

# Presidential Decision Directive 39

**Purpose.** To provide an unclassified synopsis of the U.S. national policy on terrorism as laid out in Presidential Decision Directive-39 (PDD-39).

**Background.** On June 21, 1995, the President signed PDD-39, U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism. This classified document laid out the national policy and assigned specific missions to designated Federal Departments and agencies. This unclassified synopsis is provided to enable Federal, State, and local emergency response and Consequence Management personnel without appropriate security clearances to have a basic understanding of the provisions of PDD-39.

PDD-39 validates and reaffirms existing Federal Lead Agency responsibilities for counterterrorism, which are assigned to the Department of Justice (DOJ), as delegated to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), for threats or acts of terrorism within the United States. The FBI as the lead for Crisis Management will involve only those Federal agencies required and designated in classified documents. The Directive further states that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with the support of all agencies in the Federal Response Plan (FRP), will support the FBI in Washington, DC, and on scene until the Attorney General transfers Lead Agency to FEMA. FEMA retains responsibility for Consequence Management throughout the Federal response.

**Definitions.** Crisis Management includes measures to identify, acquire, and plan the use of resources needed to anticipate, prevent, and/or resolve a threat or act of terrorism. The laws of the United States assign primary authority to the Federal Government to prevent and respond to acts of terrorism; State and local governments provide assistance as required. Crisis management is predominantly a law enforcement response.

Consequence Management includes measures to protect public health and safety, restore essential government services, and provide emergency relief to governments, businesses, and individuals affected by the consequences of terrorism. The laws of the United States assign primary authority to the States to respond to the consequences of terrorism; the Federal Government provides assistance as required.

## U.S. Policy on Counterterrorism

**General.** Terrorism is both a threat to our national security as well as a criminal act. The Administration has stated that it is the policy of the United States to use all appropriate means to deter, defeat, and respond to all terrorist attacks on our territory and resources, both with people and facilities, wherever they occur. In support of these efforts, the United States will:

- Employ efforts to deter, preempt, apprehend, and prosecute terrorists.

- Work closely with other governments to carry out counterterrorism policy and combat terrorist threats against them.
- Identify sponsors of terrorists, isolate them, and ensure they pay for their actions.
- Make no concessions to terrorists.

**Measures to Combat Terrorism.** To ensure that the United States is prepared to combat terrorism in all of its forms, a number of measures have been directed. These include reducing vulnerabilities to terrorism, deterring and responding to terrorist attacks, and having capabilities to prevent and manage the consequences of terrorist use of nuclear, biological, or chemical (NBC) weapons, including those of mass destruction.

a. **Reduce Vulnerabilities.** In order to reduce vulnerabilities to terrorism, both at home and abroad, all departmental/agency heads have been directed to ensure that their personnel and facilities are fully protected against terrorism. Specific efforts that will be conducted to ensure our security against terrorist attacks include the following

- Review the vulnerability of government facilities and critical national infrastructure.
- Expand the program of counterterrorism.
- Reduce vulnerabilities affecting civilian personnel/facilities abroad and military personnel/facilities.
- Exclude/deport persons who pose a terrorist threat.
- Prevent unlawful traffic in firearms and explosives and protect the President and other officials against terrorist attack.
- Reduce U.S. vulnerabilities to international terrorism through intelligence collection/ analysis, counterintelligence, and covert action.

b. **Deter.** To deter terrorism, it is necessary to provide a clear public position that our policies will not be affected by terrorist acts and we will vigorously deal with terrorists/sponsors to reduce terrorist capabilities and support. In this regard, we must make it clear that we will not allow terrorism to succeed and that the pursuit, arrest, and prosecution of terrorists are of the highest priority. Our goals include the disruption of terrorist sponsored activity, including termination of financial support, arrest and punishment of terrorists as criminals, application of U.S. laws and new legislation to prevent terrorist groups from operating in the United States, and application of extraterritorial statutes to counter acts of terrorism and apprehend terrorists outside of the United States. The return of terrorists overseas who are wanted for violation of U.S. law is of the highest priority and a central issue in bilateral relations with any state that harbors or assists them.

c. **Respond.** To respond to terrorism, we must have a rapid and decisive capability to protect Americans, defeat or arrest terrorists, respond against terrorist sponsors, and provide relief to the victims of terrorists. The goal during the immediate response phase of an incident is to terminate terrorist attacks, so the terrorists do not accomplish their objectives or maintain their freedom, while seeking to minimize damage and loss of life and provide emergency assistance. After an incident has occurred, a rapidly deployable

interagency Emergency Support Team (EST) will provide required capabilities on scene: a Foreign Emergency Support Team (FEST) for foreign incidents, and a Domestic Emergency Support Team (DEST) for domestic incidents. DEST membership will be limited to those agencies required to respond to the specific incident. Both teams will include elements for specific types of incidents such as nuclear, chemical, and biological threats.

The Director, FEMA will ensure that the FRP is adequate for Consequence Management activities in response to terrorist attacks against large U.S. populations, including those where weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are involved. FEMA will also ensure that State response plans and capabilities are adequate and tested. FEMA, supported by all FRP signatories, will assume the Lead Agency role for consequence management in Washington, DC, and on scene. If large-scale casualties and infrastructure damage occur, the President may appoint a Personal Representative for Consequence Management as the on-scene Federal authority during recovery. A roster of senior and former government officials willing to perform these functions will be created, and the rostered individuals will be provided training and information necessary to allow themselves to be called on short notice.

Agencies will bear the cost of their participation in terrorist incidents and counter-terrorist operations, unless otherwise directed.

**d. NBC Consequence Management.** The development of effective capabilities for preventing and managing the consequence of terrorist use of NBC materials or weapons is of the highest priority. Terrorist acquisition of WMD is not acceptable, and there is no higher priority than preventing the acquisition of such materials/weapons or removing the capability from terrorist groups.

Source: <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/odp/docs/pdd39.htm>