

MFR 04013957

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Event: Grant C. Peterson, vice president HLS Planning and Preparedness, Operational Analysis & Training Group, Titan Systems Corporation (project manager for the *Arlington County After-Action Report on the September 11 Terrorist Attack on the Pentagon*), former associate director of FEMA, 1981-1993

Type of event: Interview

Date: January 15, 2004

Special Access Issues: None

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Team Number: 8

Location: Titan Systems Corp., Fairfax, Virginia

Participants - Non-Commission: Grant Peterson

Participants - Commission: Mark Bittinger

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1. Grant Peterson's Background: He served as associate director of FEMA from 1981 to 1992. Prior experience included being a member of the Spokane County Board of Commissioners, Spokane County, Washington with responsibility for county emergency management, and service in the U.S. Air Force as a nuclear weapons plans officer.

2. History of FEMA – Late 1980's: Successive major disasters highlighted FEMA's severe lack of operational capability. Hurricane Hugo (Sep 1989), Loma Prieta (San Francisco) Earthquake (Oct 1989), Hurricane Andrew (Aug 1992), and Hurricane Iniki (Sep 1992). FEMA was essentially a check-writing organization and not an operational organization. Grant's efforts were to transform FEMA into an operational organization.

The Hurricane Hugo After-Action Report (AAR) highlighted some 18 major issues that needed to be rectified. Overall the 18 points in the AAR were not well received by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) because of the expense involved in adopting them. Some issues included the need for FEMA's early deployment to a disaster site, the need for FEMA to stockpile equipment and supplies and the need for a response plan. In fact, the genesis of the Federal Response Plan (FRP) grew out of this AAR. The FRP was agreed to and signed by 27 federal agencies, including the American Red Cross in 1992. The success of the FRP laid in FEMA securing stakeholder "buy-in," first from dozens of U.S. Government departments and agencies and then from the States. An example of this consensus building involves the emergency support functions (ESFs). "ESF 1 – Transportation" of the FRP is assigned to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). FEMA got DOT "buy-in" by allowing DOT to write their piece of the plan.

THE SINGLE BIGGEST CHALLENGE THEN AND NOW: Integrating the USG with State governments in a coordinated way in order to bring resources to bear against any given disaster.

Who is in charge at the Federal level? Who is in charge at the State and local level – emergency management directors, homeland security directors, or public health directors?

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Assistance and Emergency Act provides the “funding stream,” but there is still a need for a “robust capacity” in emergency management command, control and communications.

3. All-Hazards Approach: According to Peterson, the all-hazards approach to emergency management is the “only sane [and fiscally responsible] approach, given the need for a certain set of expertise and a certain set of assets and resources.” It is the coordination of these resources that is essential, and in many cases this coordination capability is lacking across the nation. “The core of command and control is in trouble in the U.S. because the infrastructure is not robust.”

4. Civil Defense Act Abolished: The “Federal Civil Defense Act of 1950,” was repealed by Public Law 103-337, div. C, title XXXIV, § 3412(a), Oct. 5, 1994, 108 Stat. 3111. This was one of several steps taken to move away from Cold War priorities. The repeal sought to reorient civil defense programs toward disaster relief and away from an exclusive focus on nuclear war. Some items under the Civil Defense Act were rolled over to title VI of the Stafford Act. Unfortunately, some the benefits of this act were ended, including the building of local emergency operations centers (EOCs) and supporting an early warning system.

5. The Debate that Never Happened: By the mid-1990s, FEMA had established significant connectivity (including training and increased operational capacity) within the emergency management community, *but FEMA did not take on the debate of who was responsible for preparedness against terrorism*. FEMA could have made the case that all threats – natural (floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.), technological (Y2K) and man-made (terrorism) fell under its purview and belonged under “one organizational umbrella.”

Essentially, FEMA abdicated its role in terrorism preparedness. As a result, a political vacuum existed that was initially filled by DoD and later by DoJ (ODP, Office of Domestic Preparedness). Currently, ODP has seen a substantial increase in its budget – from \$10 million to \$4 or \$5 billion annually, while FEMA’s budget has supposedly decreased. Most of the money going to the States today is coming from ODP and not from FEMA. According to Peterson, a possible reason for FEMA’s lack of interest in preparing for terrorism was that “FEMA was riding high in the mid- to late-’90s” on its successful responses to natural disasters and saw undertaking terrorism preparedness as an unnecessary organizational risk, so “[James Lee] Witt walked away from it.”

6. Current Concerns: After 9/11, action had to be taken, but DHS officials took action without properly considering existing structures and systems. A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis would have revealed the following: Civil Defense Act Emergency Procedure Guidelines (EPGs), (were a previous strength or an opportunity to

reinvigorate as it relates to the Homeland Security Advisory System – the current color-coded system); existing plans (e.g. Federal Response Plan) and emergency management systems (were a strength or an opportunity to reinvigorate); and a weak command, control and communications infrastructure (were a weakness or threat to effective emergency management/ homeland security).

Another concern is that law enforcement and intelligence professionals are usurping the coordinating role in States that have created a State homeland security department. Some States have combined their emergency management agency and homeland security department into one department (such as Iowa). Other States have two separate departments (such as Alabama). Peterson sees this bifurcation of emergency management and homeland security as an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and an impediment to effective command, control and coordination. Emergency management is a *system* that “should not be owned by a parochial interest” (be it fire, police, EMS, public health, National Guard, etc.). Don’t bifurcate the command and control structure and authorities, with an emergency management director, homeland security director and a public health director each competing for funds and organizational clout. Each State needs a combined, coordinated emergency operations plan (EOP). “We are losing sight of what the job is” regarding the coordination role vis-à-vis the State governor.

A final concern is how we build upon our existing emergency management capacity, capabilities to meet the needs of the terrorism threat.

7. Strategic Recommendations:

- (1) Appoint a single titular head who reports to a State governor, covering both emergency management and homeland security. Stop bifurcating the system.
- (2) Develop a common set of planning documents at the local, State and Federal level. Create the appropriate Federal legislative authority to support these planning documents; possibly broaden the Stafford Act.
- (3) Build the required infrastructure, which has “atrophied” in the past several years, in two particular areas: staffing to implement plans and a response capacity (facilities and equipment).
- (4) Develop a strategy for regionalization. Every State should be required to break their State into regions. Allow each governor and their staff to create these regions.
 - a. Develop a regional plan (EOP) for each region. Identify regional requirements and prioritize.
 - b. Establish a regional emergency operations center (EOC) within each region for coordination and equipment storage and stockpiling.

The Federal Government would pay the States through these regions via Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPGs), modify the percentages to make it a very substantial grant program, possibly 80%-20%. Such a funding stream would be the incentive for States to organize intra-regionally. With some 3,600 counties in the U.S.,

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we simply can not have 3,600 high-speed, county EOCs across the nation (at a cost of \$5-10 million each). This regionalization strategy would allow for maximum coverage and redundancy within a State, this in addition to the State's EOC.

8. Operational Recommendations:

- (1) Emergency responder access to priority communications. This directly impacts the management of an incident and in particular the recall notification of emergency responders.
 - a. Provide Cellular Priority Access Service (CPAS) to emergency responders.
 - b. Provide a similar access for landline telephones as well.
- (2) Enhanced radio capability.
 - a. Interoperability problems are essentially a "people problem." Procurement choices are made by people in multiple jurisdictions selecting different radio models from dozens of vendors. A regional strategy would eliminate interoperability problems.
 - b. Provide dedicated bandwidth for emergency management professionals. This is a political "hot potato" because it requires either the FCC or Congress to mandate changes in frequency allocation of the public airwaves.
- (3) Adopt the Incident Command System (ICS) nationwide. Probably already being done, but need to ensure.
- (4) Ensure a mobile command center is located in each major city, major county and each State regional EOC.
- (5) Ensure that a Mass Casualty Disaster Plan is a part of every State's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
- (6) Begin research and development on the next-generation mobile communications system, with a capability to provide geospatial information system (GIS) and human body vital signs data (of emergency responders). Possibly task NIST to study and offer recommendations or have legislation proposed that would generate incentives to cover R&D costs.