



War College exercises prepare city for terror

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PROVIDENCE -- Is the city prepared to handle a terrorist attack?

The test came in Newport last week during a series of seminars at the U.S. Naval War College that replicated a real-life terrorist incident.

Providence is the second city in the nation, after New York City, to train at the U.S. Naval War College, which has also trained all the New England states.

Mayor David N. Cicilline and Police Chief Dean Esserman, Acting Fire Chief Gary Mulcahy, acting director of administration John C. Simmons, emergency management services task force head John Enright, and other top city officials took part in the seminars meant to test how prepared Providence is for an emergency.

"Cities are the frontline for homeland security," Cicilline said in a statement at a news conference at the Naval War College. "When a 911 call comes in, it rings in city offices, not in the State House, not in the White House. Cities such as Providence need to be prepared, and we need to test the plans we have in place to be sure our leadership and agencies can respond as effectively as possible."

During the tabletop exercises, the city officials took on their regular roles and reacted to the exercises proposed by the Naval War College. They had to respond to twists and turns in the scenarios, testing out the city's emergency-management procedures, Ann Gooding, a spokeswoman for the mayor, said yesterday.

"This event gave us the opportunity to provide an environment for operational leaders of the city of Providence to engage in critical thinking and share ideas of how to better prepare for the road ahead," stated Dr. Kenneth Watman, chairman of the War Gaming Department at the Naval War College. "In exposing Providence's senior leaders to a basic form of war gaming, we are able to offer them new tools for dealing with the broad-planning aspects of future complex emergencies."

The experience tested the city's systems for communications, lines of authority, the roles and functions of the Providence Emergency Control Board and Providence Emergency Operations Center, as well as interactions between city agencies and outside organizations, Cicilline stated.

"From here, we are better able to determine what it is we do best and upon which areas we can improve," the mayor stated.

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