

Carlisle community works together to respond to 'terrorist attack' on post

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An explosives detection K-9 “hits” on an explosive training aid during the annual Carlisle Barracks emergency exercise July 15. The exercise brought together more than 100 first responders and personnel together.

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July 15, 2015 – The terrorists were virtual, but the exercise was real as more than 100 Carlisle

Barracks and community first responders worked together to test the post’s emergency plans during the annual full-scale exercise July 15.

The exercise tested, rehearsed and evaluated installation emergency response procedures and served as a training mechanism for all involved, which includes most directorates across post. The scenario featured multiple explosive devices placed around the installation, which caused the Army Community Services building and Armstrong, Anne Ely, and Upton Halls to be evacuated.

“These exercises help us evaluate how well our plans work, to see where we need to improve and to make sure that our employees know what to do in the event of this type of situation,” said Barry Shughart, Installation Emergency Manager. “We hope that even in the chaos of an actual incident folks ‘muscle memory’ kicks in and folks remember their training. The best way to do that is to keep it fresh in their minds with these types of exercises.”

Participating in the exercise were all of the South Central Task Force’s dog teams, the Pennsylvania State Police Bomb Squad and FBI Harrisburg Bomb Technician and others. Bob Suskie, director of Emergency Services here, said that the experience for our police and fire fighters is invaluable.

“It’s not often that we get to work together, side by side in a real-world situation with our counterparts off-post,” he said. “Also, by hosting these exercises together we’re able to help meet multiple

requirements for multiple organizations at the same time. In a time of constrained resources for everyone, this is very important.”

The exercise isn’t just a one-day event, according to Shughart. For the past few weeks there were incidents reported and intelligence developed that members of the post operations staff used to determine if there was a threat to Carlisle Barracks, all based in the “exercise world.” As new events developed the installation’s crisis management team would gather, learn about the new information and work together to develop plans to deal with a possible imminent threat.

“We don’t plan exercises to be smooth and successful, we try to tax the system and see where we need to improve,” said Shughart. “We did that, and learned some great lessons.”

The full-scale exercise is an annual requirement by Installation Management Command to test the installation’s emergency procedures. In the past, full-scale exercise scenarios have included chemical accidents, tornadoes, winter weather, aviation accidents, terrorist attacks and more. In addition to this, the post also hosts a series of smaller exercises throughout the year on a variety of scenarios.

“These exercises are critical opportunities for us to learn and work together with our off-post partners,” said Lt. Col. Greg Ank, who oversaw his first exercise as the Garrison Commander. “It’s useful to test ourselves and see how we react to an emergency. We owe it to our residents, families, employees and the Carlisle community to be prepared.”