

**TOP OFFICIALS 4 (TOPOFF 4) FULL-SCALE EXERCISE (FSE)**

**October 15 – 20, 2007**

**AFTER ACTION QUICK LOOK  
REPORT**

**November 19, 2007**

This page is intentionally blank.

## HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS

1. The title of this document is Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4) After Action Quick Look Report (AAR/QL).
2. Points of Contact (POCs):

Federal POC:

Mr. Bill McNally  
Director, National Exercise Division  
FEMA National Preparedness Directorate  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20536  
William.McNally@dhs.gov

Exercise Director:

Ms. Sandra Santa Cosgrove  
FEMA National Preparedness Directorate  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20536  
Sandra.Santa@dhs.gov

This page is intentionally blank.

## CONTENTS

<b>Handling Instructions</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Figures and Tables</b>	
Table 1: Preliminary Observations .....	7

This page is intentionally blank.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TOPOFF is the nation's premier terrorism preparedness exercise, involving top officials at every level of government, as well as representatives from the international community and private sector. Sponsored by DHS, TOPOFF 4 (T4) is the fourth exercise in the TOPOFF Exercise Series, a congressionally-mandated exercise program. Each TOPOFF exercise involves a two-year cycle of seminars, planning events, and exercises culminating in a full-scale assessment of the nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

The T4 Full-Scale Exercise (FSE) used a radiological dispersal device (RDD) scenario based on National Planning Scenario 11 to test the full range of federal, state, territorial, and local capabilities. This scenario included coordinated attacks in Guam, Oregon, and Arizona. Nearly every capability in the DHS Target Capabilities List (TCL) was exercised. This overarching AAR/QL focuses on five of those capabilities: Intelligence/Information Sharing and Dissemination, On-Site Incident Management, Emergency Operations Center Management, Emergency Public Information and Warning, and Economic and Community Recovery.

The T4 planning team was composed of more than one hundred organizations, including DHS and other federal agencies, state and local agencies from the States of Arizona and Oregon and the U.S. Territory of Guam, private sector and nongovernmental organizations, as well as three international partners: Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

The following objectives guided planning for T4:

- **Prevention:** To test the handling and flow of operational and time-critical intelligence between agencies to prevent a terrorist incident.
- **Intelligence/ Investigation:** To test the handling and flow of operational and time-critical intelligence between agencies prior to, and in response to, a linked terrorist incident.
- **Incident Management:** To test the full range of existing procedures for domestic incident management of a terrorist WMD event and to improve top officials' (federal/state/local) capabilities to respond in partnership in accordance with the National Response Plan (NRP) and National Incident Management System (NIMS).
- **Public Information:** To practice the strategic coordination of media relations and public information issues in the context of a terrorist WMD incident or incident of national significance.
- **Evaluation:** To identify lessons learned and promote best practices.

The purpose of this report is to summarize preliminary exercise observations. It identifies strengths to be maintained and built upon as well as areas for further improvement. The contents of this report are based on initial exercise feedback, and it is not intended to serve as the official draft or final After Action Report/ Improvement Plan (AAR/IP).

### Capabilities Exercised

The following capabilities were selected from the TCL as the focus of the overarching AAR

because they link directly to the exercise objectives. They are listed below, along with major strengths observed during the exercise:

- Intelligence/Information Sharing and Dissemination
  - Within DHS, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) and the DHS Situational Awareness Teams (DSATs) facilitated secure communications and intelligence sharing.
  - Federal law enforcement agencies shared information with state and local personnel in Arizona through a newly formed fusion center.
  - Time critical information sharing between the United States and the United Kingdom helped law enforcement personnel coordinate investigation activities.
- On-Site Incident Management
  - The responses to the immediate explosions were coordinated and timely.
  - Local Hazardous Material (HAZMAT) teams effectively integrated into the Unified Command structure and demonstrated their ability to perform gross and mass decontamination in coordination with other specialized teams.
  - National Guard WMD Civil Support Teams (CSTs) provided rapid on-scene capabilities.
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Management
  - Deliberate planning helped guide the national response.
  - New entities and tools helped improve coordination, information sharing, and real-time planning at all levels of government.
  - The requirements for new and evolving federal assets were tested.
  - Robust private sector involvement in the exercise helped drive realistic decision-making by senior leadership.
  - Actions were taken to address populations with special needs.
  - The Interagency Modeling and Atmospheric Assessment Center (IMAAC) provided consequence predictions in accordance with its standard operating procedures (SOPs), revised in December 2006.
- Emergency Public Information and Warning
  - Exercise participants reported several instances where emergency public information was well coordinated.
  - New and updated public affairs policies and procedures helped guide the response.
  - Several emergency messages focused on special needs populations and foreign language speakers.
- Economic and Community Recovery
  - Recovery planning was established early at all of the venues.

The table below summarizes key initial areas for improvement. Preliminary recommendations



## National Exercise Program (NEP)

**After Action Quick Look Report  
(AAR/QL)**

**Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4)  
Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)**

are provided for those improvement areas for which some corrective action planning can begin. All of these improvement areas require further analysis before final recommendations can be developed. The reconstruction and analysis that is underway will be used to help clarify these observations, identify and analyze additional observations, and develop findings and recommendations.

**Table 1: Preliminary Observations**

Intelligence/Information Sharing and Dissemination	
Observation	Recommendations / Corrective Actions
Participants reported delays in receiving “tear-line” versions of reports.	Further analysis will be conducted on data collected via the Intelligence Control Cell (ICC).
Participants reported delays in receiving responses to classified Requests for Information (RFIs).	Further analysis will be conducted on data collected via the ICC.
On-Site Incident Management	
Observation	Recommendations / Corrective Actions
Problems were observed that affected coordination within Unified Commands. Examples include the existence of multiple Unified Commands, command structures that did not follow the National Incident Management System (NIMS), and inexperienced personnel.	Further analysis is required to understand the reasoning behind the various Unified Commands established during the exercise and identify ways to address coordination issues.
There was difficulty conducting and coordinating multiple missions at the incident sites.	Review and clarify SOPs dealing with the integration of specialized response, assessment, and law enforcement teams.
Emergency Operations Center Management	
Observation	Recommendations / Corrective Actions
The schedule of federal-level senior leadership group meetings created a high demand for updates and products to support these meetings. Decisions and taskings were not formally disseminated.	Review mission/membership of Homeland Security Council (HSC), National Security Council (NSC), and DHS leadership groups. Institute procedures for formally documenting and disseminating meeting output.
The purpose, definitions, and consequences of the Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) threat levels lack clarity. Similar issues were observed in previous TOPOFFs.	Review and refine current policy on the HSAS. Synchronize/rationalize HSAS with the many alerts and readiness postures that exist based upon National triggers and thresholds. In particular, clarification of the protective actions that are recommended for each level and sector are needed. HSAS guidance should also be integrated into the National RDD Concept Plan and the other scenario-based plans under development.
Departments and agencies (D/As) at all levels of government lacked critical information at times.	Continue development of the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) and Common Operating Picture (COP) portal. Address technical and user-driven issues and other shortcomings noted by participants.

## National Exercise Program (NEP)

### After Action Quick Look Report (AAR/QL)

### Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4) Full-Scale Exercise (FSE)

Decision-makers had difficulty interpreting plume and consequence prediction models, and using this information to support decision-making and public messaging.	State and local emergency plans should identify subject matter experts (SMEs) for RDD and other scenarios, and include protocols for integrating these experts into emergency decision-making.
The Federal Radiological Monitoring and Assessment Center (FRMAC) had difficulty coordinating its activities with state officials in Oregon as is called for in its SOP.	Further analysis is required to understand the reasons for this difficulty and identify ways to improve coordination.
The private sector had difficulty effectively integrating into some aspects of the response.	DHS should review and clarify the relative roles of its offices that work with the private sector to ensure that private sector representatives are effectively used in both exercises and actual events. DHS should develop processes to better integrate the private sector into federal strategic and operational planning, and to engage them in national-level exercises.
Unfamiliarity with the process for requesting federal support caused delays.	FEMA should explore ways to quickly communicate clear information to state, territorial, and local agencies about the request process and role of FEMA assets deployed to the field. This might include pre-event or just-in-time training.
<b>Emergency Public Information and Warning</b>	
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendations / Corrective Actions</b>
Public Information Officers (PIOs) at all levels of government had difficulty obtaining substantive information on response activities.	Emergency planners and PIOs should review emergency plans to ensure that they adequately address information sharing between emergency management and public affairs personnel.
D/As in all venues had difficulty communicating the reasoning behind initial protective action recommendations and justifying changes to those recommendations.	Federal, state, and local PIOs should pre-identify appropriate SMEs for specific types of scenarios. PIOs should work with SMEs pre-event to develop standard descriptions of technical products, fact sheets, and frequently-asked-question documents.
<b>Economic and Community Recovery</b>	
<b>Observation</b>	<b>Recommendations / Corrective Actions</b>
Recovery from an RDD event poses unique challenges that may not be adequately addressed in current recovery plans. Several common themes emerged from short-term recovery discussion-based exercises conducted in each venue.	Issues related to debris management, decontamination and clean-up, insurance, long-term health monitoring, public information, and economic impacts will be addressed in the Long-Term Recovery Tabletop Exercise (LTR TTX) scheduled for early December.

The overall exercise was successful in highlighting improvements since previous exercises and real-world responses as well as identifying areas requiring further improvement. The next step in the after action process is a reconstruction and analysis of the exercise to support the development of recommendations that will help D/As craft corrective actions. Corrective action planning will feed into the development of objectives for future exercises conducted under the National Exercise Program so that those exercises can evaluate the effectiveness of corrective actions taken in response to T4, and to help further refine these improvement areas.