

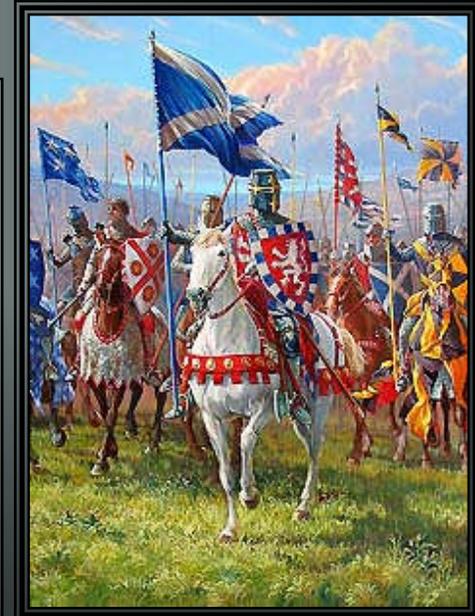
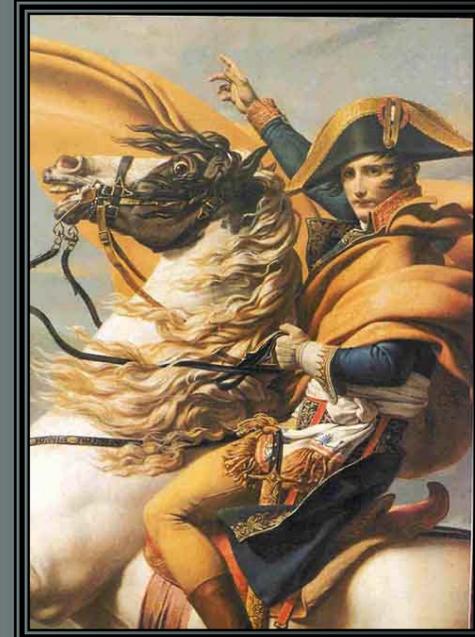
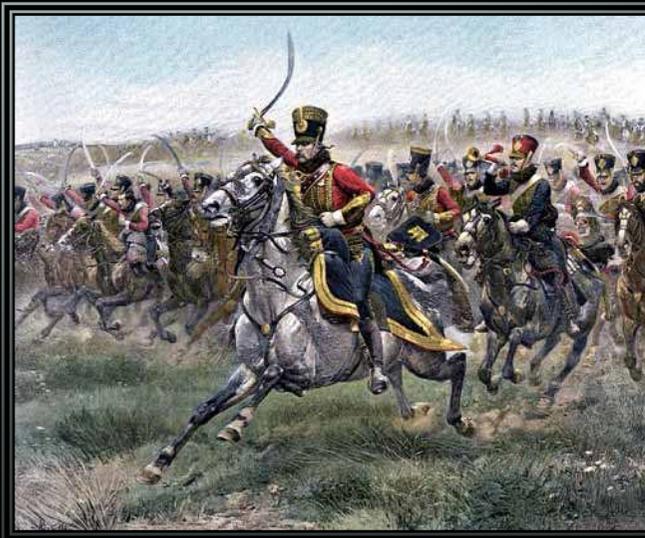
# Project White Horse

084640

An inquiry into “worst case” disasters and time critical decision making

*"If you're going to lead a cavalry charge, you better believe you look good on a white horse."*

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# Prologue

Project White Horse is focused on worst case disaster response and the group of people who must make critical decisions in an environment of extreme uncertainty and chaos. White Horse is about time, time that is not on your side. White Horse is about decisions, decisions that must be made for better or worse, decisions that if delayed looking for more information or direction from higher authority, are decisions made - for better or worse. The numbers zero, eight, four, six, four, zero are key to White Horse thinking and its focus on time. 084640 is a time – 8 hours, 46 minutes, 40 seconds into Tuesday, September 11, 2001 when Mohammed Atta flew American Airlines Flight 11 into the World Trade Center.

Warfare and sports as reflection of conflict and competition often share metaphors and slogans. One of the best, useful to both realms comes from legendary, successful, and controversial coach, often referred to as “the general,” Bobby Knight: *“The will to prepare is to the will to win as four is to one.”* In that same light from Jim Petroni, a man of some legend himself in the Fire, Law Enforcement, Emergency Management, and education world comes a crucial insight: *“When disaster occurs, ninety percent of your opportunity to make a difference is gone.”*

The research leading to White Horse has been focused on the problems of time critical decision making in the face of terrorism and the ensuing chaotic environment and specifically, what needs to be done to better prepare those core personnel, designated for this effort as commander, leader teams, for that process.

One final legend quote paraphrased from test pilot Chuck Yeager: *When an airplane starts to come unglued, the difference in a good test pilot and a good pilot is the test pilot's experientially developed brain reserve or 'delta margin' left over beyond what is required to fly the airplane and apply known emergency procedures. Critical processes are accomplished automatically and the 'delta margin' allows him room to think through the problem - and beyond - and can be the difference in saving the aircraft and himself.*

**Believing** you look good enough on a white horse to lead a cavalry charge in the 21st Century, I believe, means not only preparing yourself through current training and education practices, but also taking on “worst case thinking,” going beyond probability in analysis to look at possible events, thinking about the response to the unthinkable, and engaging in training focused on how you think, not just on getting the right answer.

There's an old joke, long forgotten, but for the punch line – time to shoot engineer, build bridge! The effort to date includes analysis of exercises, talking to key first responder leadership and authors in the emergency response field, and significant document research. The last piece of reading, produced for the Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Training entitled “Learning to Adapt to Asymmetric Threats,” done by the Institute for Defense Analysis, was the impetus “to get on with bridge building.” Their crystallizing thought:

Given the uncertainty and severity of the asymmetric 21st Century threat, the key skill that individuals, units and teams of commanders/decision makers need to learn – ADAPTABILITY

This theme and issues effecting adaptability and decision making in crisis are the content of White Horse. My intent is to forward to a distribution of multiple backgrounds small segments of the findings and implications. These will be in the form of Power Point Viewer, so that they can be read easily on-screen.

I ask the recipients to criticize freely, since my overall intent is to develop an education and training program focused on decision making in time critical, highly uncertain and chaotic situations. I am endeavoring to give credit and reference correctly a great deal of really good work as I link ideas, draw conclusions, and make recommendations. If I incorrectly quote any of you or miss giving proper credit, please let me know and change will be immediate. Feel free to distribute, but I would appreciate being copied so that I can be prepared for any feedback. For any who receive this and do not care to be on future offerings, please send me a quick e-mail so stating - no harm no foul.

I want to acknowledge and thank several key people involved in one way or another with this undertaking:

VADM Denny McGinn (USN Ret) former Commander Third Fleet who got the thinking started with Limited Objective Experiment Zero, focused on a non-state player WMD threat in deployed waters, and how well trained Battle Group Staffs might respond in an uncertain, non-templated crisis. His closing remarks in July 2000, "I know you all have day jobs, but this is more important!" was unfortunately prescient.

Dr. David Banks, Center for Asymmetric Warfare, for fighting for a unique organization focused on furthering knowledge and training related to HLS and HLD, and thereby providing me the basis in designing, planning, observing, and controlling the exercises upon which the initial analysis is based.

CDRs Dick Purnell, Marty Rouse, and Dave Tennessen, Ventura County Sheriff's Department, Battalion Chief Ranger Dorn, Special Operations, Ventura County Fire Department, Capt. Charlie Meinema, Tacoma PD, Lt. John Sullivan, Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and Terrorism Early Warning Group, and Dr. Tony Lukin (Peace Officer's Standardization Training) for listening to the concept, correcting bad assumptions and guiding my thoughts to the point that I believe I have something to offer.

Dr. Chet Richards for providing a ready reference on the works of Col John Boyd and the current thinking on Fourth Generation Warfare and for the all the time on the phone getting me to others so I could ask more questions

Mr. Mike Duncan for all the time just listening and for sharing your great knowledge of risk management.

Always to the 'Skipper,' Admiral Walter Lewis Chatham (USN, Ret) who sat a white horse in a charge better than any I know or know of.

And most importantly, the mentor, Jim Petroni. Hope this effort doesn't reflect wasting time on a poor student.

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Note 1: Initially refs will be abbreviated to acknowledge source. As things progress, formal footnoting will be used.

Note 2: I am fully aware that I am presuming on your time and cyber space. I most appreciate your patience and re-add, no harm no foul if you don't have time to read and want off the distro. *JEB*

# Introduction

What if a suicide bomber had merged with the fleeing World Trade Center workers a block down Broadway on Tuesday morning September 11, 2001? What if a sniper had been set up across the street, what if an IED had been placed on the Williamsburg Bridge leading to East River Drive set to go off at 9:46:40 Eastern Standard Time, precisely one hour after impact of American Airlines Flight 11, specifically targeting First Responders, or an hour later on the Manhattan Bridge targeting ambulances enroute to Brooklyn Hospital on DeKalb Avenue, what if...?

Likely?...doesn't matter. Possible?...ask the Israelis or the Marines and Army in Iraq. Terrorists aim precisely to create unlikely horrors, which is to say they aim to create worst cases.

Can worst cases be worse? Could it happen in downtown, your town? Consider the following from Henry Schuster, a senior producer in CNN's Investigative Unit:

**Thursday, February 2, 2006; Posted: 4:20 p.m. EST (21:20 GMT) (CNN)**A battle-hardened veteran of the jihad comes to a major American city. He has all the skills and tradecraft he learned fighting a military superpower. This jihadi recruits a small group of like-minded sympathizers and together they carry out a bold plan to attack the most striking symbols in that city. Sound far-fetched? Think again. Think about the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the first one. A man named Ramzi Yousef was the veteran of Afghan training camps who brought together a group of plotters to deadly effect. Now consider the Iraq war and the possibility that it might spin off hundreds or thousands of committed jihadis who have a combination of fervor and lethality - and that one might be coming to a city near you, ready to repeat history.

Carl von Clausewitz observed that in any war, the side willing to shed the most blood will obtain an advantage, and only the norms of civilized states restrain this impulse.

Current world conflict, unfortunately termed Global War on Terrorism, and arguably better characterized by the term *Fourth Generation Warfare* represents a form of warfare carried on by non-state entities. Its origins in insurgency have evolved into true transnational focus. The most disturbing aspect is that as it discards all state-on-state warfare norms, it becomes von Clausewitz's *total war*. In the eyes of the 4GW attacker, there are no civilians and no non-combatants. Public Relations offer the only reason for limiting the scope or level of violence. (1)

Project White Horse is a quest, first, into understanding the elements of time critical decision making in worst case disasters (those defined as inconceivable, potentially uncontrollable and with extreme aspects of uncertainty and chaos), and second, into the knowledge and readiness of the people who will be called upon to make those decisions when time is their enemy.

Its beginnings are in a handful of exercises involving non-state players and Weapons of Mass Destruction. From questions ranging from how a trained battle staff would deal with an unconventional threat scenario with responses required outside trained for templates of operation, to those encompassing civil and military response where both are equally threatened, to questions of incident command implementation and differentiation for an act of terrorism in comparison to the

more trained for all-hazard response, a common thread observed and of concern was that of decision making in the face of chaos and uncertainty with multiple organizations with legitimate responsibilities.

Analysis of multiple exercises and scenarios followed by recognition of a common thread, led to a second level of approach - interviews and dialogue with senior and experienced law enforcement and emergency management personnel. And in parallel, as a third avenue, literature search progressed from focus on terrorism and terrorists, all aspects of 911, current analysis, special operations, and intelligence, to research on the manifestation of non-state warfare, planning and thinking about worst case events, risk management and the impact of uncertainty on the decision process, crisis behavior, and finally current training practices and potential shortfalls.

While most have read and assimilated the ideas that terrorism functions on marginalizing the strengths of its target audience and that lack of imagination was a major culprit in the prevention of attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, if there was one persistent thread in the seventy plus books, equal number of articles, and numerous web sites (Bibliography to be provided), it was that a significant amount of that marginalization and imagination failure is residue of an outmoded model for dealing with problems. That model, Newtonian, linear in nature, presumes that with problem identification and basic facts, the end state can be determined and problems vanquished.

This is the American way. We can calculate to high degree, the probability of any occurrence, we understand how to manage risk, and we can produce the most detailed of plans and train to execute them. If something untoward should occur, because we have assessed things so well, created plans considering every probability and prepared so well, we can easily extrapolate to this emerging problem and its solution. We consider ourselves infinitely adaptable, yet in reality, as it relates to catastrophe, we over estimate what we know, what we can predict, and what we can control – by a lot.

Studies clearly indicate that highly trained (i.e., prepared) personnel exposed to a sudden crisis whose nature falls outside the scope of prior preparation commit grave errors of judgment and procedure. As Dr. Nassim Nicholas Taleb states in an upcoming book, *The Black Swan*, “*We do not seem to learn that we are incapable of predicting what the next significant event will be and make an allowance.....indeed we learn from the past, but what we tend to learn are not general rules; what we learn is to avoid specific classes of events...Our risk avoidance mechanism is specific, too specific and does not seem to accommodate abstract concepts...we scorn the abstract – with a passion!*” (2)

In the context of the late Colonel John Boyd’s OODA Loop, if through our own misunderstanding of the limits of our knowledge, we continue to attempt to force plans to match with changing situations, we have in effect created disorientation, self-generated disorientation, and our decisions will not reflect the real world. Creating a harmonious approach with multiple organizations will be impossible and courses of action will create even further dysfunction.

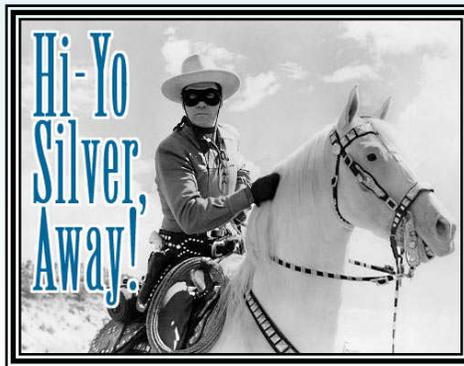
In the study done by the Institute for Defense Analysis for the Under Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Training, mostly retired senior military officers characterized 21st Century warfare as one of extreme uncertainty and stated that the key skill required at multiple levels but particularly for what they referred to as Commander Leader Teams, was that of adaptability. (3)

Project White Horse attempts to build from that assessment by looking for ways to create a learning environment focused on adaptability. This effort will highlight the following issues examined within the White Horse research endeavor that should be considered as necessary within the learning process for adaptability in the context of decision making in worst case, time critical, uncertain and chaotic events:

- 4th Generation Warfare...implications to first responders
- Civil – Military response... hang together or assuredly hang separately
- Decision making and terrorism...one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter?!!!?
- Critical 21st Century skill - Adaptability
- Worst Case Thinking – considering Probability vs Possibility
- Uncertainty and cognitive traps- why we don't learn that we don't learn
- Current training implications – prepared but not ready
- Crisis decision making and ‘orientation’
- High-end disaster planning issues – taming disasters with “fantasy” documents
- Counter Factual Tools – Disciplined approach to “what-ifying”

These topics represent the serious in-depth published work of multiple authors. Project White Horse is intended to show these key and sometimes overlapping elements and offer that when taken together they form the minimum knowledge set necessary in coming to believe you look good on a white horse.

One final note in closing this introduction - My favorite read during the last year had nothing to do with terrorism or disasters. Rather, it discussed the training, education, and learning process, developed in the face of considerable resistance to change, for a group of army officers, that allowed them to make a major transformation of a severely beaten army and lead it to one of histories most famous victories in what historians consider an unrealistically short time frame. From C.E. White's *The Enlightened Soldier*, I close with the mantra adopted from Immanuel Kant "Sapere Aude" – Dare to Know.



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