

The department of homeland security

Government



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In September 11, 2001, the United States experienced terrorist attacks which changed the way the country plans and organizes to protect itself from such acts of terrorism. In such efforts, the United States government established the Department of Homeland Security, the objectives of which would be “to secure borders, synthesize and analyze intelligence on terrorist threats, work with state and local authorities in threat preparedness, protect the public from weapons of mass destruction, help train and equip first responders, and manage emergencies” (Sloan, 2002, p. 20).

The Department of Homeland Security thus leads a national effort to protect the country from acts of terrorism and became an important counterterrorism arm of the United States. This paper is an effort to look into the agencies working with the Department of Homeland Security in its efforts in dealing with and mitigating acts of terrorism. These agencies are also herein described as to their primary functions and responsibilities so as to have an understanding on how they help in protecting the United States from domestic and foreign terrorism.

According to the Department of National Homeland Security, more than 87,000 different government jurisdictions at the federal, state and local level have homeland security responsibilities. However, there are only a lesser number which comprises the major components, government agencies and offices that currently make up and help the department in attaining its counterterrorism goals and objectives.

These agencies, as they are herein considered, are of such importance to the counterterrorism measures of the DHS because they belong to the four areas where the department is focusing on to fight and curb terrorism. These four

areas concerned are composed of the border and transportation security; the emergency preparedness and responses; the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear countermeasures; and information analysis.

Border and Transportation Security

The Department of Homeland Security ensures safe and secure borders and by doing so protects the United States from entry of possible threats to national peace and security, and provides an effective counterterrorism measure against foreign and international terrorists. In that domestic terrorists are equally dangerous as international terrorists, the DHS also employ methods of securing the safety of the United States from terrorists already based in the country. These counterterrorism measures can be done by focusing on the border and transportation security of the nation.

The agencies under the Department of Homeland Security that are responsible for curbing terrorism in these areas are:

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) protects the country from current and possible terrorist attacks by ensuring that the country's transportation system, a vulnerable area of attack by terrorists, is safe and well protected from suicide bombers or those whose tactics are to plant explosives in public transportation systems.

The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP)

The United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP) works in collaboration with the Transportation Security Administration to prevent the entry of international threats to the borders of the United States while ensuring a free movement of people and commerce. Its

counterterrorism responsibility is accomplished by guarding the nation's borders against entry of terrorists and terrorist weapons that can disrupt national peace and security.

The United States Coast Guard

The United States Coast Guard protects the country in the same manner that the United States Customs and Border Protection does: it protects the country from current and potential terrorist attacks by guarding the nation's borders against entry of terrorists and terrorist weapons. Its area of responsibility, however, is specific in that its counterterrorism responsibility Counterterrorism page_#3 is accomplished by protecting the nation in “ the nation's ports and waterways, along the coast, on international waters, or in any maritime region as required to support national security” (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006). Emergency Preparedness and Responses In order to fight terrorism, the Department of Homeland Security ensures that the country is equipped and prepared to protect itself from acts and possible threats of terrorism. It also ensures that should acts of terrorism occur, there are sufficient responses so as to mitigate the impacts of terrorism. Thus, the DHS has focus on emergency preparedness and responses. The agencies under the DHS that are responsible for curbing terrorism in these areas are:

The Directorate for Preparedness

The Directorate for Preparedness works with state, local, and private sector partners to identify threats, determine vulnerabilities, and target resources where risk is greatest and by doing so safeguards the national borders, seaports, bridges and highways, and critical information systems (U. S.

Department of Homeland Security, 2006). Its counterterrorism responsibility is accomplished through several of its components among which include the Infrastructure Protection which is responsible in identifying threats to the country's physical and informational structure.

Another equally important and useful component of the Directorate is the Cyber and Telecommunications which is responsible in preventing and mitigating a modern form of terrorism: cyberterrorism. The Cyber and Telecommunications arm of the Directorate for Preparedness protects the country against cyberterrorism by disseminating cyber threat warning information and coming up with the necessary responses to cyber attacks.

In cases of cyber attacks, it coordinates with other agencies including the law enforcement and intelligence community so as to capture and convict those who are responsible for the occurrences. It is also helpful in providing information to investigators who are working on electronic crime cases.

The Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Directorate

The Federal Emergency Management Directorate declares that it “ prepares the nation for hazards, manages Federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident”.

It is also an important counterterrorism agency working with the Department of Homeland Security in that it is responsible for the dissemination of information regarding terrorism including the kinds of acts the US government considers as acts of terrorism and the high risk target areas of terrorist attacks. The FEMA therefore helps protect the country from current and potential terrorist attacks by equipping the citizens with the basic

knowledge about acts of terrorism and giving them the necessary know how so as for them to be able to protect themselves should such attacks occur.

This will mitigate the impact of terrorist acts and the number of casualties during such incidents. The function of FEMA is well described in the role it played when the World Trade Center (WTC) was attacked on September 11, 2001. After the attack, FEMA moved immediately into its response mode to help with long-term repair, restoration, and rebuilding of the damaged and lost infrastructure (Howard & Buck, 2002). The Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Countermeasures Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear weapons are among the most dangerous and deadliest that can be possibly employed by terrorists.

While there may be vaccines for these weapons, they have too many side effects and it is quite impossible to vaccinate an entire population. The best way to protect the people of the United States from these weapons of mass destruction is therefore safeguarding them from it and, on the part of the Department of Homeland Security, to have a focus in the areas of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear countermeasures. Thus, several agencies are responsible for safeguarding the nation from these weapons of mass destructions. The agencies responsible in this counterterrorism measure include:

The Directorate for Science and Technology

The Directorate for Science and Technology is an important arm of the DHS which works to provide the necessary technology and capabilities so as to protect the United States from terrorists attacks. The Directorate for Science and Technology is responsible for protecting the country from terrorist

attacks by developing the latest and a highly capable system that can prevent, detect and mitigate the effects of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and explosive attacks.

The Directorate is also responsible in building up on the technological capacities of the country so as to be able to anticipate emerging threats, enable preparedness and provide emergency responder technologies. It further implements its counterterrorism responsibilities by working on for the detection, mitigation and response to potentially dangerous and explosive device such as bombs and weapons of mass destructions that can be improvised or assembled by terrorists.

It is also responsible to developing a system of treating and minimizing the exposure of victims to biological or chemical attacks. The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office The Domestic Nuclear Detection Office (DNDO) is responsible in improving the country's ability to detect and report unauthorized attempts to import, possess, store, develop, or transport nuclear or radiological material for use against the Nation, and to further enhance this capability over time (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006).

The DNDO protects the country from current and potential terrorist attacks by working on transformational research and development programs to improve the country's ability to detect nuclear threats. It is also responsible for establishing methods that will ensure timely and effective response actions to detected nuclear threats. Counterterrorism page_#6 Informational Analysis An important aspect in counterterrorism measures is the ability to

gather and synthesize information as information is an important tool in determining the appropriate response and counteraction to a threat.

An appropriate interpretation of gathered information will not only make counterterrorism measures more effective but can also help save lives and mitigate the impacts of terrorism. Thus, the Department of Homeland Security ensures that it has focus on informational analysis. The agencies that are responsible for curbing terrorism through intelligence gathering and synthesis are:

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)

The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative branch of the Department of Homeland Security which was created after the September 11 attack so as to have a more effective enforcement of immigration and customs law of the United States which form efforts of protecting the country against terrorism. The ICE countermeasures against foreign terrorism involve targeting illegal immigrants: the people, money and materials that support terrorism and other criminal activities (U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2006).

The organization implements its counterterrorism measures by investigating on illegal export of US munitions and similar technologies; investigating on employers who employ illegal workers in critical and vulnerable infrastructure worksites like nuclear plants and airports such that employing unauthorized workers at sensitive sites may pose serious homeland security threats; destroying the systems through which criminal organizations move and store their funds; and ensuring the removal of fugitive aliens in the country (U. S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2006).

The United States Secret Service

The United States Secret Service is responsible for protecting the President and other high-level officials of the country. It is also valuable in fighting against many forms of terrorism such that it investigates on different activities that can be possibly utilized for acts of terrorism. Among its responsibilities are to investigate counterfeiting and other financial crimes, including financial institution fraud, identity theft, computer fraud; and computer-based attacks on the nation's financial, banking, and telecommunications infrastructure.

The responsibilities of the United States Secret Service is to protect the country from threats oftentimes employed by terrorists which include the creation of fear among the public such as when the public experiences computer based attacks or some forms of cyberterrorism; and trying to convince citizens that their government is powerless in preventing terrorist attacks such as what may happen when financial crimes occur.

The Office of Operations Coordination

The Office of Operations Coordination is responsible for providing the necessary monitoring of the security of United States against terrorism by fusing different information from different sources so as to point out possible threats of terrorist attacks. These sources, as the organization refers are the “intelligence side” responsible for focusing on highly classified intelligence and assessment of information with regards to current threat picture of a specific area; and the “law enforcement side” responsible for different enforcement activities across the country that may have a terrorist nexus (U. S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006). Through its National Operations

Center, information sharing is coordinated to help deter, detect, and prevent terrorist acts.

Conclusion

In the effort of United States to protect itself from acts of terrorism such as what have occurred in September 2001, it has established a department that will be an important and leading arm in its counterterrorism measures.

This department is the Department of the National Homeland Security whose efforts, according to Sloan, are to secure borders, synthesize and analyze intelligence on terrorist threats, work with state and local authorities in threat preparedness, protect the public from weapons of mass destruction, help train and equip first responders, and manage emergencies.

While there are more than 87, 000 different government jurisdictions at the federal, state and local level that have homeland security responsibilities, there are major components, government agencies and offices that currently make up and help the department in attaining its goals and objectives considered of importance because they belong to the four areas where the department is focusing on to fight and curb terrorism.

These four areas are composed of the border and transportation security comprising the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) , United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the United States Coast Guard; the emergency preparedness and responses comprising the Directorate for Preparedness and the Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) Directorate; the chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear countermeasures comprising the Science and Technology Directorate and the Domestic

Nuclear Detection Office; and information analysis comprising the United States Secret Service, the Office of Operations Coordination The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

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