

Agency Helps DHS Build Capabilities While Supporting Fast-Paced Operations

By Sue Hall

In less than a year, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) NGA Support Team has supported a rapid succession of activities. The list includes: the Democratic and Republican Conventions, presidential election, inauguration, State of the Union address, Super Bowl, a Congressionally mandated homeland-security exercise, three orange-level threat periods and several disasters, not to mention two Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summits and the G8 and NATO summits.

A 25-foot Defender-class security boat keeps an eye on passenger vessels and high-profile landmarks as it patrols New York Harbor. NGA supports Coast Guard intelligence centers with actionable intelligence for operational commanders.

On-site teams with the capability to reach back to NGA for more support provided all of the Agency's geospatial-intelligence (GEOINT) for these events.

Despite the intense operational pace, the NGA Support Team is actively involved in many developmental initiatives of the Department as it focuses the nation's attention, as never before, on homeland security.

The scope of NGA's activities is referenced in a certificate of appreciation presented to NGA Director retired Air Force Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper Jr., signed by retired Army Lt. Gen. Patrick Hughes, Acting Under Secretary for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection, on behalf of the Department.



Department of Defense photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Kelly Newlin, U.S. Coast Guard

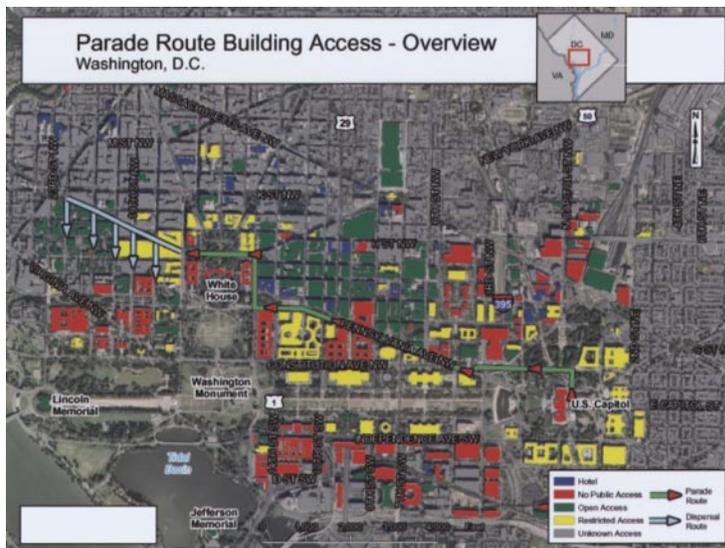
“NGA’s visionary dedication to the mission of DHS and to the protection of the homeland has manifested itself in myriad pursuits,” the citation says. “From the presence of superb NGA professionals in DHS to the wide range of high-quality support products for every DHS mission requirement, NGA has been a foundation upon which DHS success has been built.”

Foremost among NGA’s support activities is a plan to establish GEOINT capabilities throughout the Department of Homeland Security operating environment. The plan’s key component is an Infrastructure Critical Asset Viewer (iCAV), comprised of NGA’s database of homeland-security infrastructure and Palantir™ software, an application that enables users to share homeland-security information online. With the iCAV, NGA aims to provide the Department its first real-time common operational picture of the nation’s critical infrastructure and key resources. (An article about Palantir™ appeared in the January-February 2005 *Pathfinder*.)

Supporting All Levels

As indicated by the citation’s reference to “myriad pursuits,” NGA Support Team members work throughout the Department of Homeland Security, from senior staff offices to the homeland security operations center.

NGA provides custom graphics for national-security special events like this “Parade Route Access” graphic for the Presidential Inauguration.



In the operations center, NGA analysts are supporting efforts to coordinate the homeland-security operations of federal intelligence agencies and state and local law enforcement. The center operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

At the same time, Support Team members are helping to develop the GEOINT component of the operations center’s counterterrorism communications system. The center’s director has designated the GEOINT component as the primary platform for real-time threat analysis and collaboration.

Meanwhile, NGA analysts supporting the infrastructure-protection program at the Department of Homeland Security are using GEOINT to assess the vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure. The project continues to evolve in the context of a changing threat environment.

For border and transportation security, NGA is providing GEOINT for daily reports various DHS elements submit to senior staff. The role involves coordinating geospatial requirements of the U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs Service, Transportation Security Agency and several other organizations. The NGA Support Team for the U.S. Northern Command and the Office of the Americas assist in this effort, along with NGA’s Center for Advanced Geospatial Intelligence and the Office of Transnational Issues.

New Maritime Support

NGA analysts are providing direct support at the Coast Guard’s Intelligence Coordination Center, which analyzes threats to maritime, port and critical infrastructure. Besides providing customized products on site, the analysts are supporting the development of a Port Geographic Information System for the Coast Guard, with NGA data and both commercial and national imagery.



Photo courtesy of the White House Media Center

NGA has provided on-site support to a rapid succession of national-security events like the Presidential Inauguration.

NGA is also supporting the Coast Guard's new Maritime Intelligence Fusion Centers with enhanced GEOINT for their maritime domain awareness mission. Located in the Atlantic and Pacific areas, the centers provide actionable all-source intelligence to operational commanders.

An NGA staff officer at Coast Guard headquarters is assisting with several initiatives. These include expanding the Coast Guard's imagery intelligence program, fielding an enterprise geographic information system that incorporates both national data sets and Coast Guard-unique features, and developing a common operational picture to replace an existing command-and-control system. NGA recently helped the Coast Guard incorporate two NGA applications (HarborView and the Digital Reconnaissance Mapping Tool) for use in port security and critical infrastructure protection.

Traveling with the Secret Service

Geospatial intelligence has become an integral part of several facets of Secret Service operations. When the President travels in the United States, NGA's representative provides products and services tailored to the specific itinerary, including scene visualizations and geospatial vulnerability assessments, which integrate threat information into a geospatial context. This

geospatial analyst also regularly travels with the protective detail overseas.

NGA also supports the Secret Service on site during national-security special events with GEOINT for situational awareness and a common operational picture. This support is shared with other entities, including the CIA, Department of Defense, National Security Agency and White House military office.

At home, NGA supports efforts of the Secret Service to assess physical-security measures at the White House and presidential ranch in Crawford, Texas, Camp David, Md. and Andrews Air Force Base, Md. Secret Service intelligence relies on NGA for GEOINT to study terrorism trends and tactics.

Expanded Role in Disasters

NGA has helped the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) prepare for and respond to disasters for more than 12 years. Agency support continues to include both geospatial data and imagery-derived products. As an indication of the usefulness of these products, NGA now plays an expanded role, participating in disaster teleconferences at the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that the Agency is collecting and analyzing imagery of the highest-priority areas.

NGA assessments were instrumental in deciding where to send critical assets and resources following the four hurricanes that struck Florida last year. As part of Homeland Security, FEMA continues to receive an expanding array of tailored products and services through NGA's dedicated Disaster Response Branch.

In short, the NGA Support Team provides crucial support to the DHS mission of leading the unified national effort to secure America, prevent and deter terrorist attacks, and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the nation.