Anticipating Complexity | Exploring Responses | Cultivating Resilience

THE SCENARIO

A Complex Contingency: A lethal and highly-contagious virus gradually begins to spread around the globe. Infection rates are high, deaths are frequent, and no vaccine is available. Cities all over the world fall under quarantine. Emergency services and medical centers are stressed and national government agencies, affected just as severely as the cities themselves, cannot provide assistance. And then the situation goes from bad to worse.

A terrorist cell, having long waited for such an opportunity, launches a wave of successful cyber attacks in a medium size city somewhere in the developed world, bringing down grid power, Internet access, land and cellular telephones. Other, more subtle, attacks follow, and it's difficult to sort out the mess.

If there were ever a time to work effectively together, this would be it.

Recognizing that a comparable scenario might one day unfold in real life, a diverse group of disaster responders, technologists, and community leaders will assemble in San Diego in August of 2006 for an event designed to simulate a truly complex disaster. Over the course of seven days, on the grounds of the San Diego Fire Training Academy, the campus of San Diego State University, and in the streets of the city, we will explore techniques and technologies for responding effectively when the response itself must adapt to cascading losses. By demonstrating what is possible through public and private-sector partnerships within a community, we intend to develop approaches to cultivating local resilience that may be useful for any city, here or abroad.

International Partners

We are welcoming colleagues participating from around the world, including Afghanistan, Canada, China, England, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, and more.

THE DEMONSTRATION

What will happen? Organizations and individuals participating in Strong Angel III are volunteering their time and resources to explore innovations in humanitarian response capabilities. This is not a trade show or a technology fair, with vendor booths, demos, and product literature. Nor is it an Exercise in the usual sense, with teams of first responders and a highly-scripted scenario. Instead, SA-III will focus on simulating those aspects of post-disaster conditions that specifically impact communication, information sharing, and coordination. The week-long demonstration will consist of a series of collaborative technical and non-technical experiments based on both lessons learned in past disasters and on emerging requirements for integrated operations. They are designed to test the interoperability, reliability, and flexibility

of proposed social and technical solutions. Strong Angel III is a chance for vendors, humanitarian practitioners, First Responders, the military, and community leaders to explore capabilities, inter-operability, usability, and deployment with the specific intent that the solutions proposed be accessible globally. Strong Angel will provide an adverse environment designed to maximize learning, sharing and experimentation.

How will we do this? After an initial setup phase, teams from various organizations will spend the first few days conducting pre-defined experiments intended to meet one or more of the Demonstration Objectives. By early-mid week, many of the original experiments will have been completed and the Executive Team will begin to introduce additional challenges and constraints -- technical, social, operational, and environmental -- characteristic of humanitarian operations. These challenges will not be announced in advance. Our goal is to exert pressure on existing solution teams in such a way that they are forced to adapt on the fly to evolving requirements. Teams are expected to respond by collaborating with one another and recombining components and approaches from previous experiments into novel solutions incorporating the best of what they each have to offer. Each day will conclude with a briefing where team leaders will have a chance to share observations and lessons. Onsite press coverage will be extensive. The overall exercise and the individual experiments will be fully documented by participants and made publicly available.

Running in parallel with the core demonstration will be an emergent synergy operation called Shadowlite. The Shadowlite team will be remotely generating much of the content that will drive the acquisition, analysis, translation, and reporting tools in the Strong Angel Core. Shadowlite, led by Dr. Dave Warner, is responsible for agile incorporation of unanticipated opportunities and capabilities. During the Strong Angel III demonstration, the Shadowlites will be aggregating data, both structured and unstructured, from a wide variety of sources and making it available to the Core.

For more information about Strong Angel III, including a list of participating organizations, see the About page. For background on the Strong Angel series, please see the Wikipedia entry here.

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