



NEW YORK CITY **OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

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OEM & THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE HOST “OPERATION UNITED STRENGTH”

Two-Day Drill Focused on City’s Ability to Respond to Various Terrorist Scenarios

Today Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and John T. Odermatt, Commissioner of the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), announced the completion of “Operation United Strength,” a two-day tabletop drill moderated by the United States Naval War College and hosted by OEM. The exercises, which began yesterday, were designed to help determine the City’s ability to respond to hypothetical terrorist attacks by exploring leadership roles and communications protocols among City officials.

Joining Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Odermatt were Commissioner Raymond Kelly of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), Commissioner Nicholas Scoppetta of the New York City Fire Department (FDNY), Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Thomas Frieden, Dr. Kenneth Watman, Director of the Naval War College’s War Gaming Department; Professor James R. Fitzsimonds, head researcher with the Naval War College; and other City, State and federal officials.

“The tragic events of September 11th have taught us that we can never rest in our efforts to prepare for the worst-case scenario,” said Commissioner Odermatt. “By constantly reviewing and updating our emergency management protocols and responses, we are able to meet the new challenges that New York City faces in the 21st century. While these tabletop drills give us a unique opportunity to put what we have learned to the test, they are only an example of the many resources OEM uses.”

“Similar to the war games we have moderated for the NYPD and FDNY, this exercise will focus on the decision-making and communication skills of leaders when confronted with a complex scenario,” said Dr. Kenneth Watman, Director of the Naval War College’s War Gaming Department. “This tabletop exercise demonstrates how the City of New York is continuing to prepare for possible contingencies. By bringing together the Commissioner, their expert staff, and the professional from the Naval War College, this exercise represents an important step in preparing a city to respond to future terrorist attacks.”



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The two-day exercises took place at OEM's temporary headquarters in Brooklyn, and at Con Edison's Learning Center in Queens. The seminar-style games raised potential threats to the City, and put demands on each participant's expertise in several fields, from preparedness and law enforcement to utility management and health/medical protocols.

"Operation United Strength" featured two phases: Phase One was devoted to pre-incident planning, wherein participants discussed planning for an imminent, but undefined event. In Phase Two, participants examined and recommended how the City should best handle incident and post-incident situations. Recommendations during this phase demanded a hard look at functional capabilities and critical information requirements on the part of City agencies.

Tabletop drills, also known as "war games," are generally held to provide a venue for assessment and an environment to engage in critical thinking in order to make internal recommendations. The intent is to discover critical issues and insights from the context of the scenario. Participants focus on operational, strategic and policy decisions.

Additionally, the game design considerations intend to:

- Expose senior leadership to a basic form of war gaming
- Increase awareness of relevant issues
- Provide a venue for analysis of leadership and management roles within the City's ranks
- Allow for discussions of command and control issues, as well as exploration of procedural modifications
- Provide allowances for unexpected and important issues to be addressed

"Operation United Strength," the costs of which were covered by the U.S. Naval War College, was the latest in a series of drills held or hosted by OEM. Recent exercises include:

- "Operation TriPOD", which determined the feasibility of medicating a large segment of the City's populace in the aftermath of a bioterror attack;
- "Operation Sandbox," a tabletop drill that dealt with a hypothetical biological agent dispersed in the City;
- "Hurricane Yankee," which imagined the impact on the City of a powerful coastal storm;
- "Operation Ready Set," a citywide drill set at OEM's emergency Operation Center to determine the unified response by all City agencies and utilities to an unspecified catastrophe in midtown Manhattan.

OEM is planning at least five more tabletop and field drills over the course of next year.