

The Honourable ANNE McLELLAN

Integrating Safety and Security Efforts

Less than two years ago, December 2003 to be more precise, a new federal department was created, its mandate exclusively dedicated to ensuring safety and security for Canadians. The department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness (PSEPC) came to life from the fallout of the September 11 tragedy and the resulting comprehension of a need for an integrated, and interoperable, security and crisis management system.

According to the PSEPC web site, the department is “dedicated to minimizing a continuum of risks to Canadians.”

These risks include everything from personal safety from crime or natural disasters, to

threats to national security from terrorist activity. December 2003 also saw the Honourable Anne McLellan appointed as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of this new department. During an exclusive FrontLine interview, Ms McLellan shared her views on the importance issues facing Canada in terms of National Security.

Transcending the myriad of challenges facing her as Minister of PSEPC, is the on-going development of a very new department that must bring together a significant group of entities (*see text box next page*). Not only do the groups directly under PSEPC have to work together, but many of the largest federal departments

are also regularly involved in cooperative efforts regarding safety and emergency management.

It's well-known that the United States is presently in the midst of a major re-evaluation of how they created FEMA and whether it is functioning in ways that optimize its output. Ms. McLellan agrees that PSEPC is working on some of these same issues, such as the variables involved in building cooperation and the culture shifts required for complete intelligence sharing. Many departments and agencies had not worked together much (or well) in the past. The ongoing challenge, she says, is to bring these groups together as a “unified whole that is focused on Canadian safety, security, and the government’s preparedness in times of emergency.” Creating a new department is fairly simple, however, the continuing challenge comes when you have “to develop all those parts and then have all them work together... we’ve come a long way, but we still have some distance to go in that regard.”

“It’s a new concept here, as it was in the US,” McLellan explains, “where you try to pull together all the major agencies that work in the areas of safety, security and emergency management, and have them all focused. Each department has their own mandate, but they also share a mandate as a part of PSEPC.”

*Sept 2005 –
Anne McLellan and
Wajid Khan (centre), MP
for Mississauga-Streetsville, get a first hand
look at border security along the Pakistan-
Afghanistan border during a tour of the
Khyber Pass with a senior officer of
Pakistan’s Frontier Corps.*



COOPERATION

Does PSEPC, as the lead national security department at home, work effectively with other federal departments? There are probably still some turf concerns because other departments (such as Transport, Health, DND) have been in the safety business for a long time. This new department, however has safety, security and emergency management as its only mandate, and PSEPC is trying to “make sure that there is a focus within the government on that business.” The creation of the new Standing Committee of Cabinet, Public Safety (Chaired by the Minister of PSEPC), helps the Government focus on that fact that there is one department to turn to for public safety and crisis management. “If you don’t know who else to call – call PSEPC. We want to reassure the government and Canadians that there is one department whose *only* job is a focus on their safety and their security.”

INTELLIGENCE GATHERING

One of the more immediate issues to overcome seems to be “the whole question of the importance of intelligence gathering.” Under McLellan’s mandate,

Under the PSEPC umbrella:

- Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA)
- Canada Firearms Centre
- Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)
- Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP
- Office of the Correctional Investigator
- Correctional Service Canada (CSC)
- Critical Infrastructure Protection and Emergency Preparedness
- National Parole Board
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee

These departments regularly cooperate with PSEPC:

- Foreign Affairs Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans
- International Trade Canada
- Health Canada & Public Health Agency of Canada
- Industry Canada
- Justice Canada
- National Defence
- Transport Canada & CATSA

intelligence is gathered by PSEPC, CSIS, the RCMP, and CBSA. However, other departments, such as Immigration, Foreign Affairs, International Trade, Transport Canada, and of course DND, also collect intelligence.

Of particular concern to Ms McLellan is having the public, and the Government of Canada understand how important intelligence gathering is. But what do you do with all of this intelligence? “After you have gathered the right intelligence, you hope, and enough of it, you hope, making sure you are able to bring it together in one place, to analyze it all, is critical.” The Integrated Threat Assessment Centre was created, as a unit within CSIS, to provide that function. “And for the first time ever,” she says, “it is mandatory that all those departments work together and share their intelligence.” The intelligence is analyzed and threat assessments are then provided across a wide range of communities, and in some cases internationally.

“Everything we do has to be intelligence-led,” affirms Ms McLellan emphatically, “whether it’s a land border, a sea port, an airport... whatever we do, in the world in which we live, almost all of it is intelligence-led. And therefore, one of my challenges is to make sure that we have enough resources to collect enough intelligence, the right intelligence, and that everybody in this government has gotten the message that they don’t get to keep their intelligence to themselves. They must work through the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, they must put their best people in that Centre to analyze that intelligence, and then they must share it through integrated threat assessments that are sent out across the land. We still have some way to go there. There are some good people there, absolutely, but we still need to make sure that people aren’t protecting turf, and that everybody understands the importance of integrating your intelligence gathering effort – otherwise we will not be working to an optimal level.”

Is the culture of sharing starting to permeate the government? One of the challenges in the U.S. is to overcome the legendary rivalry between intelligence entities, the CIA and FBI, to create a sense of shared mission and integration around the collection and sharing of information.

According to McLellan, the culture of sharing is improving here as well. “There were a few rough edges around the time

that CSIS was born, it was a very controversial time of our history, involving the FLQ and RCMP wrongdoing. Having said, that I think today there is a high level of cooperation between CSIS and the RCMP. Certainly the CBSA is a brand new organization and has no history for culture of turf because it’s only 18 months old – they hit the ground as part of PSEPC, and understood the importance of collecting and integrating intelligence.

“My department has a very good relationship with DND, which, because it is the military, has always had a significant intelligence gathering capability. And I say this in no way to be critical, but I think probably it might be harder for DND, in some cases, to trust the rest of us to collect intelligence that will be useful to them. But that will change.

“I was in England recently talking to Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, who heads up MI5 which is the domestic intelligence gathering organization. Her colleague collects foreign intelligence and there is also a military intelligence division. She was the one who drove the concept of integrated threat assessment centres, where everybody had to put their intelligence on the table to be shared and assessed and then returned to the field. They have driven that as a model, and virtually every nation in the world now has some variation of that model of integrated threat assessment. It puts a premium on sharing, and for that model to work you cannot afford to have a culture of secrecy or turf protection concerning information. The other thing is that they have to learn to trust each others abilities, and it does take time.”

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In describing emergency response of her department, Ms McLellan explains “you assess what’s happening on the ground and calibrate your response on an almost hourly basis, and deploy the resources you need to meet the different stages of an emergency, and then you go through recovery into reconstruction. And that must be accomplished in the most organized and efficient way so that people can return to their normal lives.”

Learning from disaster events, in terms of prevention or mitigation, and using those lessons to improve response to different kinds of emergencies is essential, says Minister McLellan. “The primary

challenge for emergency management is learning from disaster events, like the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Madrid and London, or other man-made emergencies like power outages, and also from natural events such as hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, forest fires. From these incidents, you learn what needs to be done to meet other emergency circumstances.

"We are constantly learning on the emergency management front. We are developing relationships with our provincial counterparts and local governments, and we learn, for example, the absolute importance of training and exercise."

According to McLellan, one reason why the July 7 response by London's first responders appeared seamless, was because "they had trained and done exercises involving the London Tube and a terrorist attack. They had done an exercise, just weeks before, involving real people, in real time, and showed parts of it on TV." This, she contends, proves an important point, and "speaks to the fact that part of what you need to do to prepare people is to involve them in your exercises, so more and more of the public understand (either through direct involvement or seeing it played out on television) that these things happen, that we are working to be prepared, and that they have a very important part to play if this happens.

"Training and exercises is key to being prepared to deal with emergencies of any kind," she continues. "That means your first responders, almost all of whom are at the local government level, have to be well trained and well equipped.

It is important to develop disaster-scenario exercises. Local governments sometimes run these exercises, but McLellan says that "we need to plan major integrated exercises that involve all three levels of government that take into account different kinds of scenarios." While much more needs to be done, PSEPC has made a commitment to do a major real time exercise in the lead up to the 2010 Olympics. In April, federal officials from more than a dozen agencies participated in a simulated response effort with officials from the United States, the

Joint Emergency Preparedness Program

"We help with the JEPP, the provinces and municipalities would like us to do more in that regard," says Minister McLellan, "and I don't disagree with them."

The JEPP was established in 1980 to enhance the national capability to manage all types of emergencies and ensure a reasonably uniform emergency response and recovery capacity across Canada.

PSEPC now administers JEPP which, in consultation with provincial and territorial governments, contributes to emergency preparedness and critical infrastructure protection (CIP) projects and initiatives.

Currently, approximately \$5 million is made available annually for these projects from coast to coast. JEPP allocated additional funds to increase the provincial response capacity for urban search and rescue and for chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) incidents.

UK, and members of the Cabinet Committee on Security. PSEPC is committing some \$4 million over the next two years to increase participation in exercises at all levels.

These exercises should help in communicating the threat to the public, which often feels left in the dark about emergency planning. But McLellan agrees that more needs to be done in this area. "It is important for government and first responders, and NGOs, like CARE, OXFAM, UNISEF, and the Canadian Red Cross, who are often on the ground in these emergencies, to be talking to Canadians about the kinds of emergency circumstances that can arise and what individual Canadians and their families and communities can do to help be prepared."

PSEPC publishes documents explaining how individuals and families can prepare for natural and man-made emergencies, but it's hard to tell if Canadians pay enough attention to personal emergency preparedness. "Those first 24 to 48 hours are absolutely key," she stresses, "and each one of us has a responsibility to have certain basic things in our homes and in our cars to keep us alive for the first day or two, because it may take that long for somebody to get to you." Many, if not all, of the Provincial governments have developed emergency survival kits to help you stay alive for 48 hours. Ontario certainly has one, but the information is not easy to find on their web site. "All three levels of government have a responsibility to work together to try to communicate better with the public," says McLellan.

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CANADIAN FORCES

"The Department of National Defence is certainly a key part of the emergency planning structure, says Minister McLellan. "There are certain kinds of responses that only *they* can deliver. Clearly, in the development of our National Emergency Response System (NERS), but obviously in any kind of national emergency response, your military has to be embedded as a foundation piece – it's not an extra, it's not an add on... it's absolutely key.

"Take New Orleans for example, it was the Army Corps of Engineers that developed the strategy to plug the holes in the dikes to stop the flooding. And we sent 35 divers down to help work along the dikes, checking for leaks below the surface, probably also looking for bodies in certain circumstances. It's going to be the military who have the resources to provide the critical mass for those kinds of response. It is going to be very unusual for civilian authorities to be able to put enough of those kinds of resources in the field as quickly as they need to be deployed. Our

military retains the standing capacity to deliver those people and those resources, so they have to be key to any emergency management plan."

And what about the reserves? "I see a very important role for the Canadian Reserves," states Minister McLellan. "The Minister of National Defence, Bill Graham, and I have talked about this... both of us see an enhanced role for the Reserves in response to emergencies. Primarily at home, but potentially around the world. It is certainly easier to deploy Reserve Forces domestically in emergencies, and I think they are going to be key to our ability to respond in the future – and I believe that view is shared by the Minister of Defence and also by the Chief of the Defence Staff.

The Minister of PSEPC sees consolidation of military bases as a method of increasing efficiency by bringing people together to train and work in a critical mass. She believes that bringing the full capacity together makes it "easier to train

in a seamless way on a wide variety of equipment and technology, that you can't do if you are spread all over the place. Having said that, every major city will have a Heavy Urban Search And Rescue team, but again, if you look at these cities, like Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, you have a critical mass of people working and training together as a team. Their exercises are all team driven."

PARTISAN POLITICS

It can be argued that National Security and Defence are fundamental to the existence of a free and independent nation and should not be driven by partisan political agendas. *FrontLine* wondered if both PSEPC and DND should have broad all-party support in the development of their policies, and long-term stability in their budgets. "I would say that that's up to the opposition, and I'm only being partly facetious," replies McLellan.

"I think it is important, when you are dealing with issues of national security, or national defence, or emergency management, that these are not areas where people should be playing politics. They are too important. They go to the fundamental obligations of government, and they go to the abilities of individuals and society to sustain themselves and keep themselves safe. I would agree with the premise that [these factors] should largely be without partisan politics, however, we can't be naïve. If you look at the opposition in the UK after July 7, while everybody pulls together in terms of the basic objective, it is the role of the opposition to ask serious questions after the event. In that case Prime Minister Blair came forward with a new package of measures to strengthen their anti-terrorism legislation. It is the role of the Opposition to ask whether this is needed, whether it's too much, not enough, whether you have taken into account civil libertarian interests, whether you are targeting certain communities in an unintended way. Those are all legitimate questions for an Opposition to ask and, in fact, they should ask those questions. So yes, I would accept the basic premise of the question, but also say that it is important to ensure that the Opposition is asking the tough questions because they are an important part of that dialog or discourse that belongs in a democracy to make sure we have thought of everything." **FL**

WRAP UP

Overall, I think this huge spotlight that is now cast on emergency management has awakened all of us to the absolute focus of being prepared. I often reflect on how much media interest there is, and, in part because of the media attention, how much interest there is in the general public in relation to emergency management and whether we're prepared. The media asks me constantly about how the Government would respond if an earthquake happened, for example. Are we ready to respond? Are we trained? Do we have the right equipment? What have we learned from these tragedies (most of which have taken place in other parts of the world)?

In the not-so-distant past, there was minimal ongoing coverage of emergency management issues. It wasn't on the news because nobody was really paying attention. It was back of mind, if it was there at all. Whereas now it is front of mind and that's a good thing, although it puts enormous pressure on Government and departments like mine.

Media interest has gone from nothing to being an obsession. And they are all fair questions, but we can't create an expectation that government can take the risk out of every situation, because we can't. We live in an inherently risky world, whether it's in terms of global warming, the various kinds of natural disasters, or the geopolitical context of modern terrorism. There is risk in modern life, and we must try to understand and manage the risk. Part of that is helping people become more aware of their own responsibilities and role in being prepared, because they have to manage some of the risk themselves, in their homes and with their families.

An emergency can happen anywhere at any time, and this whole topic has become so newsworthy. I hope that one of the positive things that flows from that concern is that Canadians become more interested, individually and in their families, about emergency management, and find out what they can do to help prepare themselves for different kinds of emergencies. I think that would be a very positive result. ■



*Deputy Prime Minister,
Anne McLellan*