

CITIZEN CORPS VOLUNTEERS TO PREPARE FOR AND RESPOND TO TERRORISM AND NATURAL DISASTERS

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Abstract

In his State of the Union address to Congress on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush announced his intention to establish the USA Freedom Corps, one purpose of which would be to improve homeland security. The President invited every American to commit at least 4,000 hours over their lifetime to volunteer service to their neighbors and the nation. The President gave the Federal Emergency Management Agency oversight responsibility for coordinating the new Citizen Corps, the homeland security part of the USA Freedom Corps.

The Citizen Corps will unify and expand new and existing volunteer programs which focus on crime prevention and natural disaster preparedness and response to add terrorist-related concerns. These programs include Community Emergency Response Teams, overseen by FEMA; Neighborhood Watch, overseen by the Department of Justice; Volunteers in Police Service, overseen by the Department of Justice; Medical Reserve Corps, overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services; Terrorism Information and Prevention System, overseen by the Department of Justice and FBI; and Citizen Corps Councils.

The Administration is requesting more than \$230 million for these Citizen Corps initiatives in the Fiscal Year 2003 budget. The federal responsibilities are to provide general information, to develop training standards and materials, and to identify initiatives that support the goal of the Citizen Corps to bring together local government, the private sector and volunteers into a cohesive community resource. The role of these volunteer programs to prepare for acts of terrorism and natural disasters will be examined.

Introduction

The attacks by terrorists on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Virginia have resulted in a number of actions in the United States to both find those responsible and to prevent such incidents in the future. President George W. Bush described his plan when he gave his State of the Union address to members of Congress on January 29, 2002 (Bush 2002a) He said that he would be sending a budget to Congress to support three goals: to win the war against terrorism; to protect our homeland; and to revive our economy. This paper will discuss his homeland approaches to protect our citizens and strengthen our nation against the threat of attacks in the future.

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The President stated that his budget would have funding for a sustained strategy of homeland security focused on bioterrorism, emergency response, airport and border security, and improved intelligence. He called for every American to become a volunteer and commit at least 4,000 hours during his or her lifetime to the service of neighbors and our nation. He invited everyone to participate in the new USA Freedom Corps, which will focus on responding in case of crisis at home' rebuilding our communities' and extending American compassion through the world. The homeland security portion of the USA Freedom Corps will be called the Citizen Corps. It will include activities such as mobilizing retired doctors and nurses to assist in major medical emergencies, enlisting volunteers to help police and fire departments, alerting transportation and utility workers to spot dangerous activities of terrorists, and expanding neighborhood watch programs and community emergency response teams.

The President also called for the USA Freedom Corps to rebuild our communities by expanding and improving the AmeriCorps efforts for young people and for funding the Senior Corps to recruit more than 200,000 new volunteers. He is also concerned with extending the compassion of our country to every part of the world. He plans to double the number of volunteers in the Peace Corps over the next five years in an effort to encourage education, development and opportunities in the Islamic world.

Citizen Corps Programs

Citizen Corps volunteers will be able to participate in various programs which match their interests, skills and ability (Citizen Corps 2002). These programs are:

- Medical Reserve Corps: Retraining of retired doctors, nurses and healthcare professionals so that they can augment the local healthcare capacity to respond to medical emergencies caused by terrorists.
- Neighborhood Watch Programs: Expanding and enhancing neighborhood watch programs by incorporating terrorism prevention into the mission.
- Volunteers in Police Service: Expanding existing Police Department citizen academies and other programs for training local volunteers to perform non-sworn duties to free police officers to perform their front-line duties in times of emergency.
- Operations TIPS (Terrorist Information and Prevention System): Operation TIPS is designed to enlist the cooperation of postal workers, public utility employees, transportation workers and other citizens to identify and report suspicious activities which might be linked to terrorism or crime.
- Community Emergency Response Teams: Expanding the number of volunteers who have been trained to help neighbors in their local community prepare for and respond to natural disasters, and to add training for preparedness and response to acts of terrorism.

Medical Reserve Corps

Community-based volunteer Medical Reserve Corps units will be created as part of local Citizen Corps Council efforts throughout the United States. These Medical Reserve Corps units will be supported by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Veteran Affairs. The objective of these community-based Medical Reserve Corps will be to enlist retired healthcare professionals to augment local health care capacity during an emergency. No structured, coordinated system exists at the national level to incorporate the talent and knowledge of inactive physicians, nurses and other health professionals who may be eager to volunteer during emergencies. The Department of Health and Human Services will work with state and local jurisdictions to address issues of licensing and liability.

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The Medical Reserve Corps will assist communities in the delivery of necessary public health services during a crisis by providing state and local public health officials with a corps of volunteers to help expand capacity for the delivery of care. These volunteers will remove some of the burdens placed upon physicians, nurses, and others responding to a large-scale medical emergency affecting local communities. Medical Reserve Corps volunteers could assist community emergency response teams in triaging patients in order to send the most seriously affected to emergency rooms at hospitals, while providing care directly to those victims with less serious injuries.

The Department of Health and Human Services will provide guidance on how to create the Medical Reserve Corps at the local level. The Department of Health and Human Services will provide \$10 million in Fiscal Year 2003 to support this initiative. Hospitals of the Department of Veteran Affairs in local communities will provide additional support, such as training, for the Medical Reserve Corps. The Medical Reserve Corps units could also become another resource for deployment to other areas within states or regions in cases of extreme emergencies.

Neighborhood Watch Programs

Burglary rates in the United States increased during the 1960s. Law enforcement agencies considered a variety of crime prevention programs and developed a concept called “neighborhood watch” in which citizens of a neighborhood became more involved. The National Sheriffs’ Association took this concept a step further and proposed a national initiative called the National Neighborhood Watch Program (NSA 2002). Funding was sought and obtained from the Law Enforcement Administration in 1972 for this program. The first few years of the program involved disseminating information on the nature and volume of burglary and providing information to individual home owners on techniques to make their homes less vulnerable to break-ins. This effort then evolved into the establishment of local neighborhood watch groups where local residents banded together with their local police or sheriff’s department in an effort to reduce burglaries and other neighborhood crimes. The adoption of community policing by many local law enforcement agencies has contributed to a resurgence in Neighborhood Watch groups over the years.

The present concern about terrorism has resulted in a revised Neighborhood Watch program that will incorporate terrorism prevention into its routine mission. Neighborhood Watch will also operate as a distribution mechanism for anti-terrorism information circulated by Citizen Corps Councils and other agencies. The President’s announced goal is to double the number of Neighborhood Watch programs within the next two years. Neighborhood Watch programs have already been in existence for 30 years and have played an important role in preventing crime. The National Sheriffs’ Association estimate that approximately 7,500 communities representing nearly 30 million people around the country participate in grassroots crime prevention under Neighborhood Watch. As the “eyes and ears” of local communities, Neighborhood Watch is unique in bringing together local law enforcement and citizens for protection of communities.

Citizen Corps Councils will encourage the creation of Neighborhood Watch in communities that do not have them, and enhance the capacity and relevance to terrorism for those communities that do have Neighborhood Watch. The Neighborhood Watch programs will receive materials from the Department of Justice, working in conjunction with the National Sheriffs’ Association, on how to incorporate the new focus on terrorism. As a matter of fact, the National Sheriffs’ Association published a “Neighborhood Watch Manual” on the Internet on April 12, 2002. This manual was created to assist local communities and law enforcement organizations in understanding the new version of Neighborhood Watch, its role, and how to build a Neighborhood Watch program. The Department of Justice will provide \$6 million in Fiscal Year 2003 for the expanded Neighborhood Watch Program.

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In March 2002, Attorney General John Ashcroft visited Loudoun County in Northern Virginia to talk to residents about expanding the community crime prevention program to include the participation of ordinary citizens in detecting and preventing terrorism. The Loudoun County Sheriff who hosted the event felt that his county had been chosen for Ashcroft's announcement because of his emphasis on community policing and the commitment for establishing partnerships in the community. Since the announcement, the Sheriff's office has been working with residents to help them understand what it means to be on the lookout for terrorist activity. For example, the residents have been asked to report strange things, such as rental trucks parked in areas where there doesn't seem to be any driver around, or abandoned vehicles with out-of-state license plates.

Volunteers in Police Service

State and local law enforcement organizations have been given additional tasks since September 11 and many are finding it increasingly difficult to perform these tasks with the current number of sworn personnel. Recruiting additional officers is difficult and training takes months. Many Police Departments have found it desirable to establish citizen police academies to train local volunteers to perform non-sworn duties to free police officers to perform their front-line duties. I live in Pacific Grove, California, a city with a population of 17,000. The Pacific Grove Police Department has a Citizens Police Academy which offers a twelve week, 36 hour training course about twice a year. The course consists of three subjects given in each of the 12 weeks:

Week	6 pm	7 pm	8 pm
1	Department organization	Equipment/training	Station tour/ ID pictures
2	Recruitment/training	Arrests/interviews	Crime investigation
3	Defensive tactics	Field training	SWAT team
4	Traffic enforcement	Traffic Accidents	Driving under influence
5	Communications Center	Public Defender	District Attorney
6	Traffic stops	Domestic problems	Role playing
7	Horses & bicycles	Search & Seizure	DNA
8	Records	Report writing	Fire Department
9	County Coroner	County Jail tour	Juvenile Hall tour
10	Narcotics	Narcotics	Gangs
11	Less lethal agents	Firing range	Stun gun
12	Challenges	Evaluations	Graduation

Trained citizens are thus able to participate in Volunteers in Police Service programs (VIPS 2002). Some of the activities appropriate for non-sworn personnel are: doing finger printing; acting as crossing guards; assisting with crowd control and parking control at special events; participating in search and rescue missions for lost children; working with neighborhood watch groups; taking police reports; and performing other administrative tasks so that police officers can do front line police work. The Department of Justice will provide \$3 million in Fiscal Year 2003 to support these Volunteers in Police Service programs.

Operation Tips: Terrorist Information And Prevention System

As part of the Citizen Corps, Operation TIPS – the Terrorist Information and Prevention System–will be a nationwide mechanism for reporting suspicious terrorist activity (TIPS 2002). It will enlist millions of American transportation workers, truckers, letter carriers, train conductors, ship captains and utility employees. Operation TIPS will establish a national reporting system that would allow these workers, who have routines and are well positioned to recognize unusual events, to report suspicious activity to appropriate authorities. Every volunteer participant in this new program will be given a Citizen Corps: Operation TIPS information sticker that could be affixed to

the cab of the vehicle or placed in some other public location so that the toll free reporting number would be readily available to report any suspicious activity.

Operation TIPS builds on the success of programs such as Highway Watch, which is a crime prevention partnership among the American Trucking Association and six states which enhances the ability of mariners aboard American vessels in inland waterways and the Great Lakes to track and report potential threats. Everywhere in America a concerned worker will be able to call the 1-800 Hotline with terrorist information which will route calls immediately to law enforcement or a responder organization. It is important to recognize that this terrorist information system will not use the existing 911 emergency system but will take the stress off already busy local systems needed for emergencies. The Department of Justice will provide \$2 million in Fiscal Year 2003 to establish the terrorist hotline and assist with training, and an additional \$6 million for the pilot programs and outreach materials.

U.S. Coast Guard / FBI “Coast Watch” Program

In World War II, the Coast Guard deputized recreational and commercial mariners as Coast Guard Auxiliaries beginning in 1942 (Webster 2002). Sailing yachts, motor cruisers, and fishing vessels were used to look for German submarines and perform harbor surveillance duties. The prototype of a new program based on this WWII Coastal Picket mission, called Coast Watch Maine is a joint effort of the Coast Guard and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to solicit voluntary help from commercial and recreational mariners.

This community outreach program encourages those who work at sea along our coasts or who are recreational boaters to report any unusual or suspicious activity which might be associated with terrorists. The Coast Watch program has investigators available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to take reports of questionable activities. Citizens are asked to call the local Coast Guard if they see:

- Unfamiliar individuals who: Take photographs, notes or sketches near commercial or passenger vessel activities, bridges or waterside facilities; loiter near or ask specific questions about commercial or passenger vessels or waterside facilities; attempt to rent or buy fishing or recreational vessels with cash for short-term, undefined use; or attempt to gain access to waterside facilities without proper identification
- Vessels which: Circle in and around pilings, particularly near commercial traffic; or loiter offshore near commercial or passenger vessel activities
- Other items of interest/concern: Suspicious attachments to bridges and overpasses; unusual packages or unusual deliveries; or recently established vendors or roadside food stands near commercial or passenger terminals or waterside facilities

In late September, 2001, a local Connecticut fisherman reported to the Coast Guard that he had seen “unusual items” under a bridge. Five pipe bombs were found, removed and detonated by the Connecticut State Police bomb squad. In October, 2001, a Massachusetts resident noticed a fishing vessel operating very close to shore in an area not normally associated with fishing activity. The citizen reported that the fishing vessel and a car waiting shore side were communicating with flashing lights. This information was provided to the FBI for investigative follow up. In mid-October, 2001, two fishermen reported a suspicious individual inquiring about purchasing a fishing vessel, training to become a fisherman, the amount of time to get offshore, and the location of the nearest Coast Guard station. This information was turned over to the local FBI office.

The First Coast Guard district is thus actively soliciting the help of commercial fisherman and recreational boaters who know what is “normal” on the water and what are suspicious activities. The Coast Watch Maine program will be expanded to all New England states in the near future.

Community Emergency Response Teams

Fire departments in Los Angeles and San Francisco began training citizens in earthquake preparedness in the 1980s. The program was called Community Emergency Response Teams in Los Angeles and Neighborhood Emergency Response Teams in the San Francisco area (NERT 2002). I live in Pacific Grove, about 125 miles south of San Francisco. The American Red Cross gave earthquake preparedness grants to the San Francisco Fire Department to send a group of instructors to Monterey, California in three different years to put on three-day train-the-trainer courses for the local fire departments in the 12 cities in our Monterey County. The normal neighborhood emergency response team training consists of a three-hour class each week for six weeks. The subjects covered are earthquake preparedness in the home and work place, control of gas, water, and electricity utilities, disaster medicine, light search and rescue, organization of emergency response teams, and use of fire extinguishers and cribbing to rescue injured people. Exercises and refresher training to practice disaster skills and bond the volunteers into teams have been emphasized. An organization of trained volunteers in the San Francisco area has continued for years.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has added disaster preparedness for hurricanes, floods, fires, and winter storms to the original earthquake focus of the California initiative and has an expanded student manual and instructional materials (CERT 2002). It has been estimated that communities in 28 states have initiated Community Emergency Response Team training and more than 200,00 individuals have completed the training. FEMA will provide \$61 million in Fiscal Year 2003 to support expansion of Community Emergency Response Team training.

Citizen Corps Councils

The Citizen Corps will be a locally-driven initiative managed by newly created Citizens Corps Councils, supported at the state level by Governors and coordinated at the national level by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (Councils 2002). The Citizen Corps Councils are intended to include leaders and representatives from local law enforcement, fire, emergency management, businesses, schools, faith-based groups, public health, community foundations, and other organizations that represent the diversity of local communities. The Councils will be responsible for developing a community action plan, including a local assessment of infrastructure vulnerabilities and possible threats, available local resources, and how to organize and expand local efforts. The community action plan will coordinate the community-based prevention and preparedness efforts with the new emphasis on terrorism.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency will provide \$144 million in matching funds in Fiscal Year 2003 to help create and maintain the efforts of the councils. Funds can be used for staff, training, equipment, program materials and other costs.

Recent Developments in the President's Support of the Citizen Corps

On April 8, 2002, President George W. Bush traveled to Knoxville, Tennessee to discuss his Citizen Corps initiative with leaders from fourteen cities and counties who have already launched Citizen Corps Councils (Bush 2002b). The President announced that he has requested \$50 million for Citizen Corps in his supplemental budget request to Congress for fiscal year 2002. He has already requested \$230 million for the Citizen Corps initiative in his fiscal year 2003 budget.

The local government leaders were from: Arlington Heights, Illinois; Charlotte, North Carolina; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Fort Wayne, Indiana; Knoxville, Tennessee; Laredo, Texas; Los Angeles, California; Orange County, California; Orlando, Florida; Placentia, California; Redondo Beach, California; Santa Fe County, New Mexico; Tucson, Arizona; and Washington, D.C.

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America's mayors, local government leaders and governors will receive the comprehensive Citizen Corps: A Guide for Local Officials. This guide will instruct them on how to start Citizen Corps Councils in their communities to build upon their existing crime prevention, disaster preparedness, and public health response activities through volunteer service.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal agencies have begun examining ways to include Citizen Corps activities as a factor in awarding grants to local and state governments from existing and proposed emergency preparedness and response programs.

While in Knoxville, President Bush commended that city's Citizens' Police Academy to illustrate how volunteers can help their local first-responder agencies in times of emergencies. The Knoxville police academy has trained more than 600 citizens in the past seven years, each of whom volunteered for 30 hours of police and emergency training. Other examples of exemplary performance of cities and counties to develop volunteer resources include:

- Orlando, Florida: The "Mayor's Matching Grant Program" enabled seven neighborhood associations in Orlando to create Community Emergency Response Teams and purchase emergency equipment.
- Placentia, California: The call for Citizen Corps volunteers has already gone out and they have stepped up recruiting efforts for their Neighborhood Watch, Community Emergency Response Team, Volunteers in Police Service, Police Explorers, and Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Services programs.
- Tucson, Arizona: Two weeks after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Mayor started "Operation Safe Tucson" which has now become the local Citizen Corps Council.
- Washington, D.C.: The Mayor has committed Washington, D.C.'s Commission on National and Community Service to develop its Citizen Corps Council. The Commission has already convened a meeting with local volunteer organizations and local officials to begin their planning activities, including their plans for Medical Reserve Corps and Volunteers in Police Service programs.
- Los Angeles, California: The City of Los Angeles' Citizen Corps Council will be working to expand a number of local programs, including their Community Emergency Response Team, Neighborhood Watch and SafetyNet programs. In 1985, Los Angeles developed what is now FEMA's national model for Community Emergency Response Teams as a way of providing citizens with basic training in disaster preparedness and rescue skills in the event of an earthquake. SafetyNet is the city's volunteer neighborhood emergency training program.

The Citizen Corps is up and running. More than 25,000 Americans in all 50 states and territories have signed up to volunteer in Citizen Corps activities.

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