



United States Department of Defense

## News Transcript

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**Presenter:** Secretary of the Army Thomas E. White

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### Secretary White Briefing on Homeland Security

White: Good morning, everyone. My name is Tom White. I'm the Secretary of the Army. But I'm here today in my capacity as executive agent for the department for Secretary Rumsfeld in homeland security.

As most of you know, we held a hearing -- or the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing -- on this subject yesterday. We had an extensive discussion yesterday afternoon. Let me make three points to kick this off that I made during the hearing, and then we can open it up for your questions.

As I have assessed, as executive agent for homeland security, the current situation, it seems to me that three principal tasks need to get done, and we're working on all three.

The first is to consolidate responsibility for homeland security and the myriad of issues and functions and responsibilities that touch that across the Department of Defense staff into a single organization. This would not represent any significant increase in the DoD staff; it would be a realignment of many people and bits and pieces of staff elements that are already there. Homeland security cuts across certain aspects of SOLIC [Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict], assistant secretary of defense, it cuts across Health Affairs, Reserve Affairs, Policy, Acquisitions to a certain extent in some key areas. And so the first strategic task is to consolidate all that into a single organization. We're working on that.

The second is to complete a review of the operational planning for homeland security through the Joint Staff -- the chairman, the Joint Staff, and the unified commands, to ensure that the arrangements for homeland security between the various unified commands that touch this, that those arrangements are optimal.

General Pace, the vice chairman, who testified with me yesterday, also said that beyond this short-term review that I just described, the Unified Command Plan is being looked at on a more global basis as to whether the arrangements of the Unified Command Plan to deal with global terrorism and the security environment we find ourselves in post-QDR findings are appropriate.

And those will be dealt with in due course. And the final solutions on homeland security will obviously be an integral part of wherever the Unified Command Plan changes come up that the Secretary of Defense will make decisions on, and ultimately, the President.

The third strategic task is the whole business of interagency in coordination with Governor Ridge's office and all the activities that he is undertaking. Let me give you a construct to think about homeland

security that I think is useful, and it will contrast who does what to whom.

I define and view homeland security as having two principal elements. The first is homeland defense. And I define defense as those areas where the Department of Defense takes the lead in the activity, like combat air patrols under the command and control of CINC [Commander in Chief] NORAD [North American Aerospace Defense Command], for example; like maritime coastal protection, which Joint Forces Command would be responsible for, in conjunction with the U.S. Coast Guard, obviously. So there are a set of activities where the unique capabilities of the department cause us to be the lead.

Then there are a whole raft of other activities where we provide support, as requested, to other federal agencies that have the lead, and we call that civil support.

So break it down into those two pieces, and I think it's easier to think about it.

On the civil-support side, that covers a wide range of activities, both at the federal level, and the state and local level involving the Guard, for example, both under state control, under governors' control, and under federal control. And we have a number of examples since the 11th of September of how that process is executed.

So those are the two pieces.

The challenge in the interagency that we are confronting with Governor Ridge, obviously, is there are a wide number of agencies that are involved in the civil support side. So biological attacks, then, as you know, Health and Human Services has the lead; if it's a chemical, it's EPA, and so on -- nuclear, DOE. And to train everyone up to assist the local first responders across the country and what their capabilities -- (prolonged audio break from source) -- Guard today is in Bosnia. And we have about 2,400 of our Virginia/Maryland Guardsmen in Bosnia. So there's a whole slug of people in that category.

There are then a whole group of people who have been activated for homeland security, under the control of governors, but the federal money is paying for those activities. That would include airport security, for example.

And then, finally, the governors have on their own hook activated certain parts of the National Guard to suit their own purposes, and they are paying for them or getting a FEMA reimbursement, as a separate category. So we'll break that all up for you and provide it.

Q: Sir, you are now wearing three hats -- ASD/SOLIC, you're the executive agent for homeland security, and Secretary of the Army. Can you explain, first of all, why you needed to be made acting ASD/SOLIC and then address how long you can do what are usually three full-time jobs simultaneously without giving short shrift to one of the organizations, at least, that you're supposed to be looking after?

White: The reason for the ASD/SOLIC assignment, again on an interim basis, was because there are certain elements of the SOLIC structure that have to do with homeland security and chemical/biological/radiological-type things.

So my interest in SOLIC is that side of SOLIC, and not their Special Operations Command oversight functions and the things that they do for special operations forces. I'm focusing on those pieces for that -- so that's why the SOLIC hat.

The appointment is very clearly on an interim basis, because Secretary of the Army is a full-time job. And as we structure and consolidate at DOD level the new arrangements, we will recruit and bring someone in to head that up, and the Secretary will make choices on that as we go forward.

Q: Mr. Secretary, General Kernan testified yesterday that he's established a directorate within Joint Forces Command to work on planning functions for their operations in homeland defense. Is it reasonable to infer from that that he is likely to be the homeland CINC? Can you tell us any more about the changes coming in the --

White: No. I think it's reasonable to infer from that that he has a significant responsibility for homeland security now, and consequently, he is standing up the appropriate planning activities to accommodate those responsibilities as they currently sit. Where it ends up with revisions to Unified Command Plan is an entirely separate matter.

I might also say that he has under his command, he has stood up a standing Joint Task Force for Civil Support, which is deployable, which has north of a hundred people, and which has done a great deal of planning on how to interface with local and state first responders and FEMA. And they represent a significant capability on the ground now. So JFCOM, Joint Forces Command, has spent a great deal of time looking at this homeland security.

Q: Just to stay with the UCP for a minute, do you expect now that there will be a new four-star billet, a new CINC for homeland security, or is it more likely that that's going to be parcelled among the existing CINCs?

White: Well, all of those options are on the table, and not only the arrangements for homeland security, but the global arrangements, as would be the case in any review of the Unified Command Plan. And that comes up the operational chain, not up my chain. And those are under review, and I don't want to preempt, certainly, the Secretary of Defense, who hasn't made any decisions on that yet.

Q: Mr. Secretary --

White: Yes, ma'am? And then I'll come right to you.

Q: -- would you just direct your comments to the American people. Yesterday in the hearing, a number of senators also said that they wanted the Defense Department to take a much stronger lead than just this on the homeland defense, and would you direct your comments now to the American people on -- many of them are worried about exactly where they stand now. Should they be -- what would you say to them?

White: Well, on the issue of homeland security, the Department of Defense has been actively involved in all aspects of it, and is today and will always be in the future.

We said very clearly in the Quadrennial Defense Review that was released just a month or so ago that homeland security was the most important activity of the Department of Defense. And I think we are giving it the priority that the QDR suggested it should have. That has been the case in the past, and it will certainly be the case in the future.

There are some aspects of homeland security that it is not appropriate for us to be the lead. But in those -- like biological threats, Health and Human Services, the public health system, Center for Disease Control -- those are the appropriate agencies to lead. But we provide a significant level of

support from Department of Defense assets to Health and Human Services, to make sure that the overall response to this type of threat is effective. And that's true in a number of other areas as well.

Q: But the senators were saying that they really wanted to amend Posse Comitatus so that the Defense Department could do a whole lot more than it's now doing.

White: We have not found -- well, first of all, we had a lively discussion of that yesterday in the hearing. The law is a law that dates from Reconstruction days after the Civil War, prevents federal troops from being used in law enforcement activities. The president has certain opportunities under the law to take exception to that in matters of emergency.

What we said yesterday was that the broad construct which is -- that is a tradition that has served our country well we think is appropriate. And so I would not see a complete change of that basic prohibition against federal troops being used in law enforcement.

But we are looking at the details of the law to see if revisions are appropriate in the way it's executed or the exceptions that can be taken, and we will get back to the Senate Armed Services Committee with our detailed review when it's finished.

Q: Mr. Secretary?

White: Ma'am?

Q: On homeland defense, I notice there are actually quite a few biological detectors out in front of the Pentagon now. Can you tell us if that was actually the result of a credible threat that the decision was taken to do that? And have you, in a civil support role, deployed other detectors around the nation?

White: We have -- the detectors outside are from a biological detection company that we have in the active force structure. They monitor air quality for a range of biological agents. Their purpose is to identify those. And we have taken a number of steps to improve Pentagon security since the 11th of September. That just happens to be one of them. I won't talk about the details of any threat projections that caused us to do that, consistent with Secretary Rumsfeld's guidance. But that's why they're there, and that's their capability.

Q: Have you sent them elsewhere?

White: Yes?

Q: I'm sorry. Have you sent them elsewhere, to other --

White: Yes, we have. And that, again, is an example of -- the reason we have those companies in the structure is because we face biological agents on the battlefield, which dates from the Soviet days. But they are also tremendously useful from a homeland security perspective, and they are an example of how we in the DOD are stepping up to provide our resources to support Health and Human Services, in this case, to enhance the overall capability.

Yes?

Q: Everybody is crying out for some form of coordination and centralization of the homeland security

responsibilities. And yet it seemed that we're -- you know, constantly dividing up the pie again and again. You know, Governor Ridge is an adviser, but the president appointed a retired Army general, General Downing, as the NSC counterterrorism guy. You have your responsibility. You're going to create a new DOD level post, and a CINC. So, instead of consolidating, aren't we dividing this thing up even more?

White: No, I don't think so. I think that we are bringing the appropriate focus by putting these people in critical positions that the subject requires; that homeland security is our most important activity, and consequently, we should be arranged for policy planning and resource allocation within the department in a way that reflects that importance, number one. Number two, that we should look at the command arrangements that we have to make sure that there are no gaps or seams and to make sure that the arrangement of the forces for homeland security is as effective as it can be.

I view that as a positive step. The fact that the president has named a Cabinet-level special assistant to focus the efforts of the entire government I think is very positive as well, and you cite General Downing, who has specific counterterrorism responsibilities on the NSC.

This all to me indicates a heightened awareness and concern for homeland security that I think is appropriate to the environment that we face. So I view that all as a tremendous positive. We are giving it the importance that it hasn't seen since the old civil defense days that we grew up with as kids in the '50s and '60s.

Q: The problem is that no one has centralized budget authority. Everybody is still going to be competing for dollars. And it may be more dollars than we had envisioned before 9/11, but there is nobody, you know, who has control of those budgets. Governor Ridge has no budget authority. You don't have budget authority on his position.

White: Well, we have budget authority over the DoD resources consistent with what the President and the Congress choose to appropriate. And so we have a fundamental responsibility to ensure that we adequately fund what we have stated is a top-priority activity of DoD. Governor Ridge has the position of reviewing budgets and stating his views to the president as to whether he thinks they're adequate or not for homeland security, and that at this point is what the president thought were sufficient arrangements.

Q: Mr. Secretary, it seems like that every decade, the military takes on a new responsibility. In the '80s, it was counterdrug. In the '90s, it was peacekeeping operations. And now in this decade, it looks like it's going to be counterterrorism. How much can the military really take on with its existing resources? And you mentioned that one of your recommendations is to complete a review of the operational planning for homeland security. So what kind of expanded military powers do you envision as part of counterterrorism? And what additional resources do you need?

White: Well, the answer to the first question is, in the business of homeland security, we started out as a homeland security organization 226 years ago. So in a way, we are returning to our roots. This is really the first time we've been threatened on our soil since the War of 1812, I think. And so this is not a question of an additional duty; this is an inherent duty, a historical duty for the department.

The question of resource allocation to the activity is a question that we are going to get after in the operational planning, at least in the following context: Take the Army, for example. We have active and federal Reserve and National Guard components. They are all actively involved as one Army in what I would call normal deployment activities. The Virginia Guard is in Bosnia, for example. We

have Guardsmen in Kosovo. We have Guardsmen forward deployed in other areas of the world.

So there is a -- so there is, from a common force structure, a call for global purposes to suit federal responsibilities, at the same time, governors, who bear principal responsibility for homeland security within their own states, have that same Guard under state control -- Title 32, if you like. And what we have to sort out are the arrangements for what takes priority from a common force structure, and how much of the force should be apportioned or dedicated to homeland security; how much should be ready for overseas deployment. Because that's the fact of life as we currently sit here today. And so that, I think, is the resource challenge that you mentioned in your question, and that's what we're working on.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Yes. You've said a lot about forces, but not about acquisition. Acquisition, as you know, can be a 20-year process, and it includes requirements. If you're looking at missions that we need to fly over the U.S. defending the homeland, that's very different than the type of things we've defined before. What are your thoughts on what will be the requirements process that gets funneled into acquisition strategy? Don't you need a homeland CINC to do that, if the requirements come down from the CINC level?

White: Well, I think -- yes. And right now -- General Eberhart talked about that yesterday. He got that very question from an air defense perspective during the hearing. And, you know --

Q: It's not just air defense.

White: Hm?

Q: It wouldn't just be air defense.

White: Right. And of course, General Kernan, who was also at the hearing, from a land and maritime responsibility, also will bring forward into the requirements process his views of what his critical deficiencies are, and the requirements that would ultimately either drive acquisition of something or some reconfiguration of structure or something else to deal with that. That's why the operational planning that's going on is so important.

And I think General Eberhart was talking about the different requirements associated with flying a domestic-type cap, as opposed to the traditional cap in the CENTCOM AOR, and the communications associated with it, and other things that would be unique here, that he has to deal with the requirements of. So they are getting on with it, and that's why it's so important to make sure that everybody understands who is in charge of what piece of it.

Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, those of us who come to work in this building have gotten used in the last few weeks, used to passing by checkpoints with troops, as opposed to policemen. Americans are seeing troops in their airports now instead of just policemen. Do you expect that in the coming months we're going to have to become accustomed to seeing troops at shopping malls or city halls or banks? Is that going to be -- become a fixture of American life?

White: Well, I think in the short term, and mainly under state control, you will see the Guard used for

security purposes, as deemed appropriate by the governors of the various states. The airport security -- uniformed airport security is under state control, and it's all National Guard.

We hope that that is of a temporary nature and that those Guardsmen, for, example, who are currently in the airports -- about 6,000 of them total, in over 430 airports across the country -- would be replaced in the near term by civilians in some contractual arrangements that would ensure us to meet the same standards of security, but without the uniformed military. So our view is that it should be, in most cases, temporary in nature, and that we would seek to put more permanent solutions in place.

Yes?

Q: Yes, sir. What DoD resources or support are local and state officials requesting most? And how able are you to provide them?

White: We have had a number -- well, first of all, on the state and local side, the first call to fill in that gap is the Guard of the particular state in question. In 23 of our states, our adjutant general, who directs the Guard on a daily basis, is also the director of emergency services for the governor. So they come together in a fairly efficient way. So most of the state and local requests are handled by the Guard, and a number of Guardsmen are deployed protecting power stations in New York or other critical infrastructure that the governor seeks.

We get a steady flow of requests -- over 70 of them so far, since the 11th of September -- from federal agencies of all types for specific types of support, and then we decide and work with the lead federal agency as to the appropriateness of the use of DoD resources for that, and then we get the resources deployed in an efficient way. And that is a daily activity here at the department. And as I said, we've filled over 70 requests. And by and large, the vast majority of requests that we get, we find ways to accommodate.

Q: May I follow up on the answer you gave to his question about you would like to see the Guardsmen there on just a temporary basis and have a more -- it sounds like the answer to that question and the answer to -- you don't really want to see posse comitatus eliminated, you want a very limited role for the Defense Department in security --

White: Well, we want whatever role is necessary in the near term to solve the security challenge. But in the long term, we would much rather see airport security, for example, being a civilian security arrangement, as opposed to the use of Guardsmen in that capacity.

Yes?

Q: But -- not just exactly on that example, but overall, you want a very limited role?

White: Yes -- well, I think -- let's think about homeland security just for a minute in terms of who does it. There are in the country 11 million state and local first responders across a broad range of activities in homeland security -- local hazmat teams, fire departments, emergency medical teams, and so forth. And they are the first line of defense for homeland security.

It seems to me the long-term solution is to ensure that those 11 million, or 12 million, or whatever the number has to be, bear the principal responsibility for most aspects of the civil side -- as opposed to the fighter caps -- of homeland security, and that we commit the additional resources necessary to ensure that the first responders are competent to deal with the range of threats that we now see

ourselves very clearly confronted with. And that we, from a department perspective, can fill in the gaps in the interim until they reach that level of confidence, but at some point, we work ourselves out of a job because we'd much prefer to have the state and local people and emergency services able to take care of most of these things, rather than take dedicated resources of the department and manpower of the department to fill that in. And I think it's Governor Ridge's charter to lead us all in this evaluation of the first-responder community and to find out what the right balance is. Yes, sir?

Q: Mr. Secretary, the law provides for, in the case of war, the Coast Guard shifts to DoD from DoT. The president has called this a war against terrorism. You know, is there any talk about shifting the Coast Guard authority? And I understand that JFCOM is going to take over control of the coastal patrol craft from the Navy and use those for homeland security. Do you know what role they're going to play?

White: Well, on the first point: the U.S. Coast Guard works on a daily basis with the Department of Defense and, specifically, the United States Navy in the protection of ports and our coastline. And that is a very tight coordination relationship, which is -- which has been very effective -- particularly since the 11th of September. So that's the -- that is the first point.

The second point is that Joint Forces Command is responsible for the coastal maritime security on both coasts of the United States. And to the extent that Naval forces are involved in that, they are the supported CINC for those activities, so they would exercise control for coastal protection consistent with that.

One more question. Please?

Q: Mr. Secretary, the war in Afghanistan against the terrorists is ongoing, of course. And it seems like the anthrax issue has taken a front seat now. And the Army, of course, is involved. There's a unit up in Detrick, I understand, that's heavily involved in research, and so on and so forth. One thing -- can you say, tell me how important their role is in this responding to the anthrax?

White: I think the Army has -- we've been worried about anthrax for a long time because we were worried about the Soviets for a long time, and the Soviets had an anthrax capability widely reported. So we have been in the business of infectious disease research, including anthrax, because our soldiers who deploy worldwide are in environments in many cases very much unlike what we have in the United States, exposure to yellow fever or a whole bunch of other exotic things. So we have been in the business -- are in the business of research against these infectious diseases. We're very actively involved in supporting the Center for Disease Control and Health and Human Services in this activity.

Q: And sir, do you anticipate from the Army's viewpoint -- could this get much worse? Ten thousand people, evidently, are taking Cipro now throughout the country, predominantly around here.

White: Well, you're -- you should really direct that question to Secretary Thompson because Health and Human Services has the federal responsibility for that. And his assessment would be far more accurate than mine.

Thank you very much. Have a good day.

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