

New Incident Response Vehicle Proves Itself in Greensburg

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In the first morning after a deadly tornado leveled Greensburg on the night of May 4, around 50 Kansas National Guard troops had already arrived at ground zero to provide security and aid. By the second day the number of troops had doubled, and by the third day the number had doubled again. On the fourth day, over 500 Kansas Guard Soldiers and Airmen were at the scene assisting with recovery efforts.

Helping to coordinate the large-scale mobilization of troops, their equipment, and other state resources was the ACU-1000, a hybrid piece of electronics barely the size of a small refrigerator. Housed in a trailer-sized van known as the C2V Mobile Incident Response Vehicle, the equipment was also among the first Kansas Guard assets to arrive that morning after the disaster.

"This was the first time that the C2V has been fielded," said Sgt. John Staiert, network operations NCO for the vehicle. Adding to that distinction is the fact that Kansas was also the first state to have one, he explained.

"After Katrina with its host of problems -- the lost cell phone connections and incompatible radio equipment - the federal government mandated that every state

should have something like this. The Kansas National Guard took delivery of its C2V (command and control vehicle) in early April. About four weeks ago we did our first joint-operation simulation exercise with it at Pratt and coordinated disaster response with the 184th Air Refueling Wing at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita," he said.

It was fortunate for the residence of Greensburg that the five-person team assigned to the C2V had the training and was prepared.



The Kansas National Guard's C2V Mobile Incident Response Vehicle is deployed for the first time, May 5, to provide communications capabilities in Greensburg after the city was destroyed by a deadly F5E tornado.

(Photo by 1SG Carl Mar; 105th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment; Kansas Army National Guard)

"We all got called at three o'clock in the morning, and by four o'clock we were in the van and on the road," said Staiert. Charged with establishing network communications on the ACU-1000, he said "I had the system up and running 10 minutes after we arrived."

Parked in front of the Greensburg courthouse--one of the few structures to remain standing in the city--the C2V is now one of a half-dozen similar vehicles grouped

together in the area. It is distinguished by the large presence of personnel, both military and civilian around it. Parked next to it is the Federal Emergency Management Agency command post with its own trailers and alongside in a tent is the Incident Manager Command Post (IMCP). Stretching outward from them and surrounding two sides of the courthouse is a host of other support agencies.

Altogether the various entities form the Emergency

Operations Center (EOC) on site. In Topeka, the EOC is mirrored at the State Defense Building where these same agencies have representatives eyeing video feeds, news broadcasts, weather reports -- and the latest information coming from Greensburg in real-time.

"Everything that anyone sees in the Joint Operations Center in the Topeka EOC comes from here," said Sgt. 1st Class Anita Istas, the C2V NCO-in-charge. "The ACU-1000 is state-of-the-art equipment. It utilizes satellite to give us wireless internet capability, video transmission and conferencing. It allows us to convert different radio band frequencies so that hand-held communication devices can talk with one another. It enables us to set up a phone system."

Capt. Joe Dessenberger of the Wichita Police Department and operations commander for the law enforcement entity in Greensburg said, "having the C2V next to the Incident Commander's Command Post was very beneficial."

"We used it to keep in touch with Wichita and staying abreast of the situation on the ground here. It was especially handy on Saturday night when the lights went out. They were the only people to have power and shared it," he said.

After four days of active use, the C2V and its ACU-1000 has proven itself as a reliable system, one that has benefited not only the citizens of Greensburg in the first days after their calamity, but also for similar Guard missions in the future.

"The C2V and its equipment have performed up to -- maybe exceeded -- its expectations," said Maj. Gen. Tod Bunting, adjutant general of Kansas. "We expected some bumps and design tweaks in its deployment, but it's proven itself here in Greensburg.

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