

US prepares major terrorism readiness exercise

(AFP) – 2 days ago

WASHINGTON — Law enforcement and intelligence agencies in the United States and abroad are preparing to go on high alert as part of a massive terrorism prevention exercise -- the first of its kind here.

Beginning Monday, security officials at all levels in the United States and four other countries will scramble into action in the wake of a fictional terrorist attack somewhere outside the United States.

The scenario envisions the receipt of intelligence that a follow-up attack is planned inside the United States, forcing agencies inside and out of the country to test their coordination, intelligence and terror prevention skills.

The National Level Exercise 2009 "will be the first major exercise conducted by the United States government that will focus exclusively on terrorism prevention and protection, as opposed to incident response and recovery," the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) said in a statement.

The US government regularly carries out preparedness exercises, dealing with crises ranging from natural disasters to terrorist attacks.

The 2009 exercise will include agencies in Britain, Mexico, Canada and Australia, as well as federal, regional, state, tribal, local and private sector officials throughout the United States, the Department of Homeland Security said.

"Coordinating with our partners across the United States and around the world is critical to protecting the nation from terrorists attacks," said Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

"The National Level Exercise allows us to test our capabilities in real-time to refine and strengthen our strategies for preventing terrorist attacks."

The exercise is expected to last for five days and is being designed to test a variety of "capabilities," including intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism investigation, border security, infrastructure protection, security alerts and international coordination, FEMA said.

"Lessons learned from the exercise will provide valuable insights to guide future planning for securing the nation against terrorist attacks, disasters, and other emergencies," the emergency response agency said.

Copyright © 2009 AFP. All rights reserved. [More »](#)