



Ready America: The First 72 Hours

On December 15, 2003 the Gilmore Commission issued to the President and U.S. Congress the 5th and final report of recommendations concerning the threat to the U.S. from terrorist weapons of mass destruction. Of the 164 total recommendations made by the Commission, 146 have been adopted.

The final report contains several key recommendations that can be encouraged, but not enacted, by the federal government, in particular the critical role of the private sector, community organizations and citizens in local preparedness and response.

The Commission concluded that it is not possible, or advisable, to create the false security of a federal first response strategy, because there is no government large enough or with sufficient tax resources and personnel to protect every person, every place, all the time.

As a result, local governments must integrate and leverage their community and private sector resources to multiply their first response capability so that the first hours of crisis remain a humanitarian response and not lead to a local law enforcement or national crisis.

When a city is devastated by natural disaster, it may likely be the same scenario as a terrorist attack. Not only will the city suffer, but the surrounding towns and communities may face their own crisis as they receive and assist evacuees.

Domestic security is only as strong as the least prepared community. It is an all-threats reality that first response will always be local response. America therefore needs a national plan that focuses on every community's ability to organize and marshal its own resources during the first 72 hours of crisis and be America's first response line of defense during natural disaster or terrorist attack.

National Blueprint for Secure Communities (www.nationalblueprint.org)

The National Council on Readiness and Preparedness (NCORP) continues the work of the Gilmore Commission to develop the **National Blueprint for Secure Communities** (Blueprint) that helps local governments incorporate the resources of the community to augment and multiply the public sector's preparedness and response capability during the critical first 72 hours of crisis.

The Blueprint contains best practices and affordable, practical strategies to serve as examples that can be locally adopted – it is not realistic to ask each community to develop these ideas on their own. Instead, the Blueprint allows communities to share ideas with community and business leaders in ways to help augment response capacity until state and federal resources arrive.

NCORP has commissioned the **National Task Force on Community Preparedness and Response** (**National Task Force**) to collaborate with an Advisory Committee of 800 community leaders to develop the Blueprint and identify regional pilot projects in partnership with the federal/state/local sectors to demonstrate methods that increase community surge capacity during the first 72 hours of crisis.

The National Task Force is organized into 8 subcommittees representing the key resource/capability sectors of a community. The Blueprint will be generally arranged by these 8 corresponding sections, with the goal of identifying and developing best practices, ideas and programs that should be included in each of the 8 sections of the Blueprint. Each section will then be studied by academic and private sector partners to determine the responsibilities that each of the 5 community sectors have – private, community, public, responder and citizen to implement the practice or create the public/private partnership.

National Initiatives Supporting the Blueprint

The Task Force has held a variety of regional and subject-specific meetings with critical sector partners to develop recommendations for inclusion in the Blueprint that utilize essential resources and networks that facilitate or link them together. Community pilot programs are planned for different regions of the country to demonstrate how collaboration and mutual aid programs can work, and how these initiatives help tie together and multiply community response capability during the early hours of crisis. Following are some of the recommendations resulting from the regional meetings:

1. **Virtual Surge Depots (VSD)** - a micro-version of the BENS (Business Executives for National Security) virtual depots that can catalog regional or local resources deliverable by the private sector during crisis, but is scalable to accommodate a variety of small, multi-jurisdictional arrangements. This concept focuses on how the BENS approach could be scaled-down to incorporate public/private local models connected into a national network.
2. **Crisis Response Officer (CRO)** – a designated primary contact in a corporate facility who is trained by and networked directly with the local responders to catalog corporate resources, identify vulnerable/special needs employees and families, volunteers for integration into the local preparedness and response plan, and provide specific personnel for programs such as Citizen Corps and CERT. CROs would be connected together and with the community through the Essential Public Network, and trained by Guardian Corps members through the local college and university systems (see below).
3. **National Stakeholder Community Alert Network (NSCAN)** - a national data base of stakeholders, community by community, each with nomination provenance, permissions and privileges for access to a single sign-on portal that can receive and send tear-line information. It is estimated that there are over 1,000,000 such sector members of local communities who are critical to America’s domestic preparedness but who are not currently in any trusted network accessible by governmental authorities at any level. The recommendation is to form the NSCAN using current software managed by Battelle Memorial Institute so that the NCTC would have access to a validated, real-time database of community stakeholders critical to community preparedness, response and recovery.
4. **Essential Public Network** – a system to connect government with community organizations and businesses to multiply the response and recovery capacity of the public sector; and to link all the community stakeholders in a secure, interoperable network that is built to plug into federal information during crisis; and serve as a secure and dependable local bridge to the local responder, law enforcement and community sectors. Visit the EPN at
5. **GuardianCorps** - local responders who serve as the adjunct professors through the community, vocational and related colleges and universities to train the Crisis Response Officers and their employees, creating a feeder program for Citizen Corps, CERT and similar state and federal programs. Universities of Harvard, Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama and Virginia Tech are examples of target universities to participate in developing the curriculum.

6. **ResponderCorps** - a standing reserve under the state(s) defense forces consisting of trained all-hazard responder volunteers, recruited from the National Guard, CROs and GuardianCorps, deployed by governors through regional mutual assistance pacts under the command of the TAG to establish immediate communication/coordination and provide surge management of volunteers and private sector materiel using national standards during the immediate hours of a crisis. They provide the military precision and interoperability without the federal issue of combat troops, yet are under the adjutant general of the state in which the crisis occurs, working through the local incident commander following ICS, and with jurisdiction and political leadership to back-up and multiply the local capability while waiting for federal and state response support.

7. **CitizenGuardians** – a trained group of corporate employees, working with local responders, CROs and Citizen Corps councils, to care for responder families and community vulnerable/special needs individuals. Serving as a buddy system, these retired or employed citizens are registered with the NSCAN, have access to the EPN and have geo-locatable stored value cards and medical identification cards specific to their charges, available to help pay for and streamline the evacuation, transfer and relocation process.

8. **National Congress for Secure Communities** -- The Blueprint process was begun in September of 2005 with a series of firehall/townhall meetings in 3 states of Tennessee, Alabama and Virginia, followed by the formation meeting of the Advisory Committee November 16, 2005 in Washington D.C. Regional meetings have been held, starting with the Northeast regional meeting in Cambridge, Massachusetts on the campus of the Kennedy School of Government on March 31, 2006, and others towns and partners through 2006 and 2007. The National Task Force has recommended that once each year, critical sector stakeholders meet in Washington to develop recommendations for pilot demonstrations that can incorporate ideas and best practices that have been identified through regional meetings and public input into the National Blueprint. For more information, please visit www.nationalcongress.org .