



## US Marshals Service: A Model for Interagency Cooperation

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### Matthew W. Graham MAJ, IN (FA59 Strategist)

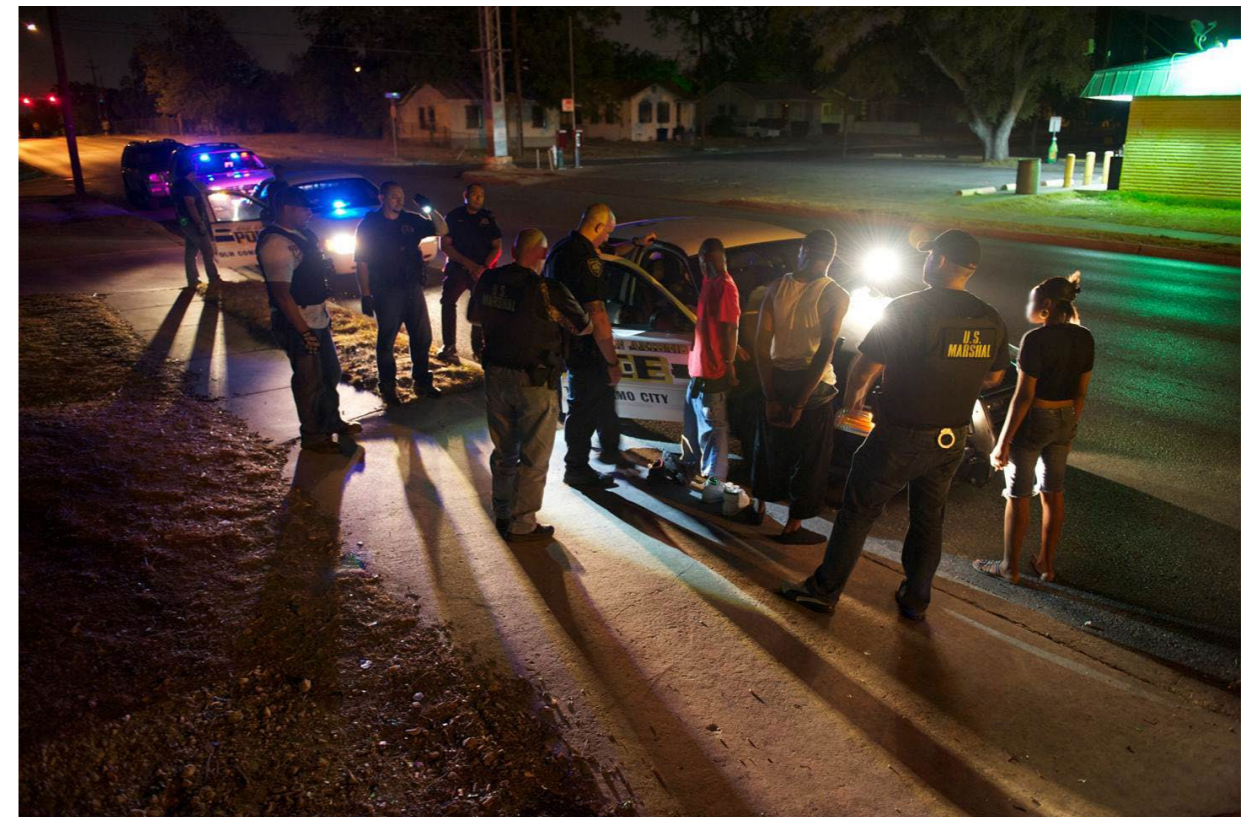
MAJ Matthew Graham is a U.S. Army Strategist (FA59). He has served as an Interagency Fellow within the US Marshals Service's Training Division and has completed tours of duty to both Iraq and Afghanistan. He holds a BS from the USAF Academy and a MPA from The George Washington University.

Each year, the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) arrests a stunning number of fugitives. With just under 4,000 deputies, the entire nationwide agency is approximately the size of a typical U.S. Army Brigade Combat Team (BCT).<sup>1</sup> Yet despite this manpower limitation, the USMS located and arrested over 120,000 fugitives in fiscal year 2012, clearing over 153,000 warrants.<sup>2</sup> To put this statistic in context, an Army BCT which detained one percent of that volume of terrorists in a yearlong deployment could declare this achievement a major success. At the tactical level, the USMS sustains an operations tempo (including planning, pre-combat checks, mission execution, recovery, detainee processing, and after action reviews) that results in 337 fugitive arrests a day. The fact that apprehending fugitives is not the only (or even primary) mission of the USMS underscores the impressiveness of this accomplishment. How is this feat managed? What can the Department of Defense (DOD) learn from the USMS to become more effective in its missions?

The answers lie in the way the USMS conducts interagency cooperation. By emphasizing this cooperation, the USMS capitalizes on the strengths of its partners and maximizes efficiency in executing its fugitive mission. Three activities characterize the USMS system of interagency cooperation: **establishing persistent task forces, building task force capacity, and strengthening relationships through mutual respect.** The DOD might obtain similar success by emulating the practices of the USMS.

#### Establish Persistent Systems

The USMS built a persistent system of task forces, involving all players with a stake in the mission, which enables it to excel in fugitive apprehension. The USMS manages seven congressionally funded regional fugitive task forces, incorporating the efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement. Furthermore, the USMS participates in 60 additional task forces with the same fugitive hunting mission.<sup>3</sup> These task forces serve as a focal point



SAN ANTONIO - The U.S. Marshals Service and the San Antonio Police Department announce the completion of Operation Triple Beam-Target Orejon. The goal of the 17-week anti-gang and violent crime reduction operation in the San Antonio metro area was to combat crime associated with gang activity. A total of 212 confirmed gang members arrested and numerous seizures to include: 38 weapons, \$82,000 cash and drugs with a combined street value of approximately \$300,000. (Photo by: Shane T. McCoy / US Marshals)

for information sharing and coordination, and the persistent nature of these task forces maximizes their potential. By routinely meeting and collaborating, all the law enforcement agencies in a region

familiarize themselves with each other's personalities, strengths, and limitations. This familiarization occurs before a crisis arises (e.g. a large jail break or a particularly violent fugitive), expediting action





Atlanta - U.S. Deputy Marshals from the Southeast Regional Fugitive Task-force work with Atlanta Police Department making routine traffic stops in a high-risk gang area during a gang reduction operation. Approximately 30 targeted arrests were made, and large amounts of guns, drugs and money were seized. (Photo by: Shane T. McCoy / US Marshals)

when time is crucial. As the agency with federal funding and broad authority, the USMS often takes the lead in establishing these task forces.

Coincidentally, the DOD has already begun to mirror the USMS task force construct described above. In recent years, many large DOD commands established Joint Interagency Task Forces (JIATFs). A good example of this is the Joint Task Force-North (JTF-North) set up by U.S. Northern Command's (USNORTHCOM). The fact that JTF-North was not hastily constructed during a crisis reflects the forward thinking of its founding commanders. Specifically, JTF-North supports law enforcement agencies and

interagency efforts to protect the U.S. homeland from transnational threats.<sup>4</sup> This cooperation enables USNORTHCOM and its partners to synergistically attack their common transnational problems, reducing unnecessary duplication of effort and capitalizing on the strengths of each partner. By creating more of these task forces, DOD can leverage the full capabilities of other agencies.

The current JIATFs must also evolve and grow to involve all stakeholders, not just other agencies of the U.S. government. Industry, academia, and state/local governments also bring useful capabilities, perspectives, and authorities. International partners also hold a stake in

our success and should contribute their talents and efforts to common missions as well. When foreign partners are included, JIATFs evolve into 'combined' organizations, or CJIATFs. In a room of state and local police, the USMS represents the better-funded federal government and consequently provides much of the material support. Similarly, the DOD, which typically brings more resources to the fight, will likely fund much of the cooperative effort. This burden should not be avoided; whether a DOD member of the task force or a non-DOD member of the task force accomplishes the mission, the mission is accomplished. The DOD's mission is therefore accomplished.

### Build Task Force Capacity

The USMS increases the capacity and the coherence of their task forces by building the capacity of their partners. Rarely will the USMS hire a Deputy U.S. Marshal (DUSM) without several years of previous experience in either the military, law enforcement or both. As such, even junior DUSMs represent a highly trained and experienced category of law enforcement official. However, the USMS realizes it cannot accomplish its mission being the only expert in the task force. In 2012-2013, during phase one of a major training initiative to improve fugitive operations, the USMS trained over 1,100 DUSMs on high-risk fugitive apprehension. In exit surveys, DUSM attendees championed the need for similar

training for non-USMS task force members. Appropriately, phase two of that training expands the program to include those members. The acknowledgment of the need to train task force members is not isolated to the individual DUSM level. The agency recognizes this need at the organizational level and established streamlined systems to facilitate non-USMS personnel training. For example, with only three one-page forms, a non-USMS employee might travel to training and submit a travel voucher to be paid by the USMS. The attitudes of its DUSMs and the hassle-free training offered to task force members builds the overall capacity of the task force, and facilitates accord among members.

In streamlining its procedures for cooperation, DOD might achieve the same result. The DOD maintains a tremendous training apparatus through the Army's Training and Doctrine Command, the Air Force's Air Education and Training Command, and others. These organizations produce the most capable warriors in the world, and our partners strive to achieve comparable levels of human capital within their ranks. However, similar training is often unavailable to many of our partners in other agencies and foreign militaries. By including interagency and international partners in more training – specifically those tailored to CJIATF missions – the DOD will enhance their partners' capacity and the utility of the training. Furthermore, the value of

the training will encourage interagency/ international task force participation and entice high-quality members of partnered organizations to pursue assignments to CJATFs. Similar to the USMS task forces, DOD should build expertise within the ranks of our partners and thereby raise the competence level of the entire team.

### Strengthen Relationships

One of the salient characteristics of USMS task forces is the mutual respect afforded by the USMS to smaller agencies, both at the individual and the organizational levels. This mutual respect is difficult to quantify, but has significant impact on the levels of cohesiveness within a multi-faceted organization. At the individual level, there is a distinct lack of arrogance within the USMS. Secure in their own quality, DUSMs do not perceive other task force members' plans as a threat to their ego. Despite their nationwide jurisdiction, DUSMs are coached to avoid haughty or arrogant behavior in working with smaller agencies. Considering all solutions without stifling non-USMS generated ones, task forces leverage the expertise of all members. Additionally, the USMS mind-set of acceptance avoids marginalizing task force members from smaller agencies and builds the task force's internal harmony. At the organizational level, USMS policy supports this "mission over ego" mind-set. For example, it is agency policy for the emergency lights on USMS vehicles to

conform to local jurisdictional guidelines. If police in one county use blue and white lights on their vehicles, so do the DUSMs in that county. If troopers in another state use red and blue lights, USMS vehicles will comply. Though anecdotal, this policy represents a mind-set of atypical amenability from a federal agency and is indicative of the emphasis the USMS places on developing relationships with its state and local partners. These relationships yield the incredible number of fugitives netted each year.

The DOD is the largest, best funded, and most powerful military force in history. Its members are aware of this fact, as are its partners. For this reason alone, DOD members must strive to suppress the tendency to dominate a collective effort or risk marginalizing the other participants and their contributions. It is not enough to build task force capacity; the DOD must incorporate that capacity into all aspects of the task force effort. This challenge is particularly difficult when considering the manpower imbalance between the DOD and its partners. Often times, the DOD can dedicate multiple planners or action officers to a project that other agencies must assign as a collateral duty to a single agency representative. Well-meaning DOD planners will develop a multitude of products and plans, but inadvertently stifle other agencies' participation in planning. This happens when partners are included in the execution stage only after DOD



Tulsa, Okla. - Operation Triple Beam II was a two-week U.S. Marshals led campaign against Tulsa area gangs. Deputies from the U.S. Marshals, along with officers from the Tulsa Police Department and several other agencies, targeted gang members with outstanding warrants and stepped up the number of pedestrian checks and vehicle stops. These increased efforts resulted in 129 arrests, 24 guns taken off Tulsa streets, \$19,759 seized and the seizure of \$11,896 in illegal drugs. (Photo by: Shane T. McCoy / US Marshals)

has drafted the plans; this demeans the partners' effort. Such practices will result in decreased enthusiasm and disenchantment with the cooperative ideals of the CJATF. Partners must be included and their input considered during every phase of planning and operation: from receipt of mission through the after action review. Additionally, when DOD planners represent the majority of manpower in an effort, meeting dynamics tend to lean heavily toward the military. The lead DOD officer should limit U.S. military attendance at collaborative meetings to guard against fostering DOD group think which overpowers partner agencies'

participants. In doing so, the DOD will leverage its partners' newly built expertise and strengthen the relationships upon which the CJATF is built.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

By establishing, building, and strengthening fugitive task forces, the USMS achieves terrific results which the DOD might emulate with similar success. Understanding the truism that "nothing can replace a habitual relationship," the USMS establishes persistent task forces to pool the resources, expertise, and efforts of law enforcement. The USMS builds the



capabilities of those task forces by delivering and funding training for non-USMS task force members. Finally, the agency capitalizes on the capability it helped assemble and build by humbly accepting and considering all task force participants' contributions. The DOD should develop its interagency efforts using similar principles.

**Recommendation 1:** Establish persistent CJATFs in pre-crisis areas where high risk threats fail to conform to a single agency's expertise. It is too late to begin cooperating after a crisis occurs. During a crisis, there is little time for planning and executing. Consequently, there is no time for learning the capabilities and shortcomings of partners during crises; that familiarization must be accomplished beforehand. Several areas of the world might be considered in pre-crisis stages. For example, a terrorist hunting task force might be well-placed in Yemen or a cartel reduction task force might be welcomed by the Mexican government.

**Recommendation 2:** Build partner capability. Partners do not have the DOD budget and cannot devote their limited resources to training. To secure quality partners, the DOD will have to help build them. DOD procedures for sending partners (specifically those already assigned to a CJATF) to training should be streamlined and expanded. Beyond raising their capabilities and exposing them to DOD procedures, establishing a reputation for training allies will attract the desired organizational and individual partners.

**Recommendation 3:** Make a conscious effort against dominating the CJATF. With the most people and funding, it is far easier for the DOD to deliver a complete plan to its partners for execution than to consider the myriad viewpoints of the collective CJATF members. However, those diverse viewpoints represent the strength of the CJATF and may yield a more elegant, efficient solution than DOD planners could devise independently. Discounting their viewpoints insults DOD partners, discourages their participation, and will result in attrition.

At first glance, the domestically-focused USMS and the internationally-focused DOD might not appear to share common missions. However, when considering the fugitive apprehension mission of the USMS and the terrorist hunting aspect of counterinsurgency warfare, the areas for cooperation become clear, particularly as terrorists flaunt international and jurisdictional boundaries. Certainly, the tactical tasks of entering, clearing, and searching buildings represent a nexus for cooperation between the USMS and the DOD; as does the investigative steps of locating elusive persons. More significantly, the ability of the USMS to capitalize on interagency cooperation represents one of the more important lessons the DOD should acquire from the USMS.**MR**

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### Endnotes

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