



## U.S. Department of Homeland Security Conducts Largest Counterterrorism Exercise To Date

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The U.S. Department of Homeland Security will conduct the largest and most comprehensive counterterrorism exercise to date from Oct. 15-19 in Arizona and Oregon, and the U.S. territory of Guam. Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4) is the fourth in a series of congressionally-mandated exercises and involves various federal agencies as well as the governments of Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom.

"The National Intelligence Estimate and recent activity overseas reinforce that we are in a period of increased risk," said Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff. "Exercises like TOPOFF help test response capabilities at all levels, strengthen national preparedness and deepen international coordination. By responding realistically to these simulated attacks, we're able to identify our strengths and weaknesses, build better partnerships, and gain valuable knowledge for securing the nation against terrorist attacks and other natural disasters."

TOPOFF 4 will involve more than 15,000 participants from all levels of government, international partners and the private sector in a full-scale, simulated response to radiological dispersal device attacks.

"TOPOFF stresses our preparedness and response systems with situations that no single agency or jurisdiction could handle on its own," said David Paulison, Administrator of DHS' Federal Emergency Management Agency. "The right response actually takes thousands of individuals working together. This exercise is about strengthening working relationships within our partners in federal, state and local agencies, emergency management communities and private industry groups. It's about increasing preparedness by sharing information and processes."

To reach the overarching goal and objectives to enhance interagency coordination, planning and preparedness, TOPOFF 4 will focus on five key areas:

- **Prevention:** To test the handling and flow of operational and time-critical intelligence between agencies to prevent a terrorist attack.
- **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 weapon of mass destruction event and to improve the top officials' capabilities to respond consistent with the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System.
- **Public Information:** To practice the strategic coordination of media relations and public information in the context of a terrorist weapon of mass destruction event or incident of national significance.
- **Evaluation:** To identify lessons learned and promote best practices.

TOPOFF 4 builds on experiences from previous exercises as well real world emergencies, and will also prioritize increased coordination with U.S. Department of Defense and the private sector, an expanded emphasis on prevention, a deeper focus on mass decontamination, long-term recovery and remediation issues, and strengthened partnerships and communications with international allies.

In addition to TOPOFF 4 objectives, each supporting and partnering agency, state, territory and local entity has developed a set of specific objectives to further assist them in preparing for emergency situations.

For more information on TOPOFF 4, visit the Department of Homeland Security Web site at [www.dhs.gov/topoff4](http://www.dhs.gov/topoff4).

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