

Homeland Defense Journal

"He is best secure from dangers who is on his guard even when he seems safe." —Syrus Publilius

First Responders: A self-examination

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The mission of the Naval War College, Newport R.I., includes contributing to the national security of the United States by supporting the U.S. Navy and U.S. defense community with research, analysis and war gaming. In the past, the U.S. defense community would be defined as the armed services, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the intelligence agencies. However, since the terrorist attack last September, domestic first responder organizations, such as police and fire departments, must be considered part of the U.S. defense community. For that reason, the War College, and specifically its war gaming department,

has become active in supporting the domestic organizations (municipal, state and federal) charged with responding to terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland.

The war gaming department has designed and implemented a number of war games for first responders from the New York City Fire and Police Departments and the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency. The objectives were to assess command and control implementations and decision making and gaming exercises conduct critical self-examinations of those agencies' organizational and operational preparedness to deal with future attacks. Similar exercises are scheduled for New York's Office of Emergency

Management and the Federal Emergency Management Agency Region I.

The war gaming department applied its experience in scenario design, event facilitation and analysis in providing the agencies with a forum to evaluate the development of contingency plans and the subsequent need to employ them in reaction to a significant threat. These simulated environments offered opportunities for both leadership and staff to gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their organizations.

In the February 15, 2002, issue of *Navy Newstand*, Dr. Kenneth Watman, director of the department, said, "We discovered [as a result of the FDNY exercise] there are a lot of similarities in how

military and domestic emergency units approach command-and-control scenarios.

Fire Department of New York (FDNY)

The game with the FDNY was conducted in December 2001 with nearly 50 senior members from the department representing firefighters, emergency medical services and special operations. The design of the exercise was intended to assist FDNY identify command, control and operational issues that warranted further study. The exercise consisted of four phases, consisting of scenarios depicting emergency incidents of plausible but sufficient scope to challenge the department to respond to a city crisis. The scenarios generated interactive discussions and examinations into significant organizational, operational and procedural areas.

Fire Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta, also featured in the *Navy Newstand* article, said, "This was a unique training experience for our chief officers and senior department officials. In the post 9/11 world, this type of exercise is something the department needs to help keep us prepared for large-scale emergencies."

In a letter to Rear Adm. Rodney P. Rempt, Naval War College president, Dr. Stephan Hittman, FDNY executive director of fire and life safety, praised the exercise.

"What occurred during the [exercise] far exceeded our expectations. Each component of the simulation was geared toward challenging FDNY leadership in situations we hope never to face but recognize the need to anticipate," wrote Hittman. "This department alone lost 343 firefighters. Only by examining potential scenarios such as those we trained on with your staff, will we stand ready for whatever is next."