

## **OBSERVING AND DOCUMENTING THE INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACK ON THE PENTAGON**

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**Key Words:** Emergency Management, Pentagon, Terrorism, Emergency Response

### **Abstract**

The National Science Foundation provided funding for the George Washington University Institute for Crisis, Disaster, and Risk Management to acquire and structure baseline data that will support the analysis of the inter-organizational response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The documentation of organizational structures and the information flows between and among emergency management and emergency medical decision makers will support future research that will address the problems of communication, inter-organizational coordination, and decision making in complex, multi organizational response environments. This paper focuses on the response to the attack on the Pentagon and describes a very successful, very complex, response operation. The organizational response was based on existing organizational systems: the Federal Response Plan, the Incident Command System, and Unified Command but a significant level of organizational creativity and adaptation was necessary to achieve success.

### **Introduction**

On September 11, the United States has suffered its first civilian mass casualty event since the Texas City Explosions/Fires of 1947 (581 deaths, 3,500 injuries). The toll of the attacks approaches the casualty toll of the Galveston Hurricane of 1900, the most catastrophic disaster in U.S. history. First response, emergency management, emergency medicine, and military organizations responded heroically and effectively. These events have, however, destroyed the myth that somehow the U.S. will remain immune to mass casualty disasters and that the U.S. emergency medical, emergency response, and emergency management systems would not have to deal with tragedies on the scale experienced in less developed countries.

The coordination of the complex organizational systems that are rapidly created to respond to an event such as the WTC collapse and the Pentagon attack is incredibly difficult. After the September 11 attacks, the United States experienced its first large scale integration of emergency management, emergency medical, law enforcement, and military resources prescribed by the Terrorism Annex to the Federal Response Plan. The attacks also resulted in the first activation of the National Disaster Medical System. We do not understand how to ensure that these meta organizations will function effectively, how to best use technology to support their decision

processes, how to manage information in such a turbulent environment, and how to retain the organizational knowledge of their successes and failures. Information management and coordination issues that arose in this response must be identified and studied as our response system evolves in the response to this tragedy.

### **The Attacks**

At 8:45am on September 11, 2001, American Airlines flight 11 crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center complex in New York City. Initially, this unbelievable event appeared to be isolated. Eighteen minutes later, as the media was televising video around the world of the smoking skyscraper, a second commercial airliner came into view and disappeared with an enormous explosion into the South tower. This plane, Flight 175 (also from Boston,) confirmed any initial fears that the United States was under attack by an unidentified terrorist group.

Within five minutes of the second event, the Federal Aviation Administration ordered all New York City airspace 'sterilized', (freed from air traffic). Seven minutes later, all New York City airports were closed, and at nine minutes after that (9:26am), all civil flights were prevented from taking off. Over 4000 planes had been over US land, and several hundred were en route from overseas - all were grounded or re-routed to Canada. This could do nothing, however, to stop American Airlines flight 77 from reaching its crash- course destination of the Pentagon at 9:43. Fearing yet another attack, the White House was evacuated at 9:45. Just after 10am, the South Tower of the World Trade Center complex collapsed, raising the estimated dead and injured exponentially. Secret service agents were positioned in Lafayette Park (10:08), the United Nations complex was evacuated in New York (10:13), and several federal departments and agencies are evacuated in Washington, DC (10:22). By 10:30, the U.S. Office of Personnel management had begun the evacuation of all DC federal buildings.

Also around 10:30am, the North Tower of the World Trade Center complex collapsed, adding to fears concerning the scale of casualties. At this point, Governor Pataki closed all government offices in New York, and New York City mayor Giuliani ordered the evacuation of all Manhattan areas south of Canal Street. It was reported that several airports around the country were evacuating, and rumors of car bombs and additional hijacked planes were making their way into the news. Reports of a fourth plane, which crashed in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, were confirmed.

At noon, it was still not known if the attack was over. Washington, DC closed its city government buildings, and the GSA closed its buildings and courthouses throughout 5 states in the capitol region. DC mayor Anthony Williams declared a state of emergency for the city of Washington at 1:22pm. Soon after, the FAA announced that there would be no commercial air traffic until at least noon of September 12.

By mid afternoon, rescue crews from around the country began arriving at the three sites to assist to local police and fire departments that immediately responded. Mayor Giuliani announced at 2:49, in a press conference, that subway and bus services were restored in New York City. Estimates into the number of injured or killed range from several hundred to tens of thousands, though no official is willing to give specific numbers.

As the evening approaches, it was reported that Building 7 of the World Trade Center complex, which had been burning for much of the day, has collapsed. In addition, other buildings in the area of the towers are reported to be on fire. Mayor Giuliani appeared at an evening press conference and urges New Yorkers to remain at home on September 12<sup>th</sup> if they can, though Defense Secretary Rumsfeld holds a news conference in which he states that Pentagon employees should expect to report to work.

## Timeline of the first 48 hours

### September 11, 2001

- 8:45am American Airlines Flight 11 from Boston flown into World Trade Center North Tower (cnn.com)
- 8:50 EPA Headquarters EOC activated
- 8:50~ USCG NRC alerts FBI of WMD terrorist event. (Capt. Mike Eagan, USCG)
- 9:00~ Airports Authority begins evacuation of Reagan, BWI and Dulles airports
- 9:01 EPA headquarters and EPA Region 2 begin coordination conference call (EPA Timeline)
- 9:03 United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston flown into World Trade Center South Tower (cnn.com)
- 9:08 FAA sends written notice to all NYC airports to 'Sterilize' the airspace
- 9:10 EPA Headquarters uses GETS conference call system with regions 1-4 (EPA Timeline)
- 9:17 FAA shuts down NYC Airports (cnn.com)
- 9:21 Port Authorities of NY and NJ close all bridges and tunnels in NY area (cnn.com)
- 9:26 FAA issues national "ground stop", preventing all civil flights from taking off
- 9:30 President Bush gives first press appearance in Florida (cnn.com)
- 9:32 HHS National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and Commissioned Corps Readiness Force (CCRF) notified and placed on advisory (HHS Sitreps)
- 9:40 DC recalls off-duty police officers, begins closing roads and securing government buildings (Washington Post, 9/17, A1)
- 9:43 American Airlines Flight 77 hits Pentagon - immediate evacuation begins. (cnn.com)
- 9:45 FAA grounds all planes in the US
- 9:45 White House evacuation begins (cnn.com)
- 9:50~ Arlington County activates emergency response plan - County Mgr. Ron Carlee becomes director of the emergency response (Alexandria/Arlington Extra, 9/20, p12)
- 9:57 President Bush departs Florida for Barksdale, LA (cnn.com)
- 10:00 EPA begins coordination with NY and VA governments (26 initial staff to NYC and Pentagon) (EPA Timeline)
- 10:05 World Trade Center South Tower Collapses (cnn.com)
- 10:08 Secret Service begin patrol of Lafayette Park, across from the White House (cnn.com)
- 10:10 Partial collapse of the Pentagon (cnn.com)
- United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark crashes in Somerset County, PA (cnn.com)
- 10:13 United Nations evacuates NY headquarters (11,400 employees) (cnn.com)
- 10:16 DC Mayor COS sends email to 100's of workers 'Evacuate Building NOW' - retracts 4 min's later (Washington Post, 9/17, A1)
- 10:22 World Bank, State Department and Justice Department evacuate (cnn.com)
- 10:24 FAA reports all inbound transatlantic flights are being diverted to Canada (cnn.com)
- 10:25 Alarm sounds at OPM, PA system instructs employees of that building to evacuate
- 10:28 World Trade Center North Tower collapses (cnn.com)
- 10:30 OPM and White house begin evacuation of all Washington, DC federal buildings
- 10:39 FAA closes all operations at all US airports by NOTAM (Notice to Airmen)
- 10:46 Colin Powell begins his trip back to the United States (cnn.com)
- 11:50~ DC hospitals move into emergency response mode
- 10:54 Israel begins evacuation of all diplomatic missions (cnn.com)
- 10:57 NY Governor Pataki closes all NY government offices (cnn.com)
- 11:02 NYC Mayor Giuliani orders evacuation of area south of Canal Street (cnn.com)
- 11:16 CNN reports the Center for Disease Control and Prevention response teams preparing to respond (cnn.com)
- 12:00pm US closes border to Mexico

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- 12:04 Los Angeles International airport evacuated (cnn.com)  
12:15 San Francisco airport evacuated (cnn.com)  
12:46 GSA orders federal courthouses and offices in VA, DE, MD, PA, WV closed until further notice  
Trains in/out of DC Union Station stopped  
DC closes all government buildings and all 19 buildings under Capital Police jurisdiction
- 1:04 President Bush gives second press appearance from Barksdale, LA (cnn.com)  
1:27 Mayor Anthony Williams holds news conference, declares state of emergency for DC (cnn.com)  
1:44 Pentagon announces 5 warships and 2 aircraft carriers have been deployed for NY and East Coast (cnn.com)  
1:48 President Bush begins flight from Barksdale, LA to Offutt Air Force Base, NE (cnn.com)  
2:00 FBI announces they "are working under the assumption that the 4 planes are part of a terrorist attack" (cnn.com)  
2:21 53 people reported injured at the Pentagon  
2:30 FAA announces there will be no commercial air traffic until at least 12pm on September 12 (cnn.com)  
2:49 Mayor Giuliani announces subway and bus service has been partially restored - no casualty info (cnn.com)  
3:55 Mayor Giuliani announces that 200 people are critically injured, of 2100 total injuries reported (cnn.com)  
4:06 CA Governor Gray Davis dispatches USAR teams to NYC (cnn.com)  
4:25 Stock exchanges (ASE, NYSE, Nasdaq) announce that they will remain closed September 12 (cnn.com)  
4:30 President Bush leaves Offutt Air Force Base, NE for Washington, DC (cnn.com)  
5:20 World Trade Center building 7 collapses (cnn.com)  
6:00 Incident Command Meeting at the Pentagon, led by Chief Schwartz  
6:00 AMTRAK resumes rail service  
6:10 Mayor Giuliani urges NYC residents to remain home September 12 if at all possible (cnn.com)  
6:40 Donald Rumsfeld holds news conference in Pentagon to announce the building is operational except for corridors 2-6 (cnn.com)  
6:54 President Bush arrives in Washington, DC (cnn.com)  
7:02 CNN reports that some NYC bridges are open to outbound traffic  
7:17 Attorney General Ashcroft announces FBI website for attack tips, and that friends/family can call 800.331.0075 to leave contact information (cnn.com)  
7:30 President Bush issues major disaster declaration for NYC (FEMA-1391\_DR)  
7:45 NYPD announces that 78 officers are missing, and at least 200 firefighters are feared dead (cnn.com)  
8:30 President Bush gives 3<sup>rd</sup> press appearance (cnn.com)  
9:22 Pentagon fire still burning, but under control (cnn.com)
- Unsp. DOD opens media operation center at Marine Corps Post Henderson Hall, Arlington, VA (703.697.9928) (defenselink.mil)  
Unsp. HHS activates National Medical Emergency System, which put and puts 7000 volunteer doctors in 80 disaster teams on readiness alert. The PHS Commissioned Corps was also put on readiness alert (5700 personnel); waits for orders from FEMA (HHS Sitreps)  
Unsp. Federal Reserve assures that funds will be available if needed  
Unsp. DC Emergency Management Agency holds meeting at Franklin D. Reeves Conference Center

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- Unsp** FEMA dispatches 4 USAR teams to Pentagon - claims to have coordinated Emergency Response
- Unsp** Arlington Fire Chief Plaughter announces 100 - 800 feared dead at Pentagon
- Unsp** HHS sends 3 DMATs to the Pentagon (46 medical personnel from the U.S. Commissioned Corps DMAT in Rockville, MD; 35 from Winston-Salem, NC; and 36 from Atlanta, GA.) (HHS Sitreps)
- Unsp** HHS sends 3 DMORTs to the Pentagon, with 102 personnel (HHS Sitreps)
- Unsp** HHS sends 5 DMATs to NYC (25 personnel from Lyons, NJ; 44 from White Plains, NY; 41 from Boston; 52 from Worcester, MA; and 49 from Providence, RI). (HHS Sitreps)
- Unsp** HHS sends 4 DMORTs with a total of 169 personnel to NYC from throughout the East Coast. (HHS Sitreps)
- Unsp** Navy prepares USS Comfort to ship to NYC if necessary
- Unsp** US Customs goes on Code Red Security Alert
- Unsp** USCG sends 4 helicopters, 270' Cutter, 3 110' coastal patrol boats and 7 small boats to NYC
- Unsp** FEMA names Ted Monet as coordinating officer of the disaster
- Unsp** HHS CDC deploys 4 epidemiologists and 2 laboratory experts to NY to assist assessing medical needs and capacity planning for treating victims in the area's hospitals. (HHS.gov)
- Unsp** HHS Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services sends 5 staff to assist at the response center established by FEMA in Edison, NJ (HHS.gov)
- Unsp** HHS authorized the 1<sup>st</sup> emergency use of the National Pharmaceutical Stockpile - the shipment arrived in NY at 9pm - 1 of 8 "12-Hour Push Packages" (HHS.gov)
- Unsp** HHS CDC worked with tetanus vaccine manufacturers and the public health dept's of NY and DC to ensure adequate supplies of the vaccine were shipped to both locations (HHS.gov)
- Unsp** HHS CDC activates Health Alert Network (provides rapid information to all health departments)(HHS.gov)
- Unsp** EPA and OSHA both monitoring exposure to potentially contaminated dust and debris; Region 2 emergency response staff stationed at FBI Joint Operations Center in NYC, Trenton NJ EOC, and FEMA's office in Albany, NY; Region 2's Edison, NJ office is providing space for 100 FEMA staff; EPA HQ EOC operating on 24-hour basis; R3 has emergency responders deployed DC, Ft. Meade and at Willow Grove Naval Air Station, PA. (EPA Timeline)
- Unsp** EPA - REGION II: Deployed 4 On-Scene coordinators to NYC, began 24-hour operations in Edison, NJ, Collected 4 dust samples in vicinity of WTC, initiated daily ambient air monitoring program downwind of WTC, coordinated with NYC and OSHA (EPA Timeline)
- Unsp** EPA- REGION III: Deployed 4 OSCs (VA, EOC, DC EOC, FEMA ROC, Ft. Meade), Deployed 4 START with OSC to Ft. Meade (EPA Timeline)
- Unsp** EPA- HEADQUARTERS: Began 24-hour operation at EOC, prepared for Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) activation, removed EPA's website to protect against hackers & secure data (OEI), staffed FEMA EST, staffed FBI Strategic Information Operations Center (SIOC), Took precautions to ensure payroll for all EPA employees, Discussion of permitting issues for air and waste with Regions II and III. (EPA Timeline)

**September 12, 2001**

- 8:00am** FEMA director Allbaugh announces phone number (800.462.9029) for emergency assistance

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- 8:11 Mayor Giuliani announces the rescue of 6 firemen and 3 police officers from WTC (stratfor.com)
- 8:15 UN announces that all staff are ordered out of Afghanistan (stratfor.com)
- 9:05 Announcement made that Dulles Airport will open at 3pm for luggage/car retrieval (stratfor.com)
- 9:53 Pentagon announces that 80 bodies have been recovered (stratfor.com)
- 10:06 Congress reconvenes (stratfor.com)
- 10:30 DOD opens family assistance center at Sheraton Hotel in Crystal City (info, counseling, support)(defenselink.mil)
- 11:20 FAA bans all air-travel in US indefinitely (stratfor.com)
- 11:58 Pentagon evacuates because of smoke; staff return shortly thereafter (stratfor.com)
- 1:00pm Pentagon alerts HHS that it will handle all med and mort needs on -site (
- 1:07pm FBI conducts search of Boston hotel room (stratfor.com)
- 1:10 American Airlines distributes passenger lists (stratfor.com)
- 1:48 United Airlines distributes passenger lists (stratfor.com)
- 2:20 Flights rerouted on September 11 given authority to resume - all others still grounded (stratfor.com)
- 2:40 Amtrak train from Boston to Providence boarded - 3 taken into custody (stratfor.com)
- Unsp Bush issues Emergency Declaration for Arlington County
- Unsp NY Union officials release that ~265 Firemen were killed
- Unsp FAA says that flights can resume, but airline executives decide not to do so for safety reasons
- Unsp Allbaugh and Bush meet to discuss the role FEMA will play in the disaster
- Unsp FEMA Acting Deputy Director Mike Brown holds press conference, gives NYC statistics - 40 bodies recovered, 1600 treated
- Unsp Bush requests \$20 billion in emergency funding from congress; congress allocates \$20 billion
- Unsp Army Corps of Engineers sends Structural Assessment Teams to assess debris removal and power
- Unsp FEMA Director Allbaugh flies to New York City
- Unsp IAFF President Harold Schaitberger says toll to NYC firefighters higher than originally estimated
- Unsp Metro opens Pentagon subway stop
- Unsp DOE's Energy Information Agency (EIA) releases oil market assessment showing overall U.S. and global oil supplies appeared to be minimally impacted, to quell rising fears of a shortage; DOE coordinates with ACOE to restore power to NYC, provide power generators and fuel; DOE personnel help evaluate the movement of critical oil resources into NY Harbor and review tug and barge availability for oil movement to upstate NY; DOE offers key equipment to assist in the NYMEX re-opening and is coordinates with USCG and local harbors to evaluate oil supplies up and down the East Coast; in conjunction with FEMA, DOE assists in search and rescue using Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) equipment, adapted with motion detection applications and uses remotely-operated equipment, including infrared cameras, robotic equipment and fiber optic cameras, to aid the search for victims and evidence.
- Unsp EPA- REGION II: Received initial mission assignments from FEMA for \$200,000, later increased to \$500,000, established operations from Edison, NJ with help of 12 OSCs, took initial dust and air samples near WTC, provided 200 Tyvek suits to Monmouth County, NJ Health Department (EPA Timeline)
- Unsp EPA- REGION III: Received initial mission assignment from FEMA for \$25,000, deployed 4 OSCs and 2 air inspectors to Pentagon and surrounding Arlington/DC area,

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deployed OSCs to FEMA A-ROC, ERT-A in Arlington, DC EMA; closed DC EMA, moved 4 START personnel from Ft. Meade to Pentagon (EPA Timeline)

**Unsp** EPA - HEADQUARTERS: Began twice daily emergency response technical conference calls with regions 1-6, prepared morning and evening special reports, held conference call with the National Response Team agencies, established communications support for Region II, including website and web access to email (EPA Timeline)

**pm** Donald Rumsfeld announces Pentagon death toll lower than estimated 800 (defenselink.mil)

**pm** HHS NMRT-E Weapons of Mass Destruction travels to NYC (HHS Sitreps)

**September 13, 2001**

**7:30am** Pentagon evacuated after a bomb threat is called in

**8:15** Sec. Thompson authorizes first collaboration of DMORT team with FBI to PA crash site

**12:00pm** Vice President Cheney is taken to Camp David

**6:00pm** Congress evacuated after a bomb threat is called in

**6:00** NYC Mayor's Office (Sam Benson) discusses establishment of treatment center with HHS, to begin at 7am on September 14<sup>th</sup>

**Unsp** President Bush declares September 14 a day of remembrance

**Unsp** President and Congress agree on \$40 billion in emergency appropriations

**Unsp** Airline operations resume

**Unsp** Army search and rescue move ~60 bodies to Dover Air Force Base, DE from Pentagon

**Unsp** President Bush announces the creation of Homeland Security cabinet position, names Tom Ridge

**Unsp** President Bush issues Emergency Declaration for VA

**Unsp** Tommy Thompson meets with Governor Pataki and Mayor Giuliani to discuss NYC needs (HHS.gov)

**Unsp** HHS Substance Abuse and mental Health Administration team dispatched to NY to conduct longer-range planning for services to rescue workers, survivors and others. (HHS.gov)

**Unsp** HHS sends National Medical Response Team (NMRT) to NY to help detect any possible industrial chemical-related problems that may result from the collapse of buildings (HHS.gov)

**Unsp** HHS sends DMORT team with 35 personnel and a portable morgue with 8 personnel to Pennsylvania crash site at request of FBI. (HHS Sitreps)

**Unsp** HHS Veterinary Medical Assistance Team (VMAT) activated and sent to NYC - 9 vets. (HHS Sitreps)






**Unsp** HHS FDA continues to monitor pharmaceutical and blood availability and helped arrange deliveries of skin products for burn victims in New York and Washington, D.C. (HHS.gov)

**Unsp** EPA- REGION II: Staffed Edison, NJ with 30 personnel, received 15 OSCs who were deployed to Edison, NJ, provided assistance to financial district companies to recover business assets in computers, coordinated with ACOE on WTC debris removal (EPA Timeline)

**Unsp** EPA- REGION III: Deployed 6 OSCs to Arlington, VA, Initiated air monitoring at Pentagon, transitioned A-ROC activities back to ROC in Philadelphia (EPA Timeline)

**Unsp** EPA- HEADQUARTERS: Continued EOC operations, technical conference calls, and special reports, initiated procurement of laptops and wireless communications for Region II. (EPA Timeline)

**Color Key**

-  = Event
-  = Action - General
-  = Action - NYC
-  = Action - Pentagon and PA
-  = Organizational Response

**The Interview and Analysis Process**

The project team interviewed key personnel from the Arlington Fire Department, the Arlington National Medical Response Team, The Department of Defense, the FEMA Incident Support Team, Fairfax County Urban Search and Rescue Team, FEMA, The US Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Health and Human Services Office of Emergency Preparedness, the State of Virginia Office of Emergency Management. The National Response Center, the HHS National Medical Response Team, and the American Red Cross. We obtained and analyzed sitreps and reports from FEMA, EPA, the US Army Corps of Engineers, The Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the National Response Center. We also obtained daily action plans prepared by the FEMA Emergency Response Team (ERT), Disaster Field Office (DFO), and Incident Support Team (IST). Press reports (primarily the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and CNN) were used. We focused on the Federal mobilization of resources for all events and on the incident response to the Pentagon attack because of the proximity to first responders, the limited time and resources for the study, and the complexity and continuing status of the response to the WTC collapse. The on scene response to the attack on the Pentagon was coordinated by the Arlington County Fire Department. However, over 100 organizations played a role in this complex response. Figure 1 is a photograph of the early, fire suppression, stage of the response.

Figure1: The Pentagon

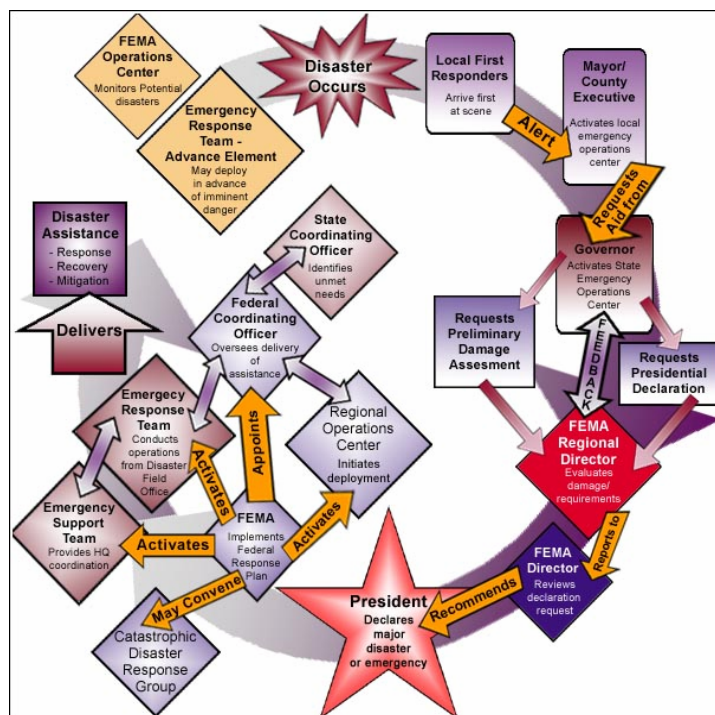




## The Response

The initial response to the fire and emergency units from the Arlington County Fire Department, the Fort Myer Fire Department (a U.S. Army Base located adjacent to the Pentagon), and the Metropolitan Airport Authority Fire Unit at Ronald Reagan National Airport. Municipalities in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area have a well established mutual aid system, and Fire and Rescue units from Fairfax County, Montgomery County, Alexandria, and the District of Columbia responded without any state or federal intervention or control. The Federal and state mobilization of resources for the response was governed by the structure and process defined in the Federal Response Plan (FRP). The purpose of the FRP is to provide a mechanism for the mobilization and coordination of federal resources to assist states in the response to Presidentially declared disasters. The FRP was amended to provide a Terrorism Annex, providing a collaborative role for the FBI and FEMA during the response to a terrorist attack. The flow of decisions and organizational capability envisioned for the response to a major natural disaster is illustrated in Figure 2 below, taken from the FRP.

Figure 2: Organizational Evolution Specified by the FRP





- experience. The Arlington County Incident Commander, for example, used a Fairfax County mobile command vehicle as the site for the Unified Command Center.
2. *Federal assets and teams, were obtained through the Federal Response Plan structure, and were effectively used.* Federal resources mobilized included search and rescue teams, disaster mortuary teams, disaster medical teams, medical response teams, EPA Hazmat teams, US Army Corps of Engineers debris removal teams, and American Red Cross mass care resources. The mobilization of federal resources occurred despite that fact that senior Federal and State emergency managers were isolated in Big Sky, Montana at an emergency management conference. The federal response organization was created and the federal mobilization was successfully executed by skilled mid level managers. The Catastrophic Disaster Response Group, the interagency group of senior managers tasked with resolving problems during a disaster response, never convened.
  3. *The Pentagon response was effective. An effective on scene response organization was rapidly created. Goals were defined and met.* The response required the local first response organization (Arlington County fire department) to coordinate of a complex meta-organization consisting of organizations from different communities: emergency response (fire, rescue, EMT), emergency management, law enforcement, and the military. The Unified Command created and executed response plans and coordinated these plans with FEMA, the FBI, and DOD. The Arlington County EOC was established within 30 minutes of the event, and supported the first responders. The FBI and FEMA established a Joint Operations Center at Fort Myers.
  4. *The complex organization that evolved was based upon the ICS system, but creativity and coordination resulted in a flexible, effective organization.* No one participating in the response to the Pentagon had ever responded to a terrorist attack. The fact that this attack took place in metropolitan Washington, and was on the headquarters building of the U.S. military meant that many organizations would be involved and many organizational issues that were totally unanticipated by response planners would occur. Issues such as the relationship between military and local responders (the ACFD was in charge) and the responsibility for identification of remains (DOD was in charge) were handled professionally and quickly. The incident management structure was a point of departure for creative, effective management...not a strait jacket.
  5. *Effectively coordinating organizations with the diverse organizational cultures of first responders, military, medical, and law enforcement in a complex disaster response is a difficult issue for incident managers.* As stated by one senior participant: "How do you, beyond ICS, blend the cultures of local assets and military assets". More than one participant pointed out that pre-established relationships between federal law enforcement and local responders greatly eased potential organizational problems. Unified command is a concept used in the U.S. for pollution incidents and technological accidents, but has not been formally incorporated into the Federal Response Plan. Organizational familiarity was a key factor in the successful coordination of response organizations. Personal relationships were helpful, but not as critical as familiarity with organizational roles, responsibilities, and capabilities.
  6. *Information Management and Media Relations are critical to actual and perceived success.* The response was hindered in the early hours by conflicting and uncertain external information. For example, rescue operations were suspended and the site evacuated based on rumors of an additional incoming plane. On site communications were established using radios (common frequencies pre-established through mutual aid agreements) and cell phones (assisted by "cells on wheels"). "Media management was a 'huge' issue in this incident" according to a senior manager. Very early in the process, a media site was established at a gasoline station within view of the site and periodic briefings were provided. This minimized, but did not eliminate, erroneous and conflicting information in media reportage.

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During the Pentagon response, a complex management situation involving very disparate entities under severe stress responded surprisingly well. Unfortunately, this is unlikely to be the last time that first responders and emergency managers face the challenge of managing the consequences of a deliberate terrorist event. The fact that systems worked is important. Documenting why they worked and communicating that knowledge is essential.

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### Author Biographies

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