitan Medical Response System program; requiring cities participating in the DPP to invite adjacent communities with whom they have mutual aid agreements in place to participate in the training; and expanding the involvement of relevant Federal agencies and the state and local community in the program activities of the Improved Response Program. Furthermore, the transition plan discusses Justice's plan to conduct further study and analysis of several key issues surrounding the DPP, namely ways to further improve the training delivered through the program, potential actions which could be taken to improve efficiency in program execution, and options for sustaining federally provided domestic preparedness training and equipment.

4

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. If you have any questions or require additional information on this subject, please contact me on (202) 307-5933, or Butch Straub on (202) 305-9887.

Sincerely,

Laurie Robinson
Assistant Attorney General

5

The following are our comments on the Department of Justice's letter dated February 22, 2000.

GAO Comments

1. Our report states that Justice provides its weapons of mass destruction training primarily through its Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program but also offers training through the National Domestic Preparedness Consortium. The data provided by Justice shows that through mid-November 1999, Justice had trained 44,000 students through the program, whereas Consortium members had trained about 3,000 students as of September 14, 1999.

2. The 8-hour awareness and operations courses in Defense's Domestic Preparedness Program have objectives similar to those of Justice's Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program. Also, some state and local officials specifically cited the awareness portion of the two programs as being most duplicative of each other. Moreover, both the Domestic Preparedness Program and the Metropolitan Firefighters program are train-the-trainer programs with the objective of providing selected responders with the necessary skills to train their fellow responders. While it is true that jurisdictions and individuals can choose not to participate in the Justice program, we believe that it would be more efficient to provide weapon of mass destruction awareness training to trainers in a city or metropolitan area as part of a single, integrated, and comprehensive program rather than through separate programs. Such a federal training program could train instructors who could tailor the material to the needs of the specific local audience.

3. For the reasons discussed above, we continue to believe that our recommendation is sound.

4. We agree with Justice that classes at the Center for Domestic Preparedness can incorporate a live agent component and so noted in our report. At the time of our review, the first responder awareness course that we cited was being offered as part of the Center's curriculum. We support Justice's decision to discontinue the course because, as we state in the report, it is duplicative of other training available to first responders.

5. As Justice states in its comments, our report notes that Justice is currently pursuing distance learning initiatives and that state and local

officials believe distance learning techniques can be an effective way of delivering instruction to the responder communities. We also pointed out in our discussion of efforts under way to improve training that one of the initial tasks the National Domestic Preparedness Office plans to focus on is coordinating the development and implementation of training systems such as video presentations and other distance training technologies. We have revised the report to show the link between Justice's distance learning initiative and the comments by state and local officials.

6. We have revised the report to include Justice's position that Congress provided no funding prior to fiscal year 2000 to develop training for state police. We agree that the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 directed that Justice provide training to the fire-fighting and emergency medical communities. However, the legislation did not preclude Justice from coordinating with the state emergency management agencies and training structures in offering that training. If Justice had done so, state agencies could have better coordinated the federal training programs within their states to ensure appropriate responder communities were trained by the available federal programs.

7. We were briefed on the draft plan and allowed to read it. However, because the plan was not approved, Justice would not provide us with a copy and cautioned us that the plan could change. Because of the limitations on our access to the draft plan, the cautionary nature of Justice's comments, and the draft status of the plans, we chose to summarize Justice's plan for the Domestic Preparedness Program. Notwithstanding the other provisions of Justice's plan, Justice planned to continue to offer both the Metropolitan Firefighters and Emergency Medical Services Program training and the Domestic Preparedness Program training until the 120 cities originally scheduled for the Defense training have completed the training. Thus, as we originally stated, in the near term, some cities will receive similar awareness courses under both programs, which results in the inefficient use of limited resources.

Comments From the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Washington, D.C. 20472

FEB 17 2000

Mr. Norman J. Rabkin
Director, National Security Preparedness Issues
United States General Accounting Office
National Security and
International Affairs Division
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Rabkin:

I am responding to your letter of January 27, 2000, requesting comments on the draft report (GAO/NSIAD-00-64) titled *Combating Terrorism: More Actions Needed to Improve Federal Training Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction*. Based on an earlier request from your staff regarding information about FEMA WMD training activities, I am enclosing a table displaying information regarding FEMA terrorism consequence management grants provided to the States from FY 1997-99. Otherwise, we have no significant comments on the draft report.

I trust this information is responsive to your request. If you need further assistance, please contact John W. Magaw, Senior Advisor for Terrorism Preparedness, on 202-646-3923.

Sincerely,

James L. Witt
Director

Enclosure