

TOPOFF 4
Frequently Asked Questions
January 2007

What is the TOPOFF Exercise Series?

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Preparedness Directorate's, National Preparedness Task Force is sponsoring the Top Officials (TOPOFF) exercise series, which is a two-year cycle of seminars, planning events, and exercises designed to strengthen the nation's capacity to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks involving Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

What is TOPOFF 4 and what are its goals? How does this vary in relation to earlier TOPOFF exercises?

TOPOFF 4 (T4) is the fourth exercise in the congressionally-mandated TOPOFF series. The Federal Executive Branch will conduct the T4 Full Scale Exercise (FSE) during October 15 – 24, 2007. The series is designed to engage top officials from Federal, State, territorial, local, and tribal government departments and agencies; the private sector; and international partners.

The goals of TOPOFF 4 are to:

- Assess the nation's capability to prevent, respond to, and recover from realistic and threat-based acts of terrorism during a national, biennial exercise series.
- Examine relationships amongst Federal, State, territorial, local, and tribal jurisdictions and the private sector in response to a realistic and challenging series of integrated geographically dispersed terrorist threats and acts.
- Use performance based objectives to evaluate the relationships amongst Federal, State, territorial, local, and tribal jurisdictions and the private sector.

TOPOFF 4 will also serve as the vehicle to help introduce a Homeland Security "Campaign Plan". The "Campaign Plan" will alter the past approach of TOPOFF by adapting it to serve as the framework of an *organized campaign* targeted at producing specific products and processes across a broad range of programmatic areas (e.g., a revised NRP; a concept plan) and *performance-testing* them in a full system test (a FSE).

What are the unique challenges and opportunities of developing the exercises?

T4 provides an opportunity to fully integrate in conformance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive – 8, the National Preparedness Goal and in pursuit of a National Exercise Program. DHS will introduce the five-year National Exercise Program during the TOPOFF 4 exercise cycle. This program combines exercise activities and affords Departments and Agencies the opportunity to reduce the number of separate exercises they must plan and participate in, and more importantly, provides an opportunity to demonstrate that the Government can operate effectively during an elevated continuity posture.

What new features are anticipated for this year's exercise? In particular what roles will Arizona, Oregon and Guam play, and what is meant by an international component?

The T4 exercise will take a capabilities-based planning approach to address past TOPOFF lessons learned. By adopting this approach, FSL entities will address capabilities suitable for a wide range of hazards during the exercise. The capabilities that will be examined during the exercise include:

- Protective Actions: Evacuation/Shelter-in Place

- Mass Care
- Mass Prophylaxis
- Communications

While the exercise will focus on an RDD scenario, many of the capabilities that will be validated are common amongst a variety of scenarios, including hurricanes, improvised nuclear device, improvised explosive device, etc.

Exercise design and development is currently underway, and each TOPOFF partner's role will become more clearly defined in the upcoming months. The U.S. Department of State is responsible for coordinating TOPOFF's international partners.

Who can I contact at DHS public affairs for additional information?

Please contact Ms. Vallee Bunting if you have additional questions. Ms. Bunting can be reached at vallee.bunting@dhs.gov or 202-447-3447.

Additional Background Information

What were some of the highlights of previous exercises in 2004 and 2005? And how did the exercises help shape priorities and foster innovations in the federal and state security sectors?

TOPOFF 2000 took place in May of 2000 in Portsmouth, New Hampshire and Denver, Colorado and exercised a chemical and biological attack respectively. In May of 2003, the State of Illinois and State of Washington participated in TOPOFF again exercising a biological attack as well as a radiological attack. The U.S. Department of State coordinated Canada's, limited but integrated participation. And finally, TOPOFF 3 took place in April 2005 with the numbers of partners and participants growing to more than 15,000. The State of Connecticut exercised a chemical attack and the State of New Jersey exercised a biological attack. The U.S. Department of State again coordinated international partners including involvement from Canada, the United Kingdom, as well as a number of U.S. embassies. Every TOPOFF exercise builds on real-world and exercise experiences and lessons learned to further enhance our national preparedness.

Lessons learned from each TOPOFF exercise provide valuable insights that guide future planning for securing the nation against terrorist attacks. As part of the exercise after-action reporting process, participants identify necessary improvements and assign them to responsible parties. DHS provides support in tracking progress toward implementation of improvement actions, to ensure that the exercises result in concrete preparedness and response benefits.

What role does the private sector play in T4?

The National Preparedness Task Force works in close coordination with the DHS Private Sector Office and the DHS Office of Infrastructure Protection to involve the private sector in the TOPOFF exercise cycle of events. TOPOFF 3 involved more than 5,000 members of the private sector participating at varying levels. At this point, the level of participation of the private sector has not yet been determined.