



Defense Orientation Conference Association

# POST CONFERENCE NOTES

Virtual Conference - Friday, August 7, 2020

## Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Adapting to Change and Overcoming Challenges for National Security

### Post Conference Report

(All presentations were UNCLASSIFIED)

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#### Organizational Overview and Top Challenges

*Mr. Thomas "Tom" Muir, Director of Washington Headquarters Services (WHS)*

The first speaker was meant to give broad insights of the OSD staff management. Unfortunately, Mr. Muir was unable to join us due to extensive damage to his home sustained in a severe thunderstorm the night before the conference. DOCA members can hope to hear from Mr. Muir in the future.

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#### The Homeland Defense and Global Security Mission and Key Roles Responsibilities, and Challenges

*Mr. Robert Salesses, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense Integration and DSCA*

Mr. Salesses traveled the world serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, and he feels he gained valuable experience during his career with the Marines. After retiring in 1998, he remained at the Pentagon and found that homeland security was an immediate and obvious mission for him and his assigned office. He said that between the combatant commands, intelligence sources, and other means, the U.S. has knowledge and takes actions against terrorism and other threats on a regular basis. Much of the protection offered to the nation and globe comes from the Air Force which is postured to react, but all the services play a role in deterring, confronting, and reacting to various attacks to our homeland. The services work together with numerous other agencies in a collaborative way to share information and resolve threats—to our borders, to large special events, to the public health, in cyber space, to natural disasters, and in other ways.

To clarify, homeland defense differs from homeland security. Homeland defense is the U.S. air defense, maritime defense, and missile defense. Homeland security has to do with transportation security, border control, etc.

Mr. Salesses mentioned that the DOD participates in three significant areas across dozens of different organizations:

1. Support of law enforcement
2. Support of public health and infection disease efforts
3. Support of other federal partners (i.e. FEMA)



Salesses' department operates in complex environments, and they are guided by Article 2 of the Constitution. Presidential policies/orders are the highest authorities for DOD actions. They operate under various authority to accomplish missions important to homeland defense. Outside of direct responsibilities of the DOD, all the laws that the department operates under read that they need to be supportive, not act in place of civil agencies. Those authorities can change when responding to major events like the 9/11 attack, Hurricane Katrina, and Super Storm Sandy. Mr. Salesses confirmed that the operational environment can be so varied that he has three lawyers on his staff just to navigate through all the legalities. Consider that there are multiple systems within the systems, and each of these systems rely heavily on the DOD support. He is confident that he knows where critical mission support is around the nation and that he can pick up the phone and call for such support.

Outside of homeland defense, his department plays a role in supporting law enforcement. To the DOD, support is a big word. He asked DOCA members to think about the Southern border, and that the 1,900 miles along that border may have about 5,000 assigned border control agents to provide continuous 24-hour security. When the department helps border control, they provide military personnel that do not normally execute any kind of law enforcement, but rather are responsible for various support activities like monitoring, detecting, communications, and logistics. The goal is to offset the manpower challenges the Border Patrol and law enforcement have with military personnel in supporting roles. At any time, 18,000 military personnel are on alert around the country to respond to any kind of threat.

FEMA, along with state and local partners, can also be supported by the DoD. During disasters and emergency responses, such support can be requested with an escalated expectation. Roles and responsibilities of the DoD in emergency scenarios can include any of the DoD missions, such as security, medical, or transportation. DoD response operations are continually adapting as new challenges come to light. Inter-agency planning and tabletop exercises conducted with federal partners, are a couple of ways the DoD prepares to more effectively aid responses. Salesses strongly understands that constant communication with other organizations, outside of emergencies, is how preparation can be enhanced.

Even during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Salesses has witnessed a prepared response from the DoD because of their experience with SARS and Ebola. With every emergency, there are lessons to be used in future planning sessions. Like other disease outbreaks, his role has been to help protect the military forces and DoD employees, maintain mission readiness, and assist the nation's and international partner responses. He also described how a key DoD flag officer with supply chain expertise went to the HHS during the COVID-19 response, and assisted for months with the numerous supply challenges in obtaining and speeding up the delivery of much-needed supplies. The DoD identified and assigned about 7,000 medical professionals to over 20 different cities as determined by HHS and FEMA's need for support.

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## **Managing Environmental Practices to Protect Our Nation's Military Training, Testing, and Operational Lands**

***Maureen Sullivan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Environment***

DoD's environmental program has a broad portfolio focusing mainly on air, water, and waste threats and contamination. Much of Ms. Sullivan's efforts focus on "cleaning up the past sins." More unique mission areas include Explosive Safety and Pest Management. The scope is so large and tasks so diverse that the potential liability for environmental costs is about \$30 billion, the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the DoD after service members' pay/benefits. Clean air, water, and disposal of hazardous waste makes up the largest piece of the allocated budget, about 44% of the \$3.6 billion dollars.



Anytime there is mention of environmental catastrophe on military installations, Ms. Sullivan is involved in the responses and advancing any needed protections. Water contamination problems have continued to be identified and are often highlighted in the mainstream media. There are 651 DoD installations that are suspected to have water, and particularly drinking water, challenges due to per- and polyfluoralkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS mitigation, protecting threatened wildlife and other species on the 26 million acres of DoD land, and reducing total environmental liability top the department's 2020 focus areas. As Mr. Salasses also mentioned, the external interactions with other Federal and State agencies is a key to success.

Regarding PFAS issues, Sullivan said it is a national issue that requires national solutions. The problem was brought to light in 2016 when a health advisory was released by the EPA. The chemicals are used in everyday consumer items, entirely pervasive. Acceptable levels of PFAS is 70 parts per trillion (compared to allowable limits of lead in water as 10 parts per million). Spotlighted interest in DOD's PFAS levels came from the DoD's use of firefighting aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) and other defense technologies. A PFAS task force was established in 2019 by the Secretary of Defense to study this problem and create a plan.

The DOD PFAS Task Force has three primary goals:

1. Mitigating and eliminating the use of the AFFF (Congress expects complete elimination of purchasing AFFF by 2023, and total termination of use by 2024). The DOD is looking for an alternative technology for AFFF. Sullivan stated that her office is working closely with the Federal Aviation Association (FAA) on this effort of procuring a new solution to fire suppression. For the FAA has a shorter deadline than projected for the rest of the DOD. Industry is constantly testing products on the market, and some technologies are close, just not close enough.
2. Understanding the impacts of PFAS on human health
3. Fulfilling cleanup responsibility

Because the DASD for Environment has such a large liability, Ms. Sullivan has four lawyers to help with the numerous legal challenges and lawsuits, especially stemming from the PFAS issues. Ms. Sullivan herself, has testified five times on behalf of her office. Refer to Sullivan's presentation for more information about how the DOD has responded to the PFAS challenges both on and off base. She has estimated that this clean-up and control effort will add at least \$3 billion dollars to the current DoD liability.

To reference back to an earlier 2020 DOCA conference, Ms. Sullivan mentioned that issues with water availability/resilience are also important issues they focus on. There are many installations running out of clean water, and she estimates that the DoD operates more than 524 water systems worldwide as a result. Additionally, some installations need to source water and buy in bulk from surrounding communities. In either case, ongoing testing and reports are important to monitor and ensure safe drinking water is available to service members and their families.

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## **Thoughts and Perspectives of Homeland Defense and Security**

***Major General Michael McGuire, USAF, Adjutant General, Arizona***

To start, Major General McGuire wanted to give an insight into his role and responsibilities being from his perspective from the state of Arizona. Currently, he is serving as both the Director of Emergency Management and commanding general of the National Guard. The National Guard is the primary combat reserve for the Army and the Air Force. It is a federal requirement to organize, train, and equip the guard units, while it is a requirement of the state to execute the training and be compliant with federal requirements while serving the governor. General McGuire continued to give a deeper history of the National Guard while simultaneously letting viewers grasp, yet again, the connection between his role and the roles of the Secretary of Defense, especially in emergency response where regular tabletop drills, focused training, and good interagency communications ensure proper preparation for any missions deployed across the state.



To frame what has been going on with the COVID-19 pandemic on a national level, McGuire stated that since the Stafford Act (Disaster Relief) was passed in 1974, there has never been an incident in U.S. history where all 50 states have had a statewide declaration of emergency going on simultaneously. Typically, all emergencies are intended to be locally led and commanded at a tactical level by an incident commander. For instance, in Arizona, the 8,200-guardsman trained and ready to defend the country are also capable of pivoting and being prepared to help these local commands and reinforce their capabilities. The Stafford Act says that if there is a state emergency and all responses put in place exhaust their capabilities, then they are invited to request federal assistance. In 2020, all 50 states have been requesting additional help.

McGuire does not envy the challenges that NORTHCOM faces with all 50 states, and thereby their state commanders along with the President, during the pandemic environment. NORTHCOM is there to support state missions when called upon and to act as the synchronizing element to prep and qualify the teams to deploy.

Arizona's Army and Air Force Guard units have significant capability in aviation, infantry, and logistics. They can support security with sheer manpower for labor and emergency capability support and at the same time be there to respond to other direct tasks. Arizona's Guard does not, however, have "heavy" units such as an armored brigade. Gen McGuire said responding to COVID-19 involved delivering essential water and food to areas and people that were in need.

Supporting the Southwest border control is one of their ongoing missions that involves interagency coordination. In 2020, 704 guardsmen are currently in the fourth iteration of this ongoing support effort. Gen McGuire mentioned that this mission transitions into a federal active duty Title 10 mission as the Guard personnel are activated. He described it as "surging badges to the border." The Arizona Guard has a large aviation task force supporting this mission. Like the DoD, the Guards' goal is to support the border control's efforts and not perform law enforcement duties.