



# Operation Global Mirror

## After Action Report

Colorado ARES District 14  
(Pikes Peak ARES)

- Date of activity: Wednesday, May 12, 2004  
Duration of activity: 0800-1230 (exercise) 1400-1630 (debrief)  
Description of activity: Major functional FEMA/DHS exercise involving the City of Colorado Springs, El Paso County and 54 agencies, disaster relief organizations and departments – including local, state, federal and military entities. The scenario revolved around a cargo aircraft carrying 20 explosive RDD devices intended for Washington, DC. The RDD cargo exploded prematurely on take-off from the Colorado Springs Airport scattering RDD explosive devices (some exploded, some did not) over a large area of eastern Colorado Springs and terminating with the contaminated aircraft crash-landing and slamming into a restaurant at Meadowlake Airport in El Paso County.
- Amateur radio groups: Pikes Peak ARES; El Paso County RACES  
Served agency: City of Colorado Springs; Penrose & Penrose Community Hospitals; Memorial Hospital; American Red Cross; American Medical Response (AMR).  
Served agency role: Full-scale multiple-agency responses to WMD terrorist attack.  
Amateurs participating: 49 – KØHBZ WØIPL KBØUBZ ADØA KØDRK KØQED KØTER KAØPII KAØWUC KBØIAP KBØYCI KB2ZVX KCØDTQ KCØGMI KCØHHZ KCØHIL KCØHPZ KCØLNM KCØMCP KCØMIR KCØMIS KCØMIT KCØNAJ KCØNRZ KCØPBR KCØQOD KCØQPS KCØQQO KD6FLM KD8EQ KE6ZOT KGØVY KRØMAG NØIKF NØLNW NØMIK NØNKG NØNKP NØTQ NØXXB NØYGM NØZMA N4RPD N7LV W6RML WAØVSL WA6TTY WL7RV KCØSHK
- Amateur service hours: 576 Hours  
Goals of activity:
- Assess Pikes Peak ARES operator ability to access agencies, facilities and secure areas where alternative communications are required and requested.
  - Test and evaluate effectiveness of packet radio for voluminous, detail-oriented communication requirements and/or transfer of sensitive information.
  - Test the intercommunication capabilities of Pikes Peak ARES and El Paso County RACES during a joint City/County exercise.
  - Establish functional, operational, tactical, liaison and/or administrative nets, as needed, utilizing Annex F of the Pikes Peak ARES Operations Manual.
  - Conduct a simulated PPARES activation, mobilization & deployment pre-exercise test to determine resource availability and timeline. Minimum standards:
    - Notify EC & Resource Manager within 7 minutes of agency notification.
    - Establish resource & operations nets within 15 minutes.
    - Activate & deploy (on station) 15 operators within 45 minutes.
    - Activate & deploy (on station) additional 15 operators within 90 minutes.
    - Activate and deploy additional 20 operators within 3 hours.
- Goals accomplished? Yes, some were exceeded significantly, some accomplished "barely."  
What went well?
- Overall, we did an excellent job of communicating for our agencies.
  - Our unannounced pre-exercise simulated activation indicated that 84

operators could be deployed within the first 3 hours, 34 more than the stated goal of 50.

- Our activation & deployment exercise (in the hour prior to the formal exercise) went exceptionally well. Stations were given deployment instructions by NCS & Resources as they came up on frequency.
- Operators were not pre-assigned, they were told to come prepared to support any assignment they were equipped and capable of supporting. Operators came well-prepared and equipped.
- Resource management team did a good job of matching operator experience and equipment with appropriate assignments.
- Separation of Resource and Tactical nets went well.
- Our assembly/staging area went fairly well, we learned a number of things that will help if we ever need to use a large assembly area.
- Operator access to facilities was excellent, no problems noted.
- Deployment & setup at most locations went smoothly.
- About 90% of net traffic handled efficiently with good protocol.
- Most packet stations all able to connect to each other and to D-14 packet cluster. Extensive path testing done.
- Our Resource Manager established a HF link with HF Net Manager, Mike Manes (W5VSI) in Denver, should outside communications be required.
- Use of "EXERCISE MESSAGE" used well and consistently.
- The group debrief session in the afternoon was an excellent opportunity to share, discuss and learn while memories were fresh. Handled well!
- More work on "TACTICAL in – CALLSIGN out."
- Additional staffing needed at both operations and resource NCS locations.
- Better coordination between resource NCS and operators deployed directly from staging/assembly area. When deployed from staging/assembly, operators need to notify Resource NCS of their status.
- NCS must NEVER leave net unattended – have assistant assume NCS.
- Inconsistent use of Tactical callsigns – should conform with Annex T of Operations Manual. EOC/POC, constant confusion – "Springs EOC" is assigned tactical for this location (Annex T).
- NCSs, in particular, need to be careful not to "over-identify." When nets get very busy, just ID once every 10 minutes rather than at the end of each individual communication.
- Individual stations must remember to ID properly at end of communication ("CALLSIGN out").
- Packet Issues
  - Tactical callsigns for packet stations not utilized.
  - Very little packet traffic provided by agencies, only agency with packet traffic was Red Cross where we hadn't deployed packet operators.
- EOC Issues
  - ID badges not displayed until 0850
  - Setup inefficient & safety issues identified.
  - Unresponsive to repeated calls.
  - Detailed logging almost non-existent. Must keep detailed log of traffic and track status of all deployments.
  - EOC Team must attend hourly EOC briefings and keep ARES leadership and nets apprised of situational developments.
  - Hazards to operators not identified and no warnings or advisories issued to PPARES members regarding radiological plume or other potentially hazardous areas.
  - EOC Team argumentative about agency requests for specific detailed information from EOC.
  - "Attitude" a serious problem at EOC.
- Need to review & update all agency MOUs with particular attention focused on activation & deployment processes and procedures.

Improvement Needed:

Lessons learned:

- NEVER ASSume anything! Our job is to relay information, relay questions as requested – get the requested answers and provide that information back quickly and efficiently.
  - Resource & Operations NCSs and EOC MUST have copy of Ops Manual Annex T available for assignment/utilization of appropriate Tactical callsigns.
- Recommendations:
- Our agency liaisons need to significantly step up frequency of contacts and interaction with agency representatives.
  - Our EOC operation needs careful review, procedural discussion & clarification, specialized training and a thorough overhaul.
  - Develop an EOC deployment box with appropriate supplies, ICS forms and a checklist of EOC responsibilities with lines to indicate who is responsible for what.
  - Our EC and Resource Manager must be responsible for the appropriate assignment of operators to ALL locations. It is inappropriate for ANYONE ELSE to make operator resource assignments or decisions.
  - Make sure all agencies have latest PPARES emergency contact list.
  - Identify potential assembly/staging locations and make arrangements with facilities for use.
  - Where multiple operators are assigned to an agency, they should use HTs on a simplex (UHF preferred) frequency to communicate & coordinate amongst themselves. Rapid transfer of information from base or packet radio operator to an agency representative shadow, for instance. FRS radios can also be used effectively this way.
  - Virtually any WMD incident will involve airborne hazards (even if dust & debris as in 9/11). Instrumented and handheld weather monitoring should be encouraged for the safety of all concerned.
  - In a major incident, such as this, every effort should be made to make contact with stations outside the affected area. In particular, establish a path to adjacent districts (for mutual aid or outside-area telephone support) and to Camp George West in case local communications to the outside world are lost.
  - Many sections of our Ops Manual are out of date. Annex T, for example, does not have a tactical for AMR (added since last Ops Manual revision).
  - NCS & EOC both need to keep accurate status logs of all operators at all locations. If station not heard from within 30 minutes, a status check call should be initiated.
- General comments:
- In recent years D-14 packet capabilities had pretty much died of neglect. In the past 9 months, we have seen a rebirth of packet interest and activity. We've had one successful training session, but more are needed. These need to be done soon – as packet momentum/enthusiasm is waning.
  - We need to establish a weekly or bi-weekly packet training net to keep operator skills sharp and to develop new packet skills and tactics.
- Additional training:
- Need to develop protocols and procedures to effectively utilize our packet cluster.
  - More training on standard message form & use of requesting/replying names/titles/locations on all messages.
  - Mode 1-4 used by EOC, need to identify and provide definitions in Ops Manual and MEAT Training.
- Future exercise ideas:
- Conduct an extensive packet-only exercise utilizing as many portable/mobile packet stations as possible in locations all over D-14.
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