

Inside Cover

20,000 Troops To Be Used as U.S. Policemen

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WASHINGTON -- The US Department of Defense plans to deploy 20,000 troops nationwide by 2011 to help state and local officials respond to terror or nuclear attacks and emergencies, The Washington Post said Monday.

Citing Pentagon officials, the newspaper said the plan calls for three rapid-reaction forces.

The first 4,700-strong unit, built around an active-duty combat brigade, is based at Fort Stewart, Georgia, and is already available for deployment, according to General Victor Renuart, commander of the US Northern Command, it said.

Two additional groups will later join nearly 80 smaller National Guard and reserve units made up of about 6,000 troops to support local and state authorities nationwide, The Post said.

They will all would be trained to respond to domestic chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, or high-yield explosive attacks.

The newspaper said that civil liberties groups and libertarians had expressed concern that the plan could undermine the Posse Comitatus Act, a 130-year-old law restricting the military's role in domestic law enforcement.

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