

Dynamics of the DES

By Major Kevin M. Kreie

At 0200, the police shift commander called the Director of Emergency Services (DES) to report an incident. While responding to a domestic altercation, one of the police officers discovered that the husband, who was a military family member, was making explosives in the house. Explosive ordnance disposal and fire department personnel responded and began evacuating twenty neighborhood families from their homes.

The above incident is typical of those encountered by the DES, who is directly responsible for a host of community services, including the law enforcement mission, fire services, access control, and morning crossing guard functions. There are five areas of interest for those who may someday hold this position: administrative issues, logistics issues, law enforcement techniques, community relations, and senior leader communications.

There are a host of DES administrative requirements. One of these is compliance with Army regulations, which generally proves to be most difficult at the beginning of a tour. Unless actively sought, many discrepancies remain undiscovered; however, once a problem is recognized and resolved, compliance can be maintained through periodic review. Another requirement involves the establishment of standing operating procedures (SOPs). While it may seem impossible to write—or even think of—every SOP necessary for the various potential situations, basic SOPs (such as SOPs for handling driving-under-the-influence cases, domestic disputes, and criminal pursuits) can be established. Once these basic SOPs have been completed, additional ones can be created as other situations arise. Because many DES employees are government civilians and contractors, a third administrative requirement consists of Civilian Personnel Advisory Center courses for supervising civilians and Acquisition Corps courses for contracting officer representatives (CORs). Even if the DES does not serve as the actual COR, the COR courses are recommended due to the workforce composition.

Logistics issues are important to any organization, but technological issues are particularly important to the DES. The technology of emergency service systems is advancing at a rapid pace. While it may not be feasible to acquire all technological advantages, it is still possible to “improve the foxhole.” The DES must research available technologies, determine which of them are most likely to benefit the community, and develop a plan to acquire them. Due to the cost of technology, the modernization of an organization is often most practical when conducted in steps; this approach can pay significant dividends. Examples of emergency service systems include digital child identification systems, automated law enforcement dispatch systems, security cameras placed in high-crime areas, access control scanners, and light detection and ranging systems (which can pinpoint speeds of selected vehicles).

Law enforcement is the most challenging DES mission. Technical policing skills are required to successfully complete this mission. Patrols cannot simply drive around and respond when called; they must use their technical expertise to prevent and spot illegal activity. For example, the explosives that were discovered when police responded to the domestic altercation described above would not have been detected if the police officers had not had the proper training and technical skills—skills which can be acquired through numerous local law enforcement classes. In addition, the use of specific policing techniques is based on police intelligence and crime statistics. The particular day, geographic

area, and composition of the population affect the crime rate. Knowing the “hot spots” is vital in determining the timing and location of police patrols.

One way to enhance law enforcement operations is through community relations. Good community relations not only cast the police organization in a positive light, but also allow the organization to obtain valuable information that would not normally be reported by the public. A good rapport with the public can be accomplished through various programs such as the Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program, the Neighborhood Watch Program, and bicycle rodeos. The establishment of a regular juvenile patrol is also advantageous. Assigning a couple of officers to develop a rapport with the juvenile population can help prevent juvenile mischief and assist in collecting information about previous incidents.

Communication with installation leaders is very important. The garrison and senior mission commanders have a vested interest in DES operations; therefore, they must be kept apprised of what happens on the installation. The DES must inform them of the true nature of any problems. For example, for every four physical domestic altercations that are disclosed on a blotter, there may be thirty verbal domestic altercations for which no charges were filed. If the senior leaders do not understand the entire situation, they could direct the redistribution of patrols to focus on what they perceive as the main issues, thereby removing the patrols from areas where they are needed most.

The DES position is very challenging and carries great responsibility—many of the same responsibilities required of a command position, including administrative, logistics, intelligence, and operation aspects of the mission on a 24/7 basis. At the same time, the position is also very rewarding. In addition to the knowledge and experience gained, there is great satisfaction in contributing to the community in which you live.

For information about the Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, DES, go to <<http://www.wood.army.mil/lec/Default.htm>>.

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