

TERRORISM READINESS

The Office of Homeland Security, Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and California National Guard Need to Improve Their Readiness to Address Terrorism

Audit Highlights . . .

Our review of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services' (OES) and the California National Guard's (National Guard) terrorism readiness activities revealed:

- Both agencies have developed plans that adequately guide their response to terrorist events, but OES has not included a prevention element in the State's terrorism response plan.*
- OES has not always identified the critical training that staff in the operations centers need to effectively complete their duties.*
- OES does not regularly develop and administer state-level terrorism readiness exercises with other state and local agencies, as its terrorism response plan requires.*
- Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the State's Office of Homeland Security and OES would be beneficial.*

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Office of Homeland Security, Governor's Office of Emergency Services, and California National Guard responses as of September 2003

The Joint Legislative Audit Committee (audit committee) requested that the Bureau of State Audits conduct an audit of the terrorism readiness efforts of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) and the California National Guard (National Guard). Specifically, the audit committee asked that we review and evaluate the terrorism prevention and response plans, policies, and procedures of these agencies and determine whether the plans are periodically updated and contain sufficient guidance. It also asked that we determine whether OES and the National Guard have provided sufficient training to their staff to effectively respond to terrorism activities and assess how the training compares to best practices or other reasonable approaches. The audit committee further requested that we determine whether both agencies take advantage of all state and federal funding for terrorism readiness. Finally, the audit committee asked that we determine whether the National Guard's recruitment and retention practices and staffing levels impact its readiness to respond to terrorism activities or its ability to attract qualified personnel for terrorism readiness positions.

Finding #1: The terrorism response plan guides the State's response but does not include ways to help prevent terrorism.

Although the State Emergency Plan (emergency plan) and terrorism response plan adequately define the roles and responsibilities of numerous state and local agencies in responding to various emergencies, including terrorism, they do not address how the State could help prevent terrorist attacks from occurring. Lacking in the terrorism response plan is guidance for terrorism prevention. One reason for this deficiency may be that

- ☑ *Although the National Guard generally relies on its members' military training to respond to terrorism missions, it has not provided all of the training its staff in its Joint Operations Center needs to adequately respond to these missions.*
 - ☑ *The National Guard believes it has not had sufficient funding to participate in exercises involving other state and local emergency response agencies.*
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the Legislature did not envision a prevention role when it established OES in the California Emergency Services Act (act). Rather, the act sets the focus of OES as coordinating the State's response activities. However, the State needs to plan how it can help prevent terrorist events from occurring to best protect the citizens of the State against the consequences of such events. Acknowledging this void in the current terrorism response plan, the director of the Office of Homeland Security (OHS) stated that his office plans to revise the current state plan to make it more concise and include a prevention component.

To ensure that the State is adequately prepared to address terrorist threats, OHS should continue its plans to develop a state plan on terrorism that includes a prevention element

OHS Action: Corrective action taken.

OHS states that it is identifying key prevention elements that should be incorporated into the terrorism response plan.

Finding #2: OES has no formal process to periodically review and update the terrorism response plan.

OES lacks a formal process to regularly review the terrorism response plan and update it as determined necessary. Rather, OES staff state that they update the terrorism response plan when changes in statute affecting emergency management or changes occur in regulations, policies, or significant procedures. Although OES has not established a formal process to regularly review the terrorism response plan, other organizations and states we contacted do regularly update and incorporate lessons learned into their plans. Without an established process to regularly review the plan, OES cannot ensure that it remains current and adequately protects the State. Furthermore, OES would make its assessment more consistent and effective if it developed a checklist to guide its efforts in evaluating the terrorism response plan.

OHS and OES should ensure that the state plan addressing terrorism is reviewed on a regular basis and updated as determined necessary to ensure that it adequately addresses current threats and benefits from the lessons learned in actual terrorist readiness events occurring both in California and nationwide. Additionally, they should develop a checklist to guide periodic evaluations of the state plan addressing terrorism to ensure that such assessments are consistent and effective.

OES Action: Corrective action taken.

OES states that it is developing formal procedures to review, assess, and update the emergency plan and its related annexes, including the terrorism response plan. OES also states that it is developing a checklist to guide its reviews.

Finding #3: OES has not identified the training needs for all of its staff.

OES has not conducted a needs assessment to determine the training requirements for all personnel in its state and regional operations centers. Although OES does develop individual training plans for some of its staff, which identify an individual employee's career goals and objectives, it does not prepare them for all staff working in state and regional operations centers. Furthermore, OES does not provide guidance to all supervisors preparing the training plans to ensure that they include training related to core competencies. Core competencies are the key skills employees need to possess to perform their assigned duties.

To ensure that state agencies, including OES, are adequately prepared to respond to terrorist events occurring within the State, OES should identify the most critical training required by staff at state and regional operational centers and then allocate existing funding or seek additional funding it needs to deliver the training.

OES Action: Corrective action taken.

OES states that it has identified the core competencies for all OES staff and has developed a training policy to guide managers as they develop training plans for OES staff.

Finding #4: OES has not conducted state-level terrorism readiness exercises as called for in its terrorism response plan.

With the exception of federally or state mandated exercises associated with nuclear power plants and hospitals, the State does not presently have an established program to provide exercises to ensure that state agencies are prepared to respond to terrorist events. According to OES, it has not regularly developed and administered terrorism readiness exercises because it is not funded to do so. However, it has not requested state funding to conduct the exercises. OES has participated in terrorism readiness exercises when other agencies have held them, and staff have received training through activation experiences.

However, these activities would not necessarily test and enhance the capabilities of state agencies, local governments, and related entities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist events as called for in the terrorism response plan. OHS has recently decided that the California National Guard should be responsible for coordinating state-level exercises, awarding \$1.6 million in federal funds to them. Because of the unique role that OES plays in coordinating emergencies, it will be important for OES to work with the National Guard to establish an effective exercise program.

To ensure that state agencies, including OES, are adequately prepared to respond to terrorist events occurring within the State, OES should assist the National Guard in providing state-level terrorism readiness exercises.

OES Action: Corrective action taken.

OES states that it is developing a functional exercise for the state and regional operations centers. It also states that it will continue to work with the National Guard in developing terrorism readiness exercises.

Finding #5: The effect of budget cuts are uncertain.

An OES analysis stated that budget cuts it is required to sustain due to the current state budget crisis will severely hinder its ability to fulfill its overall mission, including terrorism readiness. However, since February 2003, OES is to report to the Governor's Office through the OHS director, and the OHS director told us he believes that OES can meet its statutory mission despite budget cuts incurred as of June 2003. To optimize its efficiency, the OHS director intends to assess the OES organization to identify more efficient ways for OES to fulfill its statutory responsibilities, focusing its resources on mission-related activities.

To ensure that the State is adequately prepared to address terrorist threats, OHS should continue its plans to thoroughly assess OES functions to determine how it can optimize its efficiency.

OHS Action: Pending.

OHS states that it continues to assess OES functions to evaluate how best to address the budget cuts and that once the 2004–05 budget is finalized, it will be better able to address this finding.

Finding #6: Clarification of the roles and responsibilities of OHS and OES would be beneficial.

The authority provided to OES under the act and the authority provided to OHS by the governor's February 2003 executive order appear to have the potential to overlap. Further, the directors of the two offices appear to have differing views on their roles and responsibilities. A lack of clarity in their respective roles and responsibilities could adversely affect the State's ability to respond to emergencies, such as a terrorist event.

To ensure that the State is adequately prepared to address terrorist threats, OHS should work with the governor on how best to clarify the roles and responsibilities of OHS and OES.

OHS Action: Pending.

OHS states that it is working with OES and the Governor's Office to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the two offices.

Finding #7: Joint Operations Center staff have not yet completed all the training they need to effectively coordinate missions.

The Joint Operations Center is responsible for receiving state missions from OES and developing and overseeing the National Guard's response to requests for its services. In June 2002, the Joint Operations Center identified training it believes its staff need to adequately respond to state emergencies. However, 32 of the 38 members required to take specific courses had received less than half the designated training. According to the National Guard, lack of funding and limited availability of classes have hindered its ability to train its Joint Operations Center staff in the identified areas. Without proper training, the ability of the National Guard to respond promptly and effectively to state missions may deteriorate.

To ensure that its members are adequately trained to respond to terrorism missions, the National Guard should determine the most critical training its Joint Operations Center staff need to fulfill their duties and then allocate existing funding or seek the needed funding to provide the training, documenting why it is needed.

National Guard Action: Corrective action taken.

The National Guard states that it has developed a plan that identifies the training needed by the various members of the Joint Operations Center. The National Guard adds that it has not received any additional funding to provide training to members of the Joint Operations Center.

Finding #8: The Army Guard Division does not provide required terrorism awareness training to its members.

The National Guard's Army Guard Division does not provide terrorism awareness training required by U.S. Army regulations as part of its terrorism readiness force protection (force protection) program. According to the commanders of the Army Guard units we visited, the reason they have not fully implemented the terrorism awareness training is that they have not received the guidance to implement it. Further, although the regulation provides that one way the units can offer the required training is through an approved web-based course, the director of the Joint Operations Center stated that his office had been unaware of such a course until recently. However, while visiting an Air Guard unit in April 2003, we discovered that it had been using a Web-based course to fulfill the requirement for terrorism awareness training since June 2002. Therefore, despite its responsibility for implementing the force protection program in both the Air Guard and Army Guard divisions, the Joint Operations Center was unaware of the practices of the Air Guard Division that could have benefited the Army Guard Division. Had the Joint Operations Center been more aware of the training being utilized in the Air Guard Division, it could have identified this best practice and shared it with the Army Guard Division.

The National Guard should develop guidance for its Army Guard Division to implement its terrorism readiness force protection program. Additionally, it should ensure that its Joint Staff Division, including the Joint Operations Center, share best practices between its Air Guard and Army Guard divisions.

National Guard Action: Partial corrective action taken.

The National Guard states that the Army Guard Division is developing a regulation to implement its terrorism readiness force protection program, commenting that it should be fully implemented by December 2004. Additionally, the National Guard states that the Chiefs of Staff for the Army, Air, and Joint Staff divisions meet each week and include a discussion of best practices among the divisions.

Finding #9: The National Guard would benefit from increased state-level terrorism exercises

The National Guard believes that it has not had sufficient opportunities to participate in exercises with other state and local emergency response agencies. In June 2003, OHS advised us that it has now allocated \$1.6 million in federal funding to the National Guard to coordinate terrorism readiness exercises that include both state agencies and rural jurisdictions. Therefore, the National Guard should soon be able to participate in terrorism readiness exercises with other state and local emergency response agencies.

The National Guard should use the recently awarded funds from OHS to identify the type and frequency of state-level exercises responding to terrorist events that the State needs to be adequately prepared. The National Guard should then provide the exercises it has identified.

National Guard Action: Partial corrective action taken.

The National Guard states that it has formed an exercise management team consisting of staff from the National Guard and other state and local agencies that have first responder responsibilities. With current grant funding, the National Guard plans to coordinate four regional and one statewide exercise by October 2004.

