

Vigilant Shield 2008: Terrorism, Air Defences, and the Domestic Deployment of the US Military

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Vigilant Shield 2008

US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) has just announced plans for an anti-terrorism exercise called Vigilant Shield 2008. The series of exercises is mandated by the US government to prepare, prevent and respond to any number of national crises that would call for the use of the military inside the United States.

Terrorism, Air Defences, and the Deployment of the U.S. Military in American Streets

Vigilant Shield 2008 builds a scenario of a domestic disaster in the US (terrorist attack or natural disaster). It posits the domestic use of the US military including a special role for the US Air Force.

Hypothetically, a terrorist event could trigger the massive deployment of the US military as part of a national emergency. If a terrorist incident were to occur and Iran were to be blamed for the attacks, the military could also be used to shunt anti-war opposition within the US.

A precedent for the domestic use of the US military within US cities was established in New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina.

Vigilant Shield 2008 is said to be designed to deal with a terrorist or natural disaster scenario in the United States. Yet, the deployment of the US forces in the upcoming US military-security exercise, organised by Homeland Security and the Pentagon, resembles a war-time air scenario over North America and the Pacific rather than an anti-terrorist drill. Canadian territory is also involved through NORAD and so is Guam in the Pacific Ocean.

The Iran Link: Air War Scenario?

The involvement of a Pacific front suggests a scenario of confrontation with Russia or China. The Pacific Ocean, along with an arctic route across Canada are the most likely routes for hypothetical Chinese and Russian aerial attacks in response to a broader global war resulting from attacks on Iran. These assumptions were actually built into last year's Vigilant Shield exercise (Vigilant Shield '07).

[United States Northern Command](#)

Exercise Vigilant Shield '08 slated for October

[Click to download the VS-08 Fact Sheet](#)

August 30, 2007

PETERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Colo. – North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command along with U.S. Pacific Command, the Department of Homeland Security as well as local, state and other federal responders will exercise their response abilities against a variety of potential threats during Exercise Vigilant Shield '08, a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff-designated, North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM)-sponsored, and U.S. Joint Forces Command-supported Department of Defense exercise for homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities missions.

VS-08 will be conducted concurrent with Top Officials 4 (TOPOFF 4), the nation's premier exercise of terrorism preparedness sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security, and several other linked exercises as part of the National Level Exercise 1-08. These linked exercises will take place October 15-20 and are being conducted throughout the United States and in conjunction with several partner nations including Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, as well as the Territory of Guam.

VS-08 and National Level Exercise 1-08 will provide local, state, tribal, interagency, Department of Defense, and non-governmental organizations and agencies involved in homeland security and homeland defense the opportunity to participate in a full range of exercise scenarios that will better prepare participants to prevent and respond to national crises. The participating organizations will conduct a multi-layered, civilian-led response to a national crisis.

USNORTHCOM's primary exercise venues for VS-08 include locations in Oregon, Arizona and a cooperative venue with USPACOM in the Territory of Guam. NORAD's aerospace detection and defense events will take place across all the exercise venues, to exercise the ability to mobilize resources for aerospace defense, aerospace control, maritime warning, and coordination of air operations in a disaster area.

Emphasis Added

ANNEX II

[United States Northern Command](#)

USNORTHCOM prepared for hurricane response

Aug. 29, 2007

By Petty Officer 1st Class Joaquin Juatai
NORAD and USNORTHCOM Public Affairs

August 29 marks the second anniversary of Hurricane Katrina’s devastating landfall on the Gulf Coast. Local, state, federal and military responders rushed to New Orleans, one of the most devastated areas, to offer rescue, aid and clean up in the aftermath of the storm.

U.S. Northern Command is responsible for the Department of Defense’s role in response to a disaster such as Hurricane Katrina. **In that role, USNORTHCOM coordinates movement of equipment and personnel in support of the primary responding agency, whether that is the Federal Emergency Response Management Agency, the National Guard or another primary responding agency.**

“Hurricane Katrina’s impact on this country was unprecedented. There are still many of our fellow Americans whose lives still haven’t returned to normal,” said Gen. Gene Renuart, commander of North American Aerospace Defense Command and USNORTHCOM. “It will take many years for the Gulf Coast to fully recover.

“The United States military was deeply involved in the response to the hurricane and subsequent flooding,” Renuart said. “While our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines helped thousands of people, we also learned many lessons.”

According to Renuart, USNORTHCOM has been using the lessons learned from Katrina to modify plans to respond to both natural disasters and potential terrorist actions.

“We have been conducting exercises and working with our federal partners to be better prepared for a future catastrophe,” Renuart said.

Since Katrina, USNORTHCOM has pursued a robust planning and training program, developing and testing concepts of operation and response to a disaster such as a hurricane.

Personnel at the command have identified many of the resources that may be needed during a disaster and established a process to move them quicker.

The command has continued to work with other federal agencies to improve the overall federal response.

In May, USNORTHCOM and its subordinate commands participated with FEMA Region 1 in a National Hurricane Preparedness Exercise, which enabled further refining of processes and procedures in disaster response.

USNORTHCOM is ready to help federal, state and local officials to be prepared for a major hurricane and to be successful at conducting response operations, if necessary and requested by the primary responding agency. Some of the ways these objectives are being achieved are:

- Through State Engagement programs, USNORTHCOM provides planning support to help states prepare for emergencies.
- USNORTHCOM and its subordinates, as well as local, state and federal partners conduct major disaster exercises to refine processes and apply lessons learned.
- Working with FEMA, USNORTHCOM has prepared pre-scripted mission assignments to accelerate the disaster response process.
- USNORTHCOM conducted a major exercise with the National Guard in May to refine the interface between the National Guard and DoD.

The mission of USNORTHCOM is homeland defense and civil support. The command conducts operations to deter, prevent, defeat and mitigate threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories and interests within the assigned area of responsibility and, as directed by the President or Secretary of Defense, provides military assistance to civil authorities including consequence management operations.

Emphasis Added

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