



TRANSCRIPT FROM WEBCAST 3/22/2011

DESCRIPTION: Operation Golden Phoenix 2010
(regional exercise)

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[Music]

>> Good morning. Will Kohlschreiber with breaking news from ENN's national news center in New York. We're following up on our lead story of the massive explosion which hit the Los Angeles area this morning. Here is what we know so far. Just after 7:30 a.m. Pacific Time, a large explosion rocked the Los Angeles area. The effects of the blast are so extensive that it has thrown Southern California into virtual chaos.

>> Today's ICBRNE detection demonstration will serve as the cornerstone for the final phase of Operation Golden Phoenix 2010 or OGP-10. An exercise that will stretch the emergency response and recovery planning efforts of the Los Angeles County Operational Area to its limits. It is a combination of training and exercise events that focus on the effects and consequences following the terrorist detonation of a 10 kiloton improvised nuclear device or IND in the Los Angeles metropolitan area.

>> The complexity of the OGP-10 series of events has required an extensive planning effort including diligent scheduling and extensive documentation and coordination from the CAW-led multi-agency planning team. The size of the planning effort was due to the large number and unique nature of the exercise events. The quantity and diversity of the participants and most importantly, the need for the exercise to meet all of the training, testing, demonstration and evaluation goals of each of the participating agencies.



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Development of the OGP-10 exercise events was started in mid January 2010 with a meeting of the proposed participating agencies followed by the creation of a concept of operations document to guide the rest of the planning and execution process. And extensive planning and documentation effort took place over the next few months following DHS's Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program or HSEEP guidelines. A tabletop exercise and training event was conducted in early June and attended by 172 participants from 74 different agencies. Training focused on the effects of a 10 kiloton IND detonation in the Los Angeles area and the sensor technology and data integration that the ICBRNE project systems could provide. The TTX explored the multi-agency response to and recovery from the IND scenario. Some two weeks later an overview of IND effects and a focused discussion of county specific response and recovery issues were provided for 22 L.A. County Department emergency coordinators. On June 24th, senior department leads from the LA county emergency management council participated in an executive workshop which provided an overview of current IND response capability and explored critical information requirements and decision points in an IND incident. In July, subject matter experts conducted four training sessions on radiological terrorism for Los Angeles County disaster management area coordinators. Finally, a communication exercise was conducted with participants on July 26, which confirmed ICBRNE's interoperability and connectivity at participating operation centers and allowed participating agencies to interact with live sensor data in realtime. Today's functional exercise or FE events represent the culmination of an extensive six-month long planning, training and exercise program. Involving over 50 local regional state and federal agencies as well as the extensive development and implementation of the ICBRNE program. The FE will allow participants to capitalize on the data enhancements provided by the ICBRNE detection demonstration. And exercise the capabilities and expertise of the Los Angeles area in response to an IND detonation. A simultaneous advanced tabletop exercise will simulate the establishment of an area command to address the command, control and coordination of field response resources. The CAW has established an exercise control center to manage the complex exercise environment and coordinate all participating agencies. Subject matter experts from several agencies have joined CAW controllers in the exercise control cell to simulate both field operations and all entities not participating in the exercise. Evaluators will provide critical feedback on response capability and future training and planning needs, which will be incorporated into a detailed after action report and various agency improvement plans. The stage is set. The terrorist device is armed and Los Angeles is awakening to a very bad day.

>> Operation Golden Phoenix, last July this exercise challenged the emergency personnel and interdepartmental and intergovernment cooperation in this simulated catastrophic emergency which was replicating a 10 kiloton improvised nuclear device within the county of Los Angeles. We're gonna talk a little bit more about this exercise.



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With me is again Teresa Lustig who is our program manager with the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate. And I also have Brendan Applegate. He's from the Naval Postgraduate School and the Center of Asymmetric Warfare. And you were the exercise manager on Operation Golden Phoenix.

>> Yes, I was.

>> Okay, great, wow. Well Teresa, before we talk about kind of the lessons learned to this, Teresa, this really, essentially this was a regional exercise. So how did DHS get involved in something like this?

>> Yeah, that's right. When I was working on the program really we'd had a number of large scale events, this was a Grammy and the Emmy Awards but I wanted to have something that would really validate that the system will be effective when there is something much larger in scale. And so that's why you know when you see in the previous clips, we really went working with the cities and they said they really wanted the worst case. So they chose the scenario which is a 10 kiloton nuclear detonation as what they wanted to plan for.

>> Okay, the worst case.

>> So, if they could do that, they can do anything. So that's where we started from but we wanted to use a formal process that we can actually quantitatively evaluate, you know, how effectively we're in demonstrating interoperability and be able to share information across different agencies and different emergency operation centers in a regional type scale event. And so that was pretty much my goal. And I really considered you know, the outcome of this demonstration would be my report card of how effective we actually were, did we add value to what their existing response systems were. That was really what we're trying to do.

>> Your report card, huh?



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>> My report card.

>> Wow, so how did she do?

>> She did outstanding. I think when we get to talk about the lessons learned, unequivocally, the ICBRNE system was a significant force multiplier. It significantly enhanced the capabilities of the response agencies in the operational level and strategic level of decision making to make decisions and respond to the incident. We learned a lot of things about it which we can talk about if you're ready.

>> Go for it.

>> Okay.

>> Tell us some of those things.

>> Let's talk a little bit first about the scale of this exercise and like Teresa said, this was kind of the worst case scenario. We set it up to be just that. We had 6 integrated training and exercise events conducted over 2 months that included participation by 800 people from over a 130 different agencies.

>> That's huge.



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>> It was definitely big. You've also heard Teresa and the ICBRNE team talk about the real world incidents that ICBRNE's been used in, the Academy Awards, the Rose Bowl. While those events are excellent venues to look at the capabilities of the ICBRNE system at the field level, the operation centers like we see here today and the people at that upper level of decision making don't really get to participate in those events. So we wanted to take a look at something that was larger scale that would give us the whole gamut of decision making. Get the entire decision making process involved and see how the ICBRNE system could affect decision making at that level. So that's what really what we shot for with Golden Phoenix. It was the first time that the system had been used at this level of decision making and so we really had to do a lot of work on the front end to determine what the--how decision makers at this level would visualize the ICBRNE system. Because it really wasn't gonna be the same as what they were doing at the field level where you see a display on a device and you know exactly what it means. You got lots more devices, many more devices integrated into the picture and you have to use that picture in a different way to support what's going on in the field. So we got a planning team together, we got some--threw some ideas on the table and we developed--we helped David Lamensdorf and his team developed a visualization tool that could be used at this level and to support the response. Now typically, decisions at this level would be used based on a series of models that would take in a nuclear scenario, they would take the yield of the weapon, they would take terrain, they would take the predicted weather and they would give you an approximate location of hazardous and affected areas. With the ICBRNE system, you really have an integrated and interpreted picture of what that hazardous area looks like in realtime. And so you can--you have realtime information that's timely, you have accurate information that you can be very confident in making decisions on. So that was one of the biggest impacts of this system in this exercise. So besides that, what did we really learn about? Well, about it, we learned that it was a significant force multiplier. We've heard David and the other speakers talk about how in a hazardous situation you have people in very cumbersome equipment looking at small displays and they're really stressed out because they don't wanna get hurt in this hazardous environment. So we get this information beamed instantly to us and integrated into a larger picture that you can use to make decisions. That's a very, very significant capability. It's never been a capability that's been used before. So we're lucky to demonstrate that in Operation Golden Phoenix. We had 2 events really that showcased the ICBRNE system. One was a communications exercise the day before the big exercise. During that exercise we had live data from 40 instruments that were accessed by 61 unique locations which is amazing. Never been done before. The ICBRNE system enabled those people to view all this different instruments at the same time and integrated it into a picture so that they could use it to make decisions.

>> You said 61 unique locations.



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>> Correct.

>> What kind of sites are we talking about?

>> We're talking about anything from fire station to me sitting on my laptop at home if I'm authorized to view the system, to FEMA headquarters in D.C. It was all across the country so, really, really unique capability.

>> You can send something to one of the labs where there's a subject matter expert--

>> Absolutely.

>> On a particular issue.

>> And that's one of the things that we learned about the system is that you can say you're in Los Angeles and you have a catastrophic incidents. Those subject matter experts, especially in the radiological fields, they're gonna be unlimited supply, they're gonna be a limited resource. Now, you can beam that data instantly to a subject matter expert in an unaffected part of the country or even the world and have them weigh in on the decision making and the courses of action they should take in reaction to that environment, very, very powerful capability.

>> That's phenomenal.



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>> So after the communications exercise we had the functional exercise which was kind of the as close to reality as we could get in simulating the detonation of this improvised nuclear device. And you saw the news clip that we showed, that we used to kind of inject realism into the scenario that simulated a real world media broadcast. So, we tried to immerse the participants in that kind of environment, create stress, create chaos and see how this ICBRNE system could help enable decision making and enable the response efforts. And we found that it gave an amazing ground truth to the existing models that were being used for decision making. But like I said, the data coming from the ICBRNE system was considered more timely and more trustworthy, a better asset to make decisions on in these models that have been used for decades and so very significant benefits. Based on the fact that this was kind of a new system at this level of operation and that we had a visualization tool that was kind of in an infant stage, we did have some limitations in that visualization tool. It wasn't--it didn't go down as deep as we would like it to. You couldn't get as much information as we would like out of it but it's operational here in Los Angeles right now. There are focus groups that are really studying its use at this level of operation and so we're really kind of excited to see how these limitations work themselves out in how it can become a really powerful capability.

>> What kind of additional depth of information would you like to see it be able to do?

>> Some of the things we were talking about were being able to identify unique device and individual device, and kinda drill down into the information that that device would provide the actual person who's holding it. So manufacturer and model, detection thresholds, alarm settings. Right now what it displays is a green, yellow or red setting and you don't really know what settings the devices is set at so that you know what those green, yellow and red really means. I mean it's kind of left open to interpretation as to, okay, does red mean that I have to get out of here now or I'm already over my exposure limits? Also remaining battery life or the device's current user manual, just information like that could be made available. And we're really kind of too quick to have that level of development on that visualization tool. Another thing we're working that was brought up was the vulnerabilities of the systems transmission in a catastrophic incident. Say, you lose power or the cellular network is down or you have an electromagnetic pulse from a nuclear detonation. How is the system set up to handle that? Does it switch to another method of communication? Does it go down completely? Do you need a human in the loop to switch that? And so we took a look at that and I understand that those focus groups right now have developed a lot of capability in that area. So, we're really excited to see how the system has evolved in just a short amount of time since we've ran this exercise. We identify the significant capability but just a



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couple of things that really needed further work and it's really come a long way since then.

>> And we're talking, it was only July?

>> It was only July, yeah, so less than a year.

>> That's quite impressive.

>> And my goal was more you know looking at the system performance. But L.A. was really looking at how they could improve their response and work on their response plans. And so there were their safety aspect goals that they were working on as well. And I think a lot of light was shed on, you know, improvements in their response plans that they had in place through the exercise as well.

>> Absolutely, yeah. L.A. is really one of the regions on the cutting edge of this kind of response planning. And so we really did push them to the limit of their capabilities in what they were--what they had practiced and trained to do. I mean we really wanted to see if we just push the system to the breaking point, how the system could help them get through that kind of a crisis? And it was really, really an interesting thing to watch. I think everybody learned a lot about it.

>> It sounds like you've got an A?

>> Yeah. Yeah, I think definitely the system got an A in that respect, yeah.

>> Way to go.



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>> Well, Brendan, thank you. Is there anything else you wanted to add before we wrap up with your part of this?

>> No, not necessarily. I think we were excited to be--really, all of us at the Center for Asymmetric Warfare were excited to be a part of this project. And I want to thank Teresa for involving us and giving us the opportunity to work with the response agencies in L.A. County who we really feel kind of in our own backyard are the best in the world of what they do so just another opportunity to work with them and work with DHS in improving that capability further.

>> Thank you, Brendan.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Greatly appreciate it.