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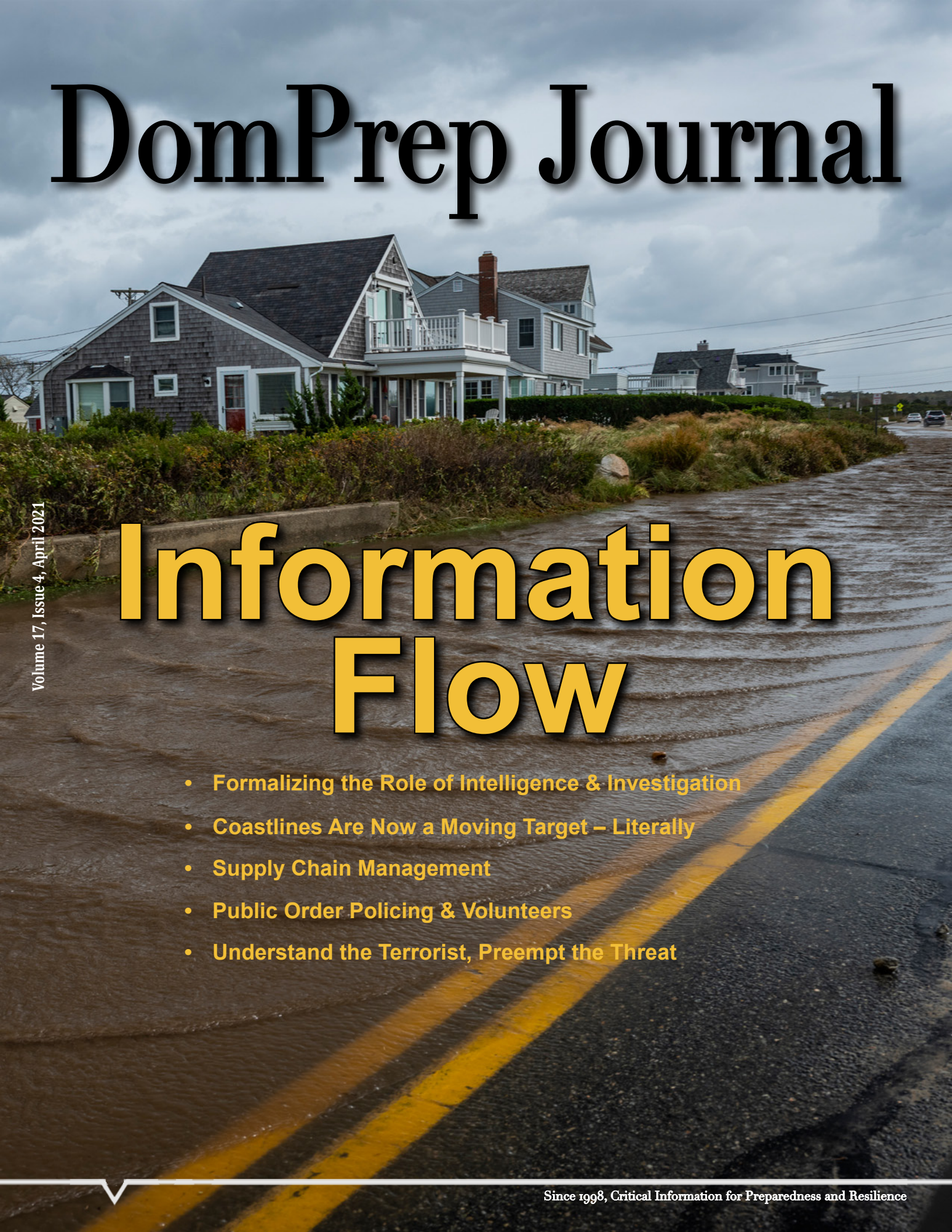

Volume 17, Issue 4, April 2021

Information Flow

- Formalizing the Role of Intelligence & Investigation
- Coastlines Are Now a Moving Target – Literally
- Supply Chain Management
- Public Order Policing & Volunteers
- Understand the Terrorist, Preempt the Threat

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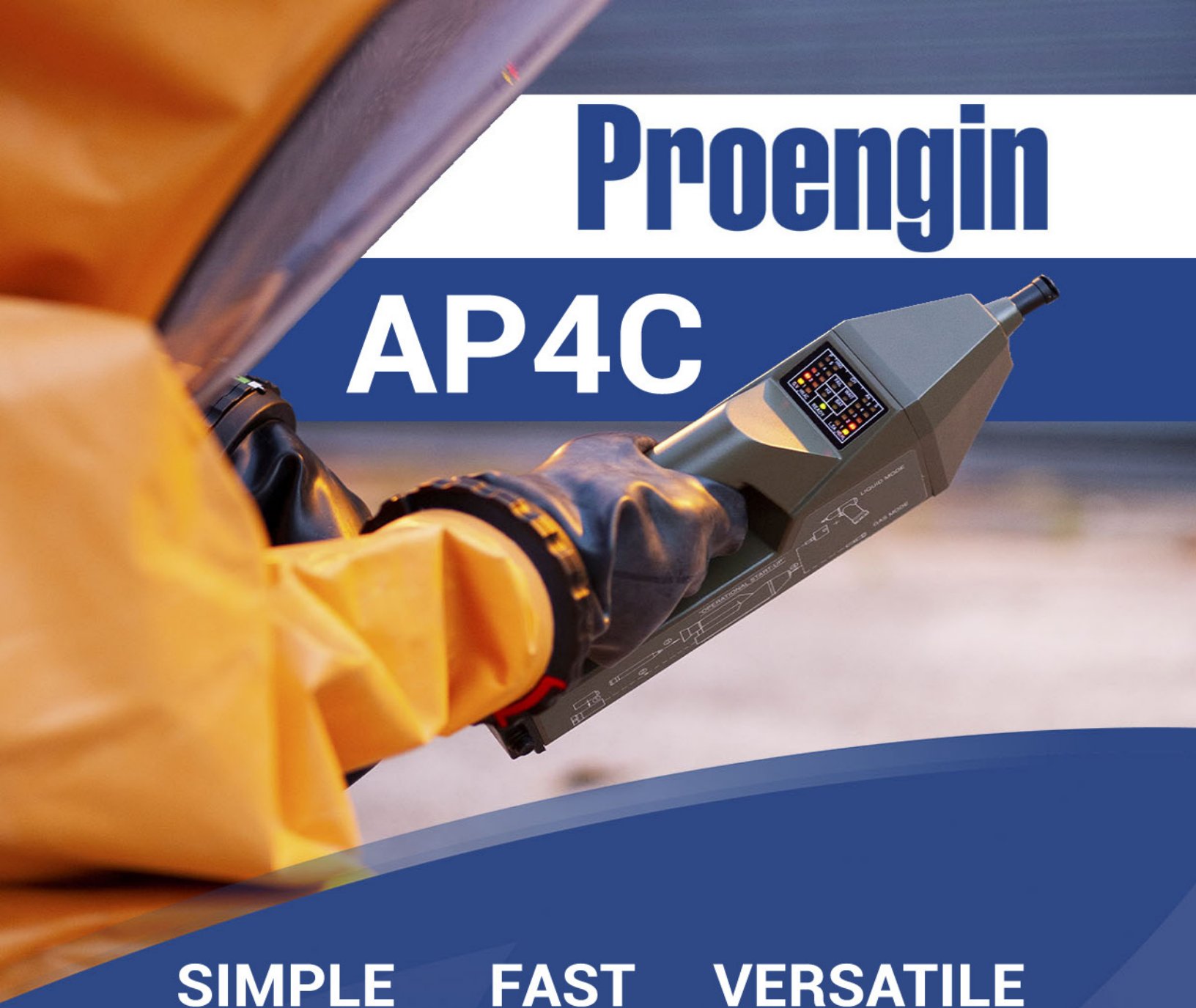

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Information – Keep It Flowing

By Catherine L. Feinman

Information flow is the process of efficiently moving information within and between jurisdictions and systems for the purpose of communicating, making decisions, and establishing policies and procedures. Whether preparing for, responding to, or recovering from a disaster, information flow is a determining factor in the success of any of these efforts.

However, when one (or more) community stakeholder groups is not part of the process, the flow can slow or stop without the knowledge and data that group(s) could provide. For example, a citizen sees something suspicious but does not know how to report it; or a researcher discovers an escalating threat, but community leaders do not heed the warnings.

Throughout the current pandemic, many processes have changed – including how people communicate and share information. The lack of face-to-face planning meetings and daily discussions can certainly hinder collaborative efforts. However, in other ways, it may have forced open a door to a digital world of communications and information sharing that would have otherwise been difficult to embrace.

More than simply sharing information, information flow is about engagement that leads to actionable items. Agencies and organizations can effectuate the process of information flow for disaster preparedness by:

- Formalizing the role of intelligence and investigation
- Exploring scientific research to build communities that are more resilient
- Managing supply chains through technology, relationships, and collaboration
- Recruiting volunteers to crowdsource and gather intelligence
- Engaging the public to identify potential threats

By taking an *information in, action out* approach, communities will be better prepared for and recover quicker from any current or future threat. The April edition of the *DomPrep Journal* is an example of the domestic preparedness community's willingness to keep the information flowing from a broad range of community stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels. The question is, what actions will this information spur within your community?

Formalizing the Role of Intelligence & Investigation

By Michael Prasad

Emergency managers need intelligence throughout the disaster phase cycle – the five mission areas of the National Preparedness Goal (prevention, protection, response, recovery, mitigation) – which is more than just situational awareness during the response phase. The construct for this under both day-to-day planning, organization, equipping, training, and exercising as well as response and recovery operations should be formalized for each organization that utilizes the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command Structure (ICS). Under the unified command concept, all of the branches, sections, task forces, strike teams, etc. benefit from a common, coordinated, and collaborative series of intelligence tools and communications.

Although the investigation role has a primary law enforcement lead, other governmental and nongovernmental organizations need to cooperate/coordinate with and potentially support the investigations activities. For example, fire departments need to assist in preserving evidence of a potential arson-caused fire. When emergency medical services personnel – as part of the triage, transport, and treatment processes – identify and process victims (including the uninjured ones), that information can be a valuable set of data for investigations.

Options for Incorporating Intelligence & Investigations

NIMS combines intelligence and investigations (I/I). Although advocating for a split of these activities within ICS might benefit emergency management, this article focuses on the benefits of aligning intelligence activities across all of the branches and throughout the disaster phase cycle. The Federal Emergency Management Agency, under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, has a formal structure designed for I/I that includes samples of nontraditional forms of I/I. The broad scope across the entire disaster phase cycle is highlighted in the 2013 NIMS: Intelligence/Investigations Function Guidance and Field Operations Guide:

> *The activities and information that are at the core of the I/I Function have historically been viewed as the primary responsibilities of "traditional" law enforcement departments and agencies at all levels of government. Although, in many cases, law enforcement departments/agencies fulfill intelligence/investigations duties, the I/I Function has aspects that cross disciplines and levels of government. "Nontraditional" forms of intelligence/investigations activities (i.e., non-law enforcement) might include:*
>
> - *Epidemiology*
> - *Mass fatality management*

- *Fire, explosion, or arson cause and origin (regardless of likelihood of criminal activity)*
- *Transportation accidents*
- *Real-time research and analysis intended to protect against, respond, and/or recover from a specific incident (e.g., critical infrastructure vulnerability and consequence analysis; hurricane forecast regarding strength and estimated point of landfall; post-earthquake technical clearinghouse; or post-alert volcanic monitoring).*

This broad definition expands situational awareness to the benefit of the emergency management and unified command. Many organizations have an emergency management group for their own internal continuity of operations/continuity of government. However, the communications of critical infrastructure vulnerability and consequence management intelligence is critical for all disaster phases – not just the specific mission essential functions and core capabilities that organizations have to support for emergency support functions and community lifelines during response and recovery (Fig. 1).

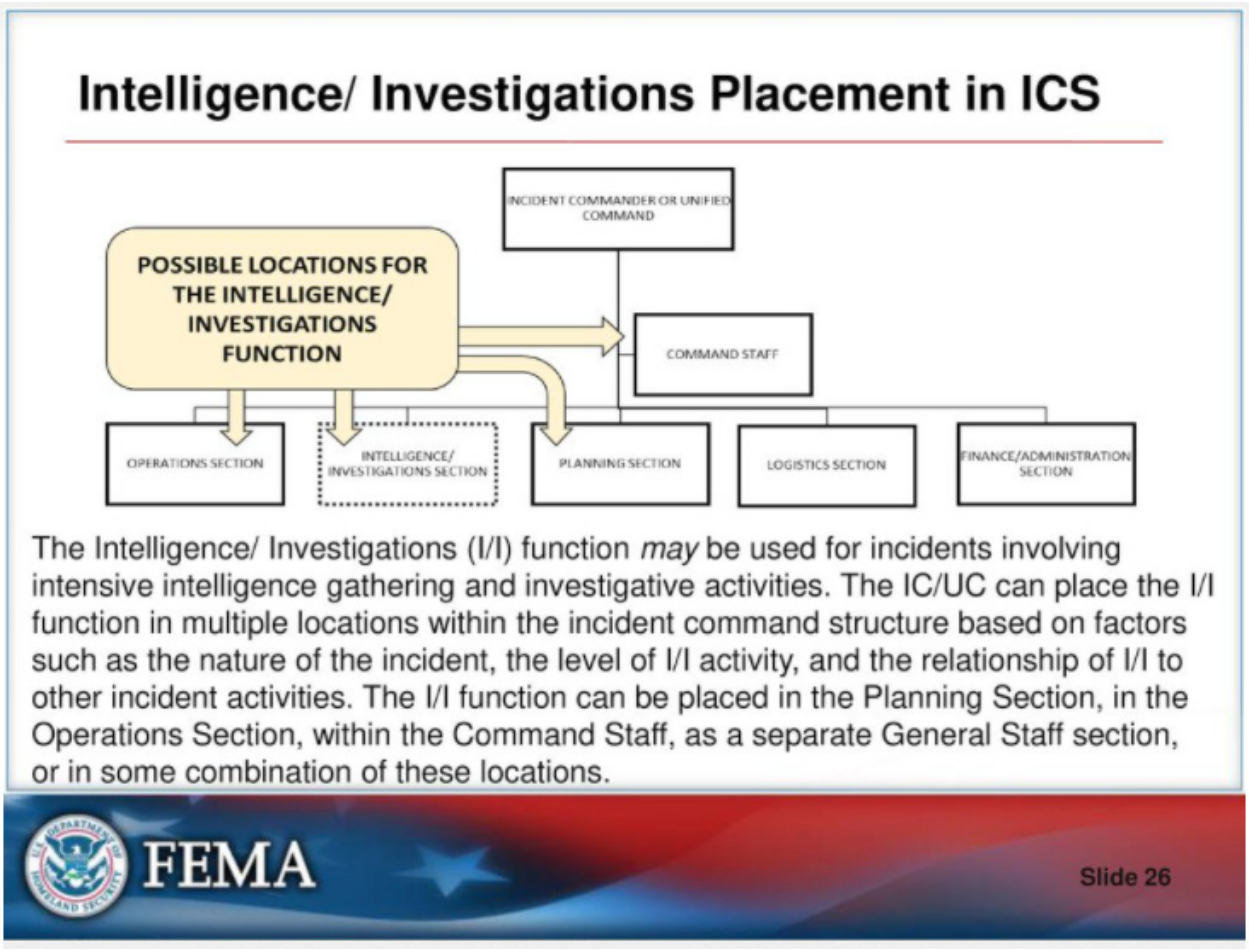

Fig. 1. NIMS Learning Materials slides (*Source:* FEMA Emergency Management Institute, 2017).

NIMS leaves the exact construct and placement of I/I up to the organization itself – and can be different day-to-day and during incidents (and even then, could be organized differently depending on the specific incident itself). In its lessons for the ICS 300 course, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) notes that I/I can be part of the command staff, a unit within the planning section, a branch within the operations section, or as its own section.

> *The analysis and sharing of information and intelligence are important elements of ICS. In this context, intelligence includes not only national security or other types of classified information but also other operational information, such as risk assessments, medical intelligence (i.e., surveillance), weather information, geospatial data, structural designs, toxic contaminant levels, utilities and public works data, etc., that may come from a variety of different sources. Traditionally, information and intelligence functions are located in the Planning Section. However, in exceptional situations, the IC may need to assign the information and intelligence functions to other parts of the ICS organization. In any case, information and intelligence must be appropriately analyzed and shared with personnel, designated by the Incident Commander, who have proper clearance and a "need-to-know" to ensure they support decision-making.*

The USDA also states, "Regardless of how it is organized, the information and intelligence function is also responsible for developing, conducting, and managing information-related security plans and operations as directed by the Incident Commander." This should place I/I more in line with the functionality of the safety officer as well, during response phase activities. This also reinforces the commander's intent in any incident objectives of the L.I.P. (Life safety of responders and the public; Incident stabilization; and Property/asset protection). Intelligence plays a key role in maintaining the safety and security of all responders on scene.

Emergency management should formalize the role of intelligence within their organizations – on an all-hazards basis, not just for potential criminal incidents.

Regardless of where an organization places I/I, it should be designed and formalized ahead of an incident. The various constructs for intelligence gathering and dissemination (e.g., day-to-day, during an assumed noncriminal incident, during a suspected criminal-incident) should be planned, organized, equipped, trained, and exercised in the same way as all of the other branches and command. Everyone in the ICS should know how I/I will be placed and support their branches, at the start of the Planning P. Although I/I might change or adapt as the incident shifts, I/I should be a checklist item to establish, not an afterthought.

Three Case Studies

Intelligence plays a key role in protecting emergency responders and supporting the day-to-day (and response/recovery phase) operations of various organizations. Potential consequence management incidents impact continuity of operations and any mission

essential functions those organizations may be supporting. Intelligence can be the trigger for activating response activities and crisis management plans. It can also assist in providing continuous protection and prevention against additional adverse impacts that may occur during any incident – especially those of a suspected criminal origination.

Case Study 1: White Powder Incidents. The attacks on the United States during 9/11 also included a white powder incident, which was identified as Anthrax. This was initially thought of as connected to the airline hijackings and part of a complex coordinated attack. Today, a major chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear, and explosive incident threat is from Fentanyl – and it is a threat to all on-scene emergency responders (not just law enforcement) and the public who may come in contact with this extremely deadly and potent chemical compound. Examples of intelligence information sharing on this threat, include first responder guidance from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, a unit of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Case Study 2: Pandemics. The 2014 Ebola outbreak extended from West Africa into the United States – and the protocols and procedures for mandatory quarantines, first responder notifications, etc. were critical to emergency management, as was intelligence about where this virus had spread. Although determining *causality* is certainly important to investigations, the adverse impacts (both now and in the future) of the threat/hazard is more impactful to emergency management. As for Ebola and any other pandemic, today's coronavirus pandemic

has the potential for predictive intelligence on where the next wave will impact; and how to target resources to the most vulnerable and underserved populations, while protecting their individual health information privacy.

Case Study 3: Domestic Violent Extremists. Challenges for domestic violent extremists (as compared to foreign terrorist organizations) include the balancing of public safety and security against individual constitutional and legal rights provided to citizens (e.g., free speech, freedom of assembly). Emergency managers are more concerned with the "what" than the "who" of adverse impacts from threats/hazards. Still, there are times when individuals pose a threat to multiple organizations, not just law enforcement. In such cases, coordinating threat intelligence communications and reviewing infrastructure vulnerabilities and consequence management impacts to staff and continuity of operations – before an incident occurs – are critical. When these U.S. citizen individuals commit violence (or become associated with groups that commit violence), they generally do not forfeit their constitutional rights. Regardless of who commits the act, emergency management still needs to protect, prevent, and prepare to respond to all incidents, as well as supporting protected activities (e.g., protests, even if they result in civil unrest). Also, these individuals do not operate within vacuums. They have interactions in their communities that may generate cascading events, which may escalate to the level of triggering violence or illegal acts themselves. Intelligence sharing from local law enforcement up through national intelligence agencies to other organizations, as applicable to the potential for threats and hazards, is critical to continued mission success.

Future Opportunities

Resources and systems at the national level – originated by law enforcement, national security, and other entities – should be utilized by emergency management at the state, territorial, tribal, and local government levels. The Homeland Security Information Network, which is utilized by fusion centers is a system that emergency managers should subscribe to and be provided information access (even to items marked as law enforcement sensitive). There is also an opportunity for academia to research and advocate for further integration of intelligence within emergency management. Historical analysis, cross-referencing against social science modalities, and experiential learning are a few of the benefits of incorporating undergraduate and graduate programs in emergency/disaster management (as well as national security studies) for the purposes of advocating for intelligence integration. Coordinated and collaborative intelligence is needed by emergency managers on an all-hazards basis, and across the entire disaster phase cycle.

Michael Prasad is a Certified Emergency Manager and is the senior research analyst for Barton Dunant Emergency Management Consulting (www.bartondunant.com). He was formerly the assistant director for the Office of Emergency Management at the New Jersey State Department of Children and Families and the director of disaster support functions at the American Red Cross – New Jersey Region. He holds a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Ohio University and is a Master of Arts candidate in Emergency and Disaster Management from American Public University. Views expressed do not necessarily represent the official position of any of these organizations.

Coastlines Are Now a Moving Target – Literally

By John Englander

In March 2021, a Cape Cod weather station in Chatham, Massachusetts was abandoned due to coastal erosion. With much media coverage, some of the articles mentioned that the situation is likely to worsen. The fact that they associated the erosion with climate change and that it was a weather station yielding research data about the changing climate added some irony.

For professionals in the diverse fields of preparedness, it is worth a deeper look to grasp how coastlines are changing profoundly. Erosion, flooding, and rising sea level are all at work, but with very different dynamics and implications for short-term and long-term preparedness. It is important for professionals to understand each in order to prepare for the new normal and unexpected emergencies.

Erosion

Erosion is best thought of as two different types: *incremental* and *abrupt*. Think of them as routine and storm driven. At the water's edge of any sandy beach, when the seas are calm, it is possible to see the ripples of water carrying sand particles along the shoreline with the current. Even without storms and big waves, that is part of the process that takes unconsolidated sediments. By itself, it would gradually change landforms. Coastal experts routinely identify and document the migration of coastlines. Wherever a new harbor inlet or groin (i.e., a barrier constructed from a beach into the sea to check erosion) is established, the process changes dramatically, with sand piling up on one side and depleting on the other, due to interrupted sand flow. These processes even occur in lakes, though the ocean environment usually is more significant.

Rising sea level, extreme tides, and coastal erosion are causing changes in coastlines that can no longer be ignored.

Crashing waves during storms is a different form of erosion. In the article about the Chatham weather station, it described the station originally being a hundred feet in from the shore. On one single stormy day, the ocean removed enough land to move the shore six feet inland. Still, they thought they had 10 years of safety. Recent erosion accelerated the projected erosion by 10 years. Such coastal beach erosion is becoming common all over the world. Beach restoration has become a huge industry that is becoming evermore expensive as the areas increase and the supply of quality sand becomes scarcer.

Flooding

In coastal communities all over the world, there is also increased flooding. One source is the record-breaking rainfall, which was anticipated as the warming oceans evaporate more. In turn, heavier rainfall moves downslope, downstream, or just down to a lower street, multiplying the actual rainfall. In 2017, Hurricane Harvey hitting Texas showed an extreme example with 40 in. of rain, more than doubling water depth at underpasses, which obstructed evacuations. Even without storms, coastal areas are seeing more flooding with clear skies and calm weather. "Sunny day flooding" is now routine during king tides, when the planetary pull on the ocean is at its peak. The planets are not getting any closer or increasing in mass. What is changing is that the base ocean height – that is, sea level – is rising ever higher.

Rising Sea Level

It is hard to notice sea level rise because the global average rate now is only about a quarter inch per year (6 mm). However, like a drip filling a bucket, the stealthy accumulation makes its mark. It is so gradual – and follows rather obscure tidal patterns – that the mysterious routine flooding is easy to dismiss and overlook. The problem, however, is that the rate of sea level rise is accelerating. Last century, the rate of rise was less that 2 mm a year. Now it is almost 5 mm a year and accelerating by each decade (see Fig. 1).

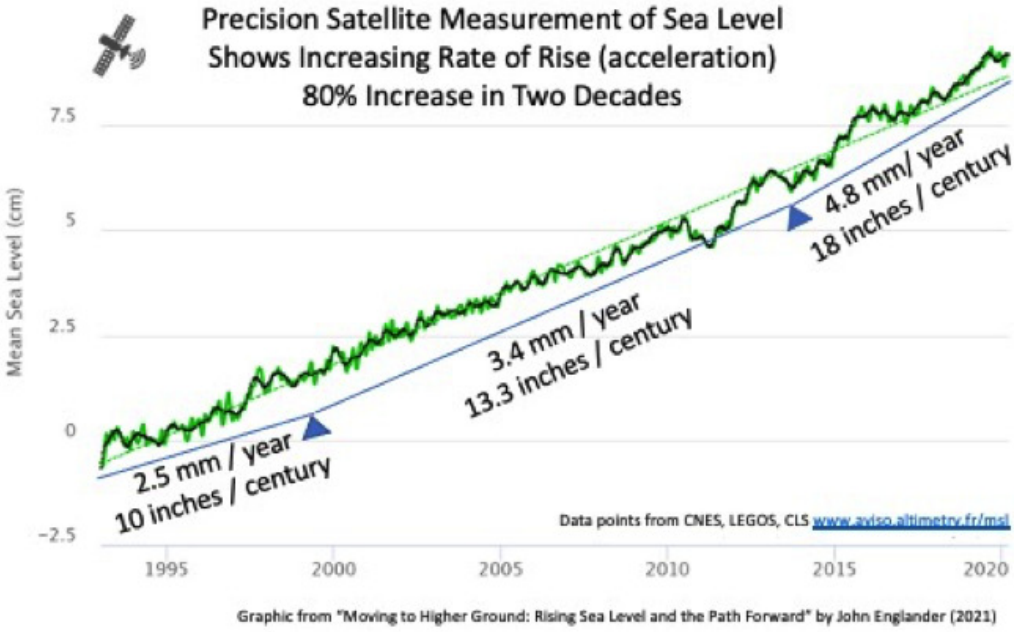

Fig. 1. Graph showing the acceleration of sea level. Over the past century, global average sea level increased at approximately 1.7 mm a year, which would only be about six inches a century. In the last 30 years, the rate has almost tripled and is accelerating. (*Source:* Adapted from "Moving to Higher Ground: Rising Sea Level and the Path Forward," 2021).

Since 1993, when precise satellite measurement of global sea level started being recorded, the rate of rise has been accelerating dramatically. Though it still is only fractions of an inch a year, the current rate of rise would raise global ocean levels one and half feet in 100 years (50 cm). However, at the current rate of *acceleration*, sea level could rise several times that. The latest NOAA extreme projection is over 8 feet this century. Projections have been increasing.

Projections from the COVID-19 pandemic have illustrated the extreme effects that rapid changes of rate could have, particularly when growth becomes exponential. Looking back in Earth's history, the lessons are clear. Geologic history may be a lot more relevant than the usual lookback period of 30 or 100 years. Just 11,000 years ago, global sea level was rising at the rate of more than a foot per decade. It did that for 400 years, rising some 65 feet.

Regardless of the effort and success in stopping the current human-induced warming, there is a need to begin designing for higher water to come. Even if it were possible to convert to 100% renewable energy, the ice sheets of Antarctica and Greenland would still melt for a long time, raising sea level. The quite stable sea of the last 6,000 years has been deceiving. Rising sea level, extreme tides, and coastal erosion will all challenge communities to think differently about the changing coastline. To be prepared, communities need to understand, plan for, and adapt to what is inevitably coming.

John Englander is an oceanographer, consultant, and leading expert on sea level rise and related flooding. His broad marine science background, with degrees in geology and economics and personal experience in Greenland and Antarctica, allow him to see the big picture on sea level rise and explain the phenomena in plain language. He works with businesses and government agencies to understand the risks of sea level rise and the need for intelligent adaptation. Englander goes beyond the usual projections and explains the uncertainties that could yield considerably higher sea level as early as mid-century. His bestselling book, "High Tide on Main Street: Rising Sea Level and the Coming Coastal Crisis" (2012), clearly explains the science of sea level rise, the impending devastating economic impacts, and the opportunity to design for a more resilient future. In his new book, "Moving to Higher Ground: Rising Sea Level and the Path Forward" (2021), he expands on that science and what now needs to be done to address this threat. He has given Congressional testimony, and has presented to national security leadership, the American Planning Association, American Institute of Architects, U.S. Coast Guard Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, etc. His weekly blog and news digest "Sea Level Rise Now" can be accessed at www.johnenglander.net

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- COLLABORATION: How does federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial interfaces impact preparedness vis-á-vis the supply chain?

Click here for the podcast.

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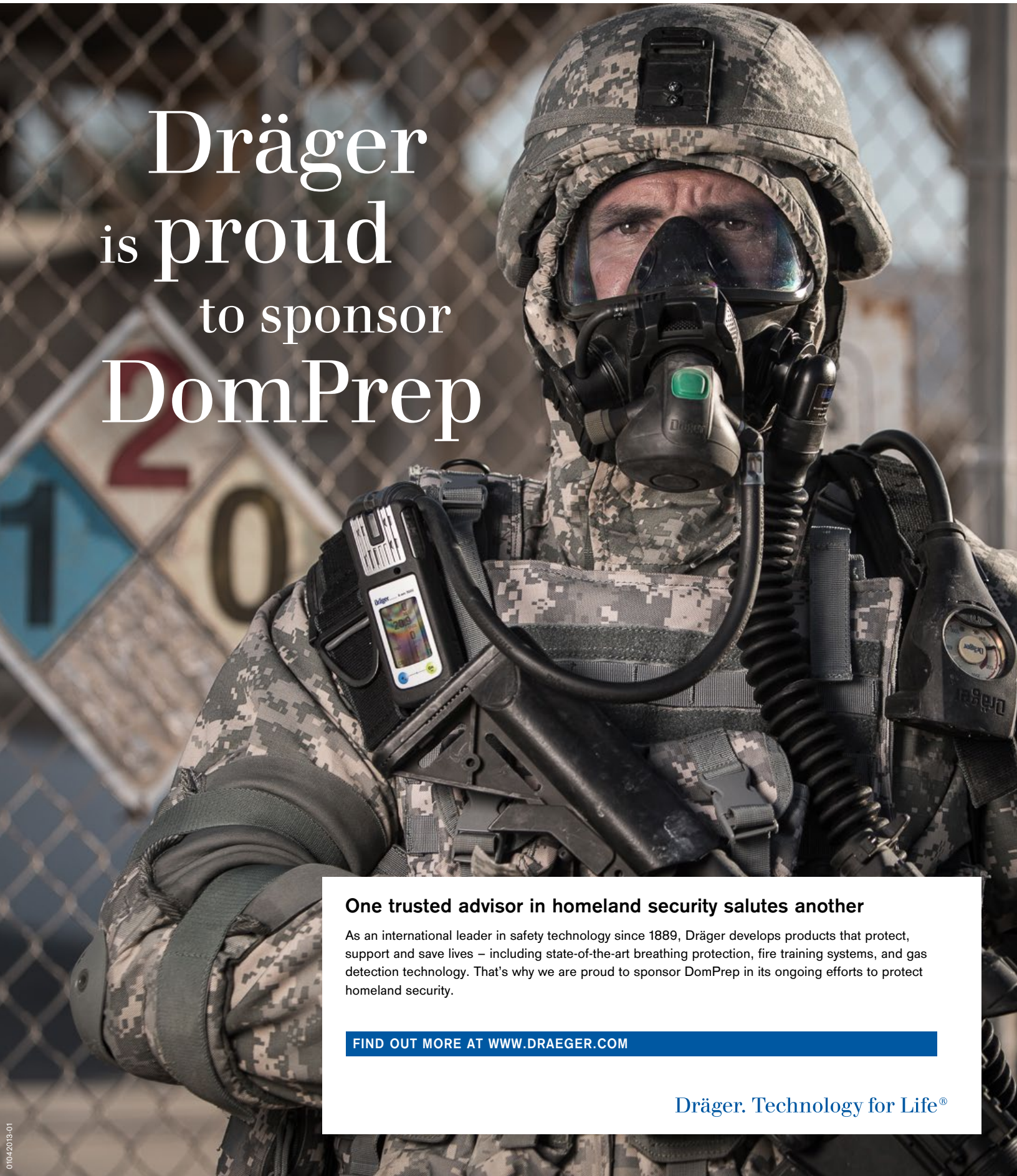

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Public Order Policing & Volunteers

By Erik Westgard

Two days into the May 2020 George Floyd riots in Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, hundreds (on the way to ~1,500) of properties were burning, with smoke visible on the horizon. Top leaders appeared on television stating that law and order were breaking down and urging calm within the community. Based on media reports, there were a few places volunteers could help. One was in watching pandemic-vacated buildings, schools, churches, and grocery stores that were being systematically firebombed and looted. This was beneficial as volunteers deployed and were able to save some buildings such as a popular local Mexican restaurant complex near St. Paul (El Burrito Mercado) and a grocery store in Minneapolis. Another way in which volunteers could help was in intelligence gathering.

Historically, amateur radio volunteers were the emergency management community's essential radio people. In Minnesota, for instance, 100 Amateur Radio volunteers run a medical command center and family reunification service for the largest outdoor sporting event in the state, working alongside a score of agencies. However, with modern public safety radio systems and updated cellular networks, these volunteers now play a much smaller role day to day. In 2018/2019, two area emergency managers directly said, "We don't have time for volunteers." According to the 2018 SAFECOM Nationwide survey, only 7% of public safety organizations trained with the private sector or nongovernmental organizations.

Overcoming Barriers

Much of the hesitation for using volunteer resources is fear of liability, which is not trivial. For example, the legal manual the Federal Emergency Management Agency created for Citizen Corps is 92 pages. There is a long list of additional issues that arise when considering volunteers in policing: arming law enforcement volunteers, training gaps, ability to assign volunteers to duty, etc. As another example, thousands of civilian volunteers successfully supported emergency services during the 1940/1941 Battle of Britain, when around 8,000 buildings a day were being damaged by bombs and fires. In July 1939, the Auxiliary Fire Service had 138,000 members.

Unfortunately, with no framework in place, efforts to provide the services of amateur radio operators and other volunteers during the riots were unsuccessful. Some government officials entertained the idea but politely declined. With the release of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) after action report from the Los Angeles George Floyd protests, a few possible roles for volunteers in civil disturbances seem obvious. One is in intelligence gathering.

A stock plot feature in old television police shows is the confidential informant, who in return for a small fee or not being arrested would turn over critical information. In modern times, department personnel sit in front of computer screens with an artificial intelligence application that can pinpoint criminal activity in real time (consider fusion centers, such as in Washington, DC, which can play a critical role in intelligence gathering).

Leveraging a Large Support System

Crowdsourcing applications, although flawed (e.g., racial profiling), suggest a ground truth reporting system – possibly with trusted, trained observers – could be developed. Individuals can safely report what they see out the window, and licensed officers are not needed to operate this process. Media accounts of vehicles without license plates driven by out-of-town criminals were rampant during the Minnesota riots.

The other opportunity for volunteer support is in logistics. As noted in a post-incident report by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, nearly 95% of the demonstrations in the summer of 2020 were peaceful, with only about 5% involving acts of violence. With a small percentage of criminals and anarchists doing most of the serious damage, this presents a good opportunity for volunteers to provide logistical support to law enforcement efforts. The LAPD report says that about 50-80 officers were needed to manage temporary jails, where they would process the intake of 200-300 arrestees per hour and await prisoner transports. If the hardened dangerous criminals were sent directly to the county jail and the hundreds of other people arrested for blocking the freeway were sorted, the mass movement, feeding, and processing of protestors could be safely run by non-licensed individuals.

Crowdsourcing, logistics, and intelligence gathering are ways in which volunteers can support policing efforts and build greater community resilience.

The warrior police model does not appear to be as effective in protest scenarios as guardian policing. For demonstrations, as with other large public events, normal event organizing methods could be used. However, this is a struggle and a large role change for some agencies. As mentioned in the LAPD report, the Incident Command System has been a standard public safety training focus for decades but is not, by itself, a panacea. It also is sometimes ignored in real-world events.

A volunteer branch stood up for such events would be valuable. Alongside the existing chain of command, volunteers could assist with intelligence gathering and suspicious activity reporting to more rapidly help identify and stop bad actors before an incident occurs. Rather than saying, "I'm in charge," agencies should refocus on the National Incident Management System (NIMS). Unfortunately, multiple chains of command can introduce conflicting agendas

and authorities among overlapping jurisdictions. For example, although NIMS (which originated in the fire service) is broadly accepted across most emergency response agencies, law enforcement has perhaps been slower to embrace it.

Building Trust & Filling Gaps

The term "force multiplier" in the military sense is not applicable to public order policing with regard to volunteers. The use of armed volunteers on the front lines has obvious risks. Law enforcement is incredibly complex and subtle, and volunteers would not have near the level of training and experience needed to successfully perform the required tasks. The volunteers could, however, provide a surge of support. As an example, the U.S. Coast Guard has for decades handed over the entire recreational boating safety mission to The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, freeing active-duty team members to focus on law enforcement and other more hazardous duties. At a Minneapolis-area sheriff office, the communications and water patrol units are run by volunteers.

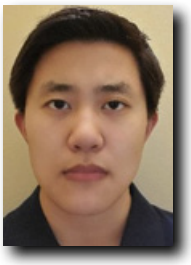
Human intelligence and trust are required for effective public order policing. Aloof, hardened tactics are proving to be much less effective. Many cities are struggling in this area. Volunteers though do not represent as much of a security risk as is often portrayed. The daunting potential liability of enhancing law enforcement efforts with volunteers could be managed (possibly via legislation). The key goal should be to enable highly trained officers to sleep when off duty and apprehend criminals when on duty rather than typing reports, answering phones in the emergency operations center, or supervising bathroom breaks at the fairgrounds. Volunteers could fill some gaps by performing basic tasks and reporting suspicious activities to help law enforcement officers focus on the highly skilled jobs they were trained to do.

Erik Westgard, MBA, teaches digital strategy in the College of Management at Metropolitan State University in Minneapolis. He coordinates ham radio volunteers for the Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon, Red White and Boom Half Marathon, and the Loppet City of Lakes Winter Festival. His most recent project is the conversion of a dozen surplus construction light tower trailers into mesh networking tower generator units to support events and Minnesota VOAD.

Understand the Terrorist, Preempt the Threat

By Laura Ehrmantraut

It is important to understand why people do the things they do when trying to figure out an individual's motives and reasons. It is even more captivating when it involves an individual doing unspeakable actions toward another, such as murder or abuse. When it comes to terrorism, there are many different kinds of people who become terrorists – regardless of gender, orientation, religion, or race. These people have complex varying agendas, motivations, and reasons for their actions: religious, political, cultural, emotional, or perceptual. Understanding these reasons will help communities develop counterterrorism programs and support groups to help thwart terroristic actions.



Throughout history, terrorism – both international and domestic – has existed around the world. The 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001 was a turning point for the U.S. that exposed copious vulnerabilities within government preparedness for and response to such threats. After that attack, national security became a major focal point against international terrorism, which was the main priority at the time. This led President George W. Bush to sign the Homeland Security Act of 2002 into law, creating the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Recently, due to numerous events within the past decade, domestic terrorism has garnered much more attention and focus from all levels of government and the media. In addition to acknowledging the existence of international and domestic terrorism, it is important to explore the reasons people become terrorists in order to create mitigation strategies.

Behind the Terrorist

Profiles are created to define groups of people who exhibit similar characteristics in hopes of understanding individuals and reasons for their actions. However, many people do not fit within these created profiles. For example, someone may have similar characteristics as a profile but does not commit the same crimes or may commit the same acts but have none or very few similar characteristics. Although profiles help in understanding individuals and their motives, they are not totally reliable. A "terrorist" is one such profile that cannot be easily defined.

There are many different reasons why someone may become a terrorist or join a terrorist group, such as religion, pride in self or nation, strong beliefs for or against something, or feelings of injustice or unfairness. These few major factors provide an understanding of motivations for joining a group or becoming a terrorist, but some questions remain unsatisfied:

- While not dismissing motivations, what is personally and emotionally driving an individual to become a terrorist or join a group?
- What is the core reason for becoming a terrorist?

The answers to these questions include many personal reasons, such as a sense of belonging, revenge, power, validation, and family/society. These reasons also can inspire action individually or can overlap or be combined with one another. Personal factors coupled with the right type of terrorist group can move an individual toward becoming a terrorist.

Sense of belonging. Many terrorists want to belong somewhere or to something. They often believe they have been outcasted by their peer groups, society, and/or even their own families. In turn, they are motivated to look for a group of like-minded people and create or join a surrogate-like family. Feelings of finally belonging somewhere – acceptance, acknowledgement, and even expressions of love from the group – can override actions that go against personal morals. Even in a group of terrorists, a new member may be willing to do anything to be praised and accepted by their "family," even if it means killing others or themselves.

Revenge and power. Individuals who become terrorists sometimes exhibit patterns of being bullied or targets of violent attacks (e.g., from the household, society, peer group, academic institutions), which can influence future bullying and other violent behaviors. Depending on the individual, it can follow into adulthood. A sense of feeling powerless and weak from being humiliated and shamed can lead to blaming others for personal misfortune. Within a terrorist group, members may start blaming a particular set of people – involved or not – to coincide with the group's target. By seeking revenge and committing acts against those who "wronged" them, they gain a sense of power that they previously lacked.

Exploring the reasons people become terrorists is more effective than profiling for creating counterterrorism strategies.

Validation. Often, those who want to feel validated have had their expressed feelings belittled, treated like they do not matter, or treated as though they are wrong or crazy. This can sometimes lead individuals to act certain ways deemed by society as bad or criminal because of the master label society gives them. Validation is an integral part of other listed reasons. Having a sense of belonging with like-minded people helps to validate an individual's personal views, feelings of anger and blame, desire to seek revenge, and longing for a sense of power. At the core, validation involves being understood, being acknowledged, and having feelings and views deemed important.

Family/society. Some individuals are raised by their families or in small established societies to become terrorists (i.e., group terrorism rather than an individual joining a group or independently becoming a terrorist). Group terrorism involves having religious, political, criminal, state-sponsored, and other goals. Although family/society-encouraged terrorism is not the most common way in Western society to become a terrorist, it is more prevalent in parts of the world where religious/cultural roles play a larger role. Often, when one is raised to become a terrorist, the family is already part of the group or small society that encourages terrorism. The individuals are taught what the roles, duties, and expectations of them will be.

Disrupting a Terrorist's Path

The reasons listed above are just a few of the many important possible reasons why people become terrorists. Once integrated into certain terrorist groups, members often conform to adopt the group's targets, goals, and motivations. Awareness is the first step toward prevention. Individuals who become terrorists are often in the background and go unnoticed by the general public. However, others who do interact with the public may show signs of suspicious activities – for example, direct or indirect threats; or a fascination or obsession with weapons, especially guns or explosives.

Although there are no telltale signs – and some show no signs – that someone is or is becoming a terrorist, it is critical to recognize potential threats and alert the proper authorities if someone does display unusual and dangerous behaviors. Emergency preparedness professionals should work with community organizations to help build awareness and partnerships to encourage situational awareness and reporting. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's If you see something, say something campaign offers valuable tools for all community stakeholders to use for building situational awareness and reporting practices. The Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting Initiative provides law enforcement with an information sharing tool to bridge the investigative efforts of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement partners.

It is important for emergency preparedness professionals to understand the core reasons behind people becoming terrorists or joining terrorist groups. Understanding these reasons can lead society to address such issues or to create groups that provide support for non-violent coping strategies. People want to be validated, supported, and have a sense of meaning and feeling important, so understanding these underlying reasons is a step toward a less violent future.

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