



ARLINGTON, May 2003 – **Highly secure web based collaboration Portal used to coordinate TOPOFF 2, the national terrorism response exercise in Seattle, Chicago and Washington.**

The ODP web based collaboration Portal, created and hosted by The ESP (Extranet Secure Portals) Group LLC, a Virginia-based Secure Application Service Provider, was used as the communication and collaboration platform during TOPOFF 2 this year. The Portal was used to tie together first responders, law enforcement and federal agencies in Seattle, Chicago and Washington to coordinate situational awareness and to deploy resources during the exercise.

The Office for Domestic Preparedness (ODP) is part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and is the entity responsible for providing training, equipment, exercises and assistance to first responders across the United States. TOPOFF 2 is the second exercise in three years that is part of a Congressionally mandated, weapons of mass destruction exercise series that brings together representatives from 19 federal agencies, the state of Washington, Illinois, Canada, the National Capital Region and the American Red Cross. For five days, the exercise presented a fictitious weapons of mass destruction and biological attack scenario in two states simultaneously. The drill unfolded according to a carefully prepared script, giving the responders the ability to coordinate with one another to handle the event real-time.

The secure Portal technology used during TOPOFF 2, originally developed under the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), enabled highly sensitive collaboration among command centers and first responders in the field. High levels of security were achieved through the combination of a carefully constructed network architecture and security focused rights-based applications. The after-action reports from the first TOPOFF exercise in May 2000 eluded to problems with communication among responders, whereas during TOPOFF 2, the Portal provided an easy means of obtaining contact information for involved parties in addition to providing secure messaging, document sharing and chat capability. Users could only see data for which they had a need-to-know.

The ODP Portal used during TOPOFF 2 is only one of the secure Portals operated by The ESP Group in use by first responders. Others include the Extranet for Security Professionals, which serves the National Defense and Intelligence security community; the Pentagon Force Protection Agency Portal which distributes sensitive bulletins and threat information to law enforcement and emergency responders for the National Capital Region and the Cybercop Portal, serving nearly 4,000 law enforcement and first responders from 50 states and 17 countries, which provided secure collaboration for emergency responders handling events during Super Bowl XXXVII. For additional information on The ESP Group secure Portals and for a live demonstration, please visit <http://www.espgroup.net> or call 703-418-4996.