



# An Army Strategy for Homeland Security

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The September 11 terrorist attacks vaulted homeland security to a top national priority. Since then, many civilian organizations have been improving their capabilities to respond to such attacks. The role of the U.S. military, especially the Army, is to make up for any shortfalls in civilian capabilities. The Army has already taken steps to enhance its ability to respond in this area. For example, it has made sure some of its active and reserve units will be available more rapidly. The question is whether it should do more to hedge against the risk of not being adequately prepared, given a world where terrorist organizations have displayed both the will and capability to cause mass casualties in the United States. A group of RAND Arroyo Center researchers explored ways that the active and reserve components of the Army could respond to that risk today. The results of the analysis appear in *Army Forces for Homeland Security*.

## Uncertainty Abounds

The considerable uncertainty that surrounds homeland security complicates the Army's task in deciding what further actions to take. A major uncertainty is the nature of the threat. Terrorist groups are numerous and diverse, and the tactics employed in the last attack might not be those used in the next. Evidence indicates that some groups are trying to obtain weapons that could cause mass casualties, but the type and method of employment remains unclear. Also unclear is the capability of the various law enforcement and other civilian agencies to deal with another attack. Much progress has been made, but how effective these changes will be in an event involving mass casualties remains an unknown. Finally, homeland security at the national level has been substantially reorganized, but how that new structure will respond to another attack is yet another unknown.

## Abstract

Given the potential but undefined threat posed to the U.S. homeland by terrorists, the Army needs to decide whether it should hedge against the risk of not being adequately prepared. RAND researchers posed five plausible scenarios and potential Army responses along with an estimated cost for each. They recommend four actions the Army could take now to enhance its ability to respond to an attack on the United States.

## What Should the Army Hedge Against and How?

To determine what the Army might plan for, Arroyo researchers posed five possibilities against which the Army might want to hedge. These hypothetical but plausible possibilities could pose a serious risk to the country should they occur. To illustrate possible responses, Arroyo researchers developed ways that the Army could prepare today by conducting specialized training, by improving responsiveness, or by augmenting capabilities. Of course, the Army could devise other responses for each possibility.

**Possibility 1:** The National Guard is inadequately prepared because of its focus on conventional warfare.

**Army response 1:** Improve National Guard homeland security capabilities by providing funds and facilitating the sharing of state assets. DoD funding would be provided for training that enhances a state's homeland security capability. Legislative changes would facilitate use of one state's soldiers in another state by making laws uniform and extending legal protections to guardsmen performing homeland security.

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**Possibility 2:** Active component is not available soon enough or trained well enough to respond to a large-scale domestic emergency.

**Army response 2:** Dedicate a brigade for rapid reaction, rotating between the active component and National Guard (3,600 soldiers). The brigade would have an exclusive homeland security mission and thus be always available and well trained in homeland security tasks. Some elements of the brigade would always be on a higher alert status.

**Possibility 3:** Law enforcement combined with existing Army counterterrorism capabilities cannot meet demands of future terrorist attacks.

**Army response 3:** Create rapidly deployable and dedicated combating terrorism force (6,200 soldiers) in the active component. This force would be designed to augment civilian law enforcement efforts quickly with highly trained, specialized forces that can protect key installations, assist in the event of civil disturbances, track terrorists and their weapons, and carry out other anti- and counterterrorism operations.

**Possibility 4:** Active component cannot respond adequately to large-scale domestic emergencies because of significant forces deployed overseas.

**Army response 4:** Give National Guard primary responsibility for homeland security activities by creating dedicated rapid-response civil support battalions (8,900 soldiers). This response would create ten new organizations—civil support battalions containing about 900 soldiers—in ten regions across the country. It would provide the heart of the National Guard homeland security capability with special training. The civil support battalions could draw on other Guard capabilities as required. Members would agree to remain on special alert status.

**Possibility 5:** Units critical for homeland security in the Army Reserve are not available because they are deployed overseas, not ready soon enough, or prohibited by law from conducting all missions.

**Army response 5:** Dedicate a pool of Army Reserve units exclusively to homeland security mission (7,500 soldiers). Many of the types of support units particularly needed in past Army disaster relief operations are located primarily in the Army Reserve. They will likely remain there, even given the Army’s plans for augmenting support units in the active force. The forces would be located in different parts of the United States to facilitate responding to homeland security contingencies anywhere in the country. Although the reservists would not be on active duty, they would be notified of their priority homeland security status and would be on-call for a more rapid activation (e.g., less than 7 days).

These responses would offer a range of benefits, from providing more responsive, better-trained units for homeland security to improving the overseas readiness of active component units.

**What Are the Costs?**

The Army would take these actions immediately if no costs were involved. But that is not the case. Each response costs something, even if it is only the ability of the Army to carry out some other mission. The financial costs are of two types: startup and sustaining. In some cases startup costs are negligible, such as changing the nature of National Guard training as suggested by Response 1. Some, however, entail substantial costs. A rough estimate for standing up a new combating terrorism force is between \$1 billion and \$1.4 billion. Sustainment costs also vary. For example, the enhanced training for National Guard soldiers suggested in Response 1 could amount to \$20 million annually, but keeping a National Guard brigade on active status for six months each year could cost \$200 million. The table roughly compares the relative startup costs and annual costs of each of the responses.

**Estimated Costs of Illustrative Army Responses (\$ Millions)**

Army Response	Startup Costs	Annual Costs
Army National Guard Training	0	20
AC/Army National Guard HLS Ready Brigade	0	200
Combating Terrorism Force	1,000 to 1,400	0
Army National Guard Primary HLS Responsibility	400 to 600	0
Dedicate Rapid USAR Units	0	0
NOTE: Assumes no changes in Army end strength.		

Not all costs are financial. Some of the responses suggested above would incur a political cost. Defense Department officials are not likely to want to expend funds on or dedicate forces to an explicit homeland security mission, preferring instead its historical stance of viewing homeland security as a lesser but included aspect of normal combat training and readiness. Any additional burden on the National Guard, particularly one that increases the possibility of activation, is unlikely to find favor with Guard leaders or state officials. What the analysis makes clear is that while the costs are certain, the benefits arise only if a future homeland security emergency arises.

**A Hedging Strategy for the Army**

Without being able to predict the future and in the face of certain costs but uncertain benefits, the choice for the nation is what sort of homeland security risks it is willing to assume. Based on their analysis, Arroyo researchers concluded that a multifaceted hedging strategy could make sense for the Army.

First, given the National Guard’s responsibility and availability to respond to domestic emergencies, the Army should support legislation that would make it possible for DoD to fund homeland

security training activities and for the National Guard to share its resources more easily across state borders. The Army should also seek the necessary statutory changes so that the Army Reserve can conduct any homeland security missions, including responses to natural disasters.

Second, given the possibility that units in all components of the Army may be unavailable because of overseas deployments and the need already acknowledged by DoD for units in all of the Army's components to be ready and on alert, the Army should take the additional step of dedicating some forces to homeland security emergencies, making them ready for rapid deployment and ensuring that they are appropriately trained.

Third, because the prospective capabilities and deficiencies of civilian organizations are uncertain, the Army should hedge again by dedicating a mix of forces for homeland security with some units trained in specialized law enforcement capabilities.

Fourth, the dedicated units should be drawn from the National Guard to permit the active Army and supporting Army Reserve units to be available for deployments overseas and to capitalize on the Guard's historical experiences in domestic emergencies and links to state and local emergency responders. To be effective as a hedge, the National Guard would need to create standing regional homeland security task forces across the country, with units dedicated to and trained for homeland security and capable of rapid response.

What is needed is for the nation to decide that it is worth bearing the costs today that are associated with the Army becoming better prepared for HLS than it presently is (in the aftermath of September 11) in order to *hedge* against a future that is uncertain, but one that could involve serious risks if the Army were found unprepared. ■

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This research brief describes work done for RAND Arroyo Center documented in *Army Forces for Homeland Security*, by Lynn E. Davis, David E. Mosher, Richard Brennan, K. Scott McMahon, Michael D. Greenburg, and Charles W. Yost, MG-221-A, 2004, 99 pp., \$20, ISBN: 0-8330-3673-4, available at <http://www.rand.org/publications/MG/MG221/>. It is also available from RAND Distribution Services (phone: 310-451-7002; toll free 877-584-8642; or email: [order@rand.org](mailto:order@rand.org)). That report and this brief build on the concepts in several other RAND Arroyo Center reports that are cited in the text and listed in the references. RAND Arroyo Center URL: <http://www.rand.org/organization/ard/>. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. **RAND**® is a registered trademark.

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