

**STATEMENT OF  
GENERAL RICHARD MYERS, USAF  
CHAIRMAN  
JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
BEFORE THE  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TERRORIST ATTACKS UPON THE  
UNITED STATES**

**17 JUNE 2004**

I thank the Commission for your efforts to help our Nation guard against future attacks. We share a common goal: to capture the lessons of 9/11 to better protect the American people. The War on Terrorism that began that day continues to be a major effort for our Armed Forces. Across the US and around the world, our servicemen and women are doing remarkable work to defeat the threat of terrorism and defend our freedom. I appreciate the opportunity to provide my perspective on the military's response to 9/11.

### **Pre-9/11 Posture**

As Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Shelton's and my actions up to and on 9/11 were directed by Title 10 of the US Code. The Chairman serves as the principal military advisor to the President, the National Security Council, and the Secretary of Defense; and makes recommendations to Congress. The Chairman's responsibilities include strategic planning, contingency planning and readiness of the armed forces. The Chairman "may not exercise military command over the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any of the armed forces." As Vice Chairman, I served as a member of the Joint Chiefs, performed duties assigned by the Chairman, and acted as Chairman in his absence.

Unified command roles are directed by Title 10 and the Unified Command Plan. Each of the combatant commander's chain of command runs through the Secretary of Defense to the President.

Several other documents outlined the armed forces' roles and responsibilities in combating terrorism: The National Security Strategy for a Global Age (2000), Presidential Decision Directives 39 (1995) and 62 (1998), and the National Military Strategy (1997). Additionally, as outlined in the National Security Strategy, DoD maintained a "tailored set of options to respond to terrorism." As outlined in these documents, our focus pre-9/11 was on anti-terrorism—force protection of overseas DoD personnel and assets, and assisting designated Lead Federal Agencies with consequence management. Another National Security Policy Directive, NSPD-9, was in draft. That document was revised following 9/11, and was issued in October.

We took our counter-terrorism role very seriously, and we were constantly reevaluating our capabilities and posture. Our focus was more on anti-terrorism, however, as directed. Following the final report on the USS Cole incident and the Hart-Rudman Commission report, we made many improvements to our anti-terrorism and force protection capabilities, and on 9/11 were in the process of implementing still others.

We had also been working on our consequence management capability. Joint Task Force-Civil Support (JTF-CS) was activated in Norfolk in 1999. JTF-CS was originally under US Joint Forces Command (JFCOM), but now is part of US Northern Command (NORTHCOM). JTF-CS was and is prepared to respond in support of Lead Federal Agencies to help deal with chemical, biological, and radiological incidents.

The armed forces also supported lead agencies for Special Security Events, including the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta and the 2001 Presidential Inauguration. We provided capabilities such as physical security, including military working dogs, and explosive ordnance disposal. We did not provide combat air patrol coverage to special events prior to 9/11.

While the military was focused on force protection and consequence management, the unified commands and the Joint Staff had developed an array of military options for counter-terrorism and anti-terrorism.

All the options directed at preempting terrorism, from a very limited, precision strike on a terrorist camp to a larger special operations force insertion, require very precise and timely intelligence. In the years leading up to 9/11, we struggled with getting that quality of intelligence. To increase our range of military options, we were aggressively pushing for accelerated development of an armed Predator system. By the summer of 2001, testing was well underway, although some technical issues were still being resolved.

In the period before 9/11 we conducted a number of exercises related to terrorism, Homeland Defense (HLD), and our role in support of Lead Federal Agencies such as the FBI and Secret Service. The CJCS sponsored several exercises at the strategic level, and the Combatant Commanders conducted counter-terrorism exercises at the operational/tactical level. The CJCS-sponsored exercises focused on interagency coordination and decision-making, and counter-terrorism was a

recurring exercise theme. Scenarios were usually focused outside the United States. In 1999, at least one key exercise dealt with Homeland Defense, portraying a terrorist threat to detonate an improvised nuclear device in the National Capital Region, with the objective of exercising the relocation and interoperability of military and civil command and coordination centers.

Another exercise scheduled for November 2001 portrayed a terrorist threat to the Pentagon requiring evacuation of the facility and conducting operations from a relocation site. Additionally, Assistant Secretary of Defense Special Operations/Low Intensity Conflict has sponsored a series of tabletop-seminar exercises since 1992, focused on the coordinated interagency response to terrorist threats, including domestic scenarios.

There was a significant increase in terrorist threat reporting during the late spring and summer of 2001, clearly indicating a major Al Qaida terrorist operation was pending, but the location and timing were unknown. To the extent that the warnings pointed to specific areas, they pointed to the Arabian Peninsula. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) also issued a number of warnings in the months prior to 9/11. Those warnings were also non-specific, and focused primarily on threats against US citizens abroad and traditional hijackings.

The Department of Defense responded to the increased threat reporting in a number of ways. The 5th fleet in Bahrain put the majority of its ships out of harbor. The Force Protection Condition (FPCON) was raised in many of the countries in the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility. In addition, the

Defense Department and intelligence community issued several general warnings during that timeframe. North American Aerospace Defense Command did not have specific enough intelligence to warrant increasing their alert status or placing additional forces on alert.

### **September 11th**

I saw television reports of the first Trade Center tower being hit, and later received notification of the attacks via a phone call from General Eberhart at NORAD when I was on Capitol Hill. Leaving Capitol Hill, I received word that the Pentagon had also been hit.

When I arrived at the Pentagon, I spoke briefly with Secretary Wolfowitz on my way into the building; he was on his way to an alternate location. After I reached the National Military Command Center (NMCC), I asked questions to determine where Secretary Rumsfeld was, how the FAA was handling airborne flights, and the status of fighters prepared to intercept any hijacked aircraft inbound to Washington. I recommended General Shelton return to Washington, D.C. I was also concerned with making sure actions were being taken to support and protect the President. One of my priorities was looking ahead, and giving strategic guidance to make sure we were prepared to handle whatever came next. We didn't know at that time if we were in the middle of a several-day long attack, what kind of attacks could come next, or who and what might be targeted.

The NMCC serves as our worldwide monitoring, crisis response center. We maintain a continuity-of-operations contingency plan, and that plan was

executed very soon after the attacks. The NMCC does not serve as a combatant headquarters for any forces, and the aircraft responding to the terrorist threat that day were under command of NORAD. However, I did have several conversations with General Eberhart, commander of NORAD, throughout the day. He was the combatant commander with authority over the combat air patrols.

The NMCC had long-standing procedures and communications links to help DoD and some non-DoD organizations communicate and react to threats and incidents. Shortly after the second Trade Center tower was struck, the NMCC convened a Significant Event Conference to gather and disseminate information. Shortly thereafter, this conference transitioned to an Air Threat Conference, which was underway when I arrived at the Pentagon from Capitol Hill. Throughout the morning, there were multiple reports of additional threats and explosions, adding to the task of sorting out accurate information and responding appropriately.

In order to improve our readiness and protection of our forces worldwide, our DEFCON was raised to DEFCON 3, and our FPCON changed to FPCON DELTA. I also suggested that General Franks return to Tampa to prepare for a possible response.

In my opinion, the armed forces responded well on 9/11. Key leaders and crisis centers knew their procedures well; fighters were launched quickly and the crews acted professionally; lines of authority, communication and command were clear; and the Commander in Chief and Secretary of Defense conveyed clear guidance to the appropriate military commanders.

As I reflect on the actions of our servicemen and women that day, I'm very proud of their dedication and professionalism.

### **Actions Post 9/11**

The Department of Defense has accomplished a very long list of actions in response to lessons learned on 9/11, well beyond combat operations in the War on Terrorism. For example, we have assigned new responsibilities to various commands, improved our planning process, established better and more rapid communications with a variety of government agencies, and reallocated resources. I'll detail just a few of the specifics.

Within the NMCC, we have refined our procedures to improve our communications with other agencies, including the FAA. We have established procedures for Domestic Event Conferences and Domestic Threat Conferences to better respond to domestic crises, and installed better communications and ventilation equipment.

We now have a mature plan to protect against future airborne attacks originating from inside the Continental United States. This includes air assets postured to respond—Operation NOBLE EAGLE, fully developed Rules of Engagement, and improved coordination with the FAA. The world saw this capability successfully exercised over the 2003-2004 holiday season, when threat reporting indicating Al Qaida was planning additional airborne attacks.

To better resource and posture the Department of Defense for anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism missions, NORTHCOM stood up last October, and US Special Operations Command's budget increased by about 36%. Each of the regional combatant commands now has a Joint Interagency Coordination Group to coordinate interagency efforts in the War on Terrorism.

Within the Joint Staff, we established a deputy directorate for the War on Terrorism within J-5 and formulated a National Military Strategic Plan for the WOT. We have also improved coordination between strategic planners, operations, and intelligence.

Fighting the War on Terrorism has been my number one priority throughout my term as Chairman. We've continued and improved our support to Lead Federal Agencies, including the newly-established Department of Homeland Security. We conduct frequent reviews at all levels to ensure our strategy, plans, and resources are as focused and effective as possible.

### **Additional Recommendations**

While we have accomplished a great deal since 9/11, I believe several areas warrant further attention. First and foremost, we must bear in mind that this War on Terrorism can't be won by the military alone. We need to ensure that we bring to bear all our instruments of national power, and the instruments of power of the international community, in a coherent, synchronized manner. I recommend an independent, comprehensive

review of our government—much like the Goldwater-Nichols review of the Department of Defense—to determine what organizational, procedural, and resource management changes are needed.

Much has been accomplished in the past few years to help counter proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, to include the Proliferation Security Initiative. We must maintain our focus, and the international community's focus, on the threat of proliferation of WMD.

We must dramatically accelerate our progress in the area of intelligence collection, analysis, and sharing. It is imperative that we maintain the separate intelligence agencies within the national structure we have today in order to retain the mission focus each of these components brings. The DoD must retain influence within the community to ensure we have the intelligence support for military forces crucial to the successful conduct of combat operations.

The intelligence community must replace the outdated concept of collector as owner of information with a user-oriented focus. Further, we need to eliminate the mindset that categorizes intelligence as national, strategic, or tactical—in today's security environment, individual platoons, ships, and aircraft often need the same data that national decision makers need. Consumers of intelligence must be able to “pull” the information they need to plan, decide, and act. Intelligence must be tailorable to customer needs, and disseminated in formats that encourage rather than hamper information sharing. The “need to share” needs to replace the concept of

“need to know;” we must especially improve our ability to share information among government agencies and with our allies.

Violent extremists who use terrorism as their weapon of choice have a decided advantage in this struggle, at least in the short term: a small number of people, with inexpensive weapons and equipment, can plan attacks at the place and time of their choosing. They are flexible, adaptable, and patient, and they only have to succeed once in a while.

Our task, in contrast, is enormous. We have to defend across the country and beyond, all the time, and can accept not a single failure. I applaud all the men and women in the Department of Defense, especially our troops in harm’s way, for their selfless and tireless efforts to defend our freedom and way of life. I also thank the commission for your efforts to help us accomplish this all-important mission.