

*City of Alexandria, Virginia*

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: JULY 28, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: BRUCE JOHNSON, ACTING CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLANNING FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON HEADQUARTERS SERVICE  
(AKA BRAC-133) (11-15H)

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This memorandum is a response to an e-mail from Mr. Don Buch dated July 14, 2011, entitled, "Where's the Plan?" That e-mail also referenced his public discussion period testimony of June 25, 2011. Parts of this response were conveyed orally to the BRAC-133 Advisory Group on July 20, 2011 by myself, Fire Chief Adam Thiel and Deputy Police Chief Blaine Corle. Other parts represent plans and activities undertaken in the last week.

**Summary Response**

- The City recognizes that it is extremely important to provide for the safety of both the employees who will be working at the WHS facility and those that live and work in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Emergency management plans are in place for large scale incidents affecting the surrounding public.
- These plans are not specific to the WHS facility, or to any other facility, but are adaptable to address any such incident at any facility anywhere in the City.
- To make specific decisions and manage both small and large emergencies based on the exact circumstances of the situation, a large number of City staff, both public safety and non-public safety personnel, are trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), as are other local, state and federal emergency responders. NIMS includes the Incident Command System (ICS), which is the structure used nationally to manage all emergency incidents.
- There is not an emergency management plan for a major incident specifically for the WHS. But should a major incident affecting the surrounding community occur, we would handle it using our existing plans and established procedures.

- For incidents that occur in the WHS facility and/or on Federal property, our public safety departments will use ICS, established guidelines, standard operating procedures and doctrine that reflects the jurisdictional authority of the Federal government over the property and its unique security/site characteristics.
- City public safety officials have more work to do. We are coordinating with Pentagon Force Protection Agency officials about how to handle specific emergency incidents that occur on Federal property, or in the WHS facility itself.
- We are planning to hold an emergency preparedness and response workshop for the public in mid-September. This workshop would be designed to provide an opportunity for the public to hear directly from the City Public Safety Agencies about their response to several scenarios that may affect the WHS facility and the surrounding community and ask questions.
- We also are planning several internal and regional planning and simulation exercises this year.
- For security reasons, neither the City's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, nor specific standard operating procedures for handling emergency incidents in general or emergency incidents at the Washington Headquarters Service will be made available to the public.
- Our first responders will always do their absolute best, given the available resources and assisted by our mutual aid partners, both federal, state and local, to protect the employees of the Washington Headquarters Service and the surrounding community.

### **Detailed Response**

The City recognizes that it is extremely important to provide for the safety of both the employees who will be working at the WHS facility and those that live and work in the surrounding neighborhoods. We have picked up the tempo for detailed operational planning for both transportation-related issues and public safety issues and established two operational planning groups – one for transportation and one for public safety to prepare more detailed operational plans for getting ready. In the case of public safety, the men and women of our Police and Fire Departments, together with our Department of Emergency Communications, are the right people for us all to rely on to plan for any emergency incident, and they are doing so in a professional manner based on their experience and best judgment. In developing these plans our approach is to be neither overly optimistic nor excessively pessimistic. Successful emergency management planning and preparations will be neither easy nor impossible.

Emergency management plans are in place for large scale incidents affecting the surrounding public. After 9-11, significant planning, additional training and new resources were put into place to handle a wide range of emergency issues. Some significant emergencies including the February 2010 snowstorms, the windstorm of last August and the SARs and H1N1 virus threats have helped us apply with some frequency our emergency procedures, refine our plans, and build

our organizational readiness. The City's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan updated this year guides City responses to large scale public emergencies due to various hazards, including terrorism incidents such as explosions or use of weapons of mass destruction that are nuclear, biological, chemical or radiological. Specific support function plans are in place for 20 key functions.<sup>1</sup>

These plans are not specific to the WHS facility, or to any other facility, but are adaptable to address any such incident at any facility anywhere in the City. Like any such emergency plans and standard operating procedures, they are not straightjackets that mandate specific actions. Specific decisions and actions to be taken in the event of a specific incident will depend on the unique circumstances of each incident and cannot be determined precisely in advance. Those emergency management plans establish responsibilities, including those for general emergency management, general preparedness, general response, and specific responsibilities to be performed by individual city departments as necessary in response to the circumstances.

To make specific decisions and manage both small and large emergencies based on the exact circumstances of the situation, a large number of City staff, both public safety and non-public safety personnel, are trained in the National Incident Management System (NIMS), as are other local, state and federal emergency responders. NIMS includes the Incident Command System (ICS), which is the structure used nationally to manage all emergency incidents. This system provides a unified approach to incident management including a standard command and management structure and an emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid and resource management. It is a standardized management tool for meeting the demands of small or large emergency situations. NIMS/ICS was developed at the national level so responders from different jurisdictions, agencies and disciplines can work together better to respond to natural disasters and emergencies, including acts of terrorism. NIMS/ICS represents best practices and has become the standard for emergency management across the country. It may be used for planned events, natural disasters and acts of terrorism. The City has used NIMS/ICS for managing such events as the large snowfalls of February 2010 and the windstorm of August 2010. The NIMS and ICS systems fit together with the City's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to provide a framework for managing all emergency incidents.

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<sup>1</sup> These include the following: Emergency Management, Alert and Warning, Fire Fighting, Mass Care, Health, Emergency Medical Services, Hazardous Materials, Energy and Water Supply, Technical Rescue, Transportation, Law Enforcement and Security, Information Technology and Communication, Public Works and Engineering, Public Information, Resource Management, Life Safety & Damage Assessment, Administration and Finance, Volunteer and Donation Management, Mass Fatality Management, and Debris Management.

There is not an emergency management plan for a major incident specifically for the WHS. But should a major incident affecting the surrounding community occur, we would handle it using our existing plans and established procedures. A significant emergency incident would no doubt be a challenging event. We would do our best, using our comprehensive emergency plans, significant training in emergency management procedures, our resources existing at that time, and those resources made available by our mutual aid partners and the Federal and State government.

Mr. Buch in his public hearing comments on June 25<sup>th</sup> also asked the following specific questions related to a large scale incident:

1. What is the communication system? How will people know?

Answer -- Various methods would be employed depending on the circumstances. Those include such methods as:

- Emergency Alert Systems (commercial radio and TV)
- NOAA Weather Alert Radios (used for disasters other than weather)
- Telephone Emergency Notification System (so-called reverse 911)
- Print and Electronic media e-news, facebook, twitter, Cable TV
- Public Text Emergency Notification System (E-news)
- Public Address Systems on public safety vehicles
- Health Department “Blast Fax”
- Alert and warning releases to commercial TV, radio and newspapers
- Public Safety Radio Network

2. What are people expected to do?

Answer -- Materials for people to take emergency preparations in advance of an incident and are available for distribution. Those materials were made available to the attendees at the BRAC Advisory Group meeting on July 20, 2011. Exactly what actions people should take will depend on the nature of the incident itself and cannot be known in advance. We recommend the first step always be to “tune-in” to the situation by seeking information from the sources listed above. Unless you have been directly impacted by the event, the default action should be to shelter where you are until you have information that directs you to take additional or a different action, such as evacuation.

3. Who do we look to for direction?

Answer – All incidents are managed using the NIMSs and ICS systems described above. An Incident Commander will be in charge at the incident site. For incidents either in or on the WHS facility/property, the City Public Safety incident commander on site would

be directly responsible and in charge of protecting the community near the WHS facility. For such an incident, “Unified Command” structures and processes as outlined in NIMS/ICS will blend the WHS first responders with the City’s first responders to effectively manage and respond to the incident and manage the emergency response assets at the WHS facility.

When an emergency threatens or impacts the City, the City Manager may issue an emergency declaration, and as the Director of Emergency Management, the City Manager assumes direct operational control over all of the emergency management functions within the City, delegating emergency authorities as he/she may deem prudent. The City Code gives the City Manager the authority to issue a Declaration of Local Emergency if an emergency affecting the City has occurred or that the occurrence of the threat of an emergency affecting the City is imminent. The duration of each such Declaration of Local Emergency is limited to 14 days without ratification by City Council; and will continue until the City Council finds that the threat or danger has been dealt with to the extent that the emergency conditions no longer exist and ends the state of local emergency.

City officials would coordinate with Federal and State government authorities under NIMS/ICS protocols both on the scene on the scene and from the Emergency Operations Center and work to make sufficient resources available to the incident commander.

4. Will certain buildings be on lockdown? Will people be expected to get in their vehicles and leave the area?

Answer -- The decision whether to shelter in place or evacuate will be made according to the type of threat and the circumstances at the time.

5. Are parents to go to the schools and to the Winkler Preserve to pick up their children?

Answer -- Again, the decision will made according to the type of threat and the circumstances at the time.

For incidents that occur in the WHS facility and/or on Federal property, our public safety departments will use NIMS/ICS, established guidelines, standard operating procedures and doctrine that reflects the jurisdictional authority of the Federal government over the property and its unique security/site characteristics. The City already has standard operating procedures (SOPs) for such emergency incidents as active violence (e.g. active shooter), bomb threats or actual bombings, hazardous materials, evacuations (small or large scale), fires, and emergency medical services, technical rescue and responses to possible weapons of mass destruction that might be found on the property (e.g. nuclear, biological or chemical agents). Commanders and supervisors have received training on the implementation of these plans and mock drills or table to exercises serve to keep skills sharp. These plans are designed as a framework for responding

officials who make concise operational decisions, consistent with the plan, at the scene. These SOPs need to be adapted to the unique security enhancements and physical features of the WHS facility. You should be aware that the WHS facility's internal fire safety systems are code compliant and their plans were reviewed by City Code Administration personnel under contract to DOD. These systems including fire alarms, fire-rated materials, and sprinkler systems were also inspected by City staff for code compliance.

City public safety officials have more work to do. We are coordinating with Pentagon Force Protection Agency officials about how to handle specific emergency incidents that occur on Federal property or in the WHS facility itself. The City is working with their federal counterparts to develop memoranda of understanding and operational standard operating procedures that provide for a division of roles and responsibilities in handling such "on the base" emergency incidents that involve the Police, Fire/EMS, Emergency Management, and Emergency Communications. These SOPs will also be shared with our mutual aid partners in Arlington and Fairfax County so those jurisdictions also will be able to provide emergency services to the WHS facility under the regional mutual aid agreement. Is all our planning complete and done? No, there is still important work to do in regard to providing detailed operational plans for protecting federal employees in the WHS facility and on the base.<sup>2</sup> These plans will continue to be developed as the move-in occurs over the coming months. There are also known and documented capability gaps and other emergency response issues that we are actively working to address. This past week City staff from Fire/EMS, Police, Emergency Communications and Emergency Management attended several response workshops at the Pentagon designed to coordinate responses with the Department of Defense and the City.

We are planning to hold an emergency preparedness and response workshop for the public in mid-September. This workshop would be designed to provide an opportunity for the public to hear directly from the City Public Safety Agencies about their response to several scenarios that may affect the WHS facility and the surrounding community and ask questions. The workshop would have two components. The first will be a scenario driven facilitated discussion with a panel from the Police Department, the Sheriff's Office, the Fire Department, Transportation and Environmental Services, and Emergency Management. Three so-called "outside the fence" scenarios would be examined. These events would be focused on emergencies that affect the wider community. Emergency incidents in the facility would not be featured because plans and procedures to handle internal procedures are law enforcement and security sensitive. The second component of the workshop would be to demonstrate the capabilities of our emergency response teams and assets.

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<sup>2</sup> Emergency planning has been complicated by the WHS facility organizational structure where the facility is "owned" during construction by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a military base annex will be turned over to Fort Belvoir when construction is completed. Then WHS will become the building facility and maintenance manager. This unique structure has made emergency planning more difficult, but recent meetings appear to have cleared most of the federal bureaucratic cobwebs.

We also are planning several internal and regional planning and simulation exercises this year. The first is a “tabletop” exercise for senior City officials to test our Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and will simulate Emergency Operations Center actions specifically for WHS-related emergency incidents. We are targeting to have this exercise occur the first week of September. The City will be participating in an exercise series called Gallant Fox at the Pentagon each year from this point forward to maintain our response capabilities with DOD. These are Federally-sponsored regional exercises and will include other regional response partners. We are also planning a full scale exercise (boots on the ground) held at the facility designed for the public safety agencies including our mutual aid partners in Arlington County and Fairfax County. This exercise will test our response capabilities at the facility in the actual work environment they may encounter. This exercise is tentatively being planned for November.

For security reasons, neither the City’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, nor specific standard operating procedures for handling emergency incidents in general or emergency incidents at the Washington Headquarters Service have been or will be made available to the public. Knowledge of these plans would provide any would-be terrorist or assailant with valuable information that would endanger the public and our first responders. We will be providing the public with general guidance on what to do to be prepared in the event of an emergency affecting the wider community.

Our first responders will always do their absolute best, given the available resources and assisted by our mutual aid partners, both federal, state and local, to protect the WHS employees at the facility and the surrounding community.

Cc: Chair and Members, BRAC-133 Advisory Committee  
Michele Evans, Deputy City Manager  
Mark Jinks, Deputy City Manager  
Rose Boyd, Special Assistant to the City Manager  
Members of the City’s WHS Public Safety Operational Planning Group