

## Carter Honors Defense Threat Reduction Agency

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 26, 2013 – In an auditorium filled with nearly 400 Defense Threat Reduction Agency employees and other defense officials, Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton B. Carter presented the Joint Meritorious Unit Award to agency representatives yesterday.

It was the fourth time DTRA received the award, and Carter called it a great testament to those who have served the organization, past and present.

“In all your work you have aggressively pursued the president’s vision for countering [weapons of mass destruction] around the world,” the deputy secretary told the audience.

“You’ve kept WMD out of the hands of terrorists by locking down dangerous nuclear and biological materials, destroying legacy weapons and developing technologies to prevent, defend against and counter a WMD attack,” he added.

Joining Carter at the ceremony were Frank Kendall III, undersecretary of defense for acquisition, technology and logistics; Andrew C. Weber, assistant secretary of defense for nuclear, chemical and biological defense programs; and Kenneth A. Myers, director of DTRA and the U.S. Strategic Command Center for Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction.

DTRA’s mission is to safeguard the nation and its allies from chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and high-yield explosive weapons of mass destruction by providing the capabilities needed to reduce, eliminate and counter the threat such weapons pose and to mitigate its effect.

The Joint Meritorious Unit Award, established in 1981, is the only ribbon award granted by the Defense Department and is the organizational equivalent of the Defense Superior Service Medal.

It’s presented in the name of the defense secretary, and Leon E. Panetta signed a congratulatory statement that appeared on the award certificates.

“DTRA distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service from October 2009 thru September 2011,” he wrote, “by their exemplary performance of duty, the members of the Defense Threat Reduction Agency have brought great credit upon themselves and the Department of Defense.”

During the ceremony, Carter described the work performed around the world by DTRA scientists and specialists, and the kind of work the nation will need from the agency in the years ahead.

In March 2011 DTRA directly supported the crisis response in Libya through Operations Odyssey Dawn and Unified Protector, he said.

DTRA staff worked with U.S. Africa Command and the Joint Staff to generate more than 100 targeting support products to assess the effects of striking WMD targets in Libya.

The products were used to determine how WMD sites would be addressed during the crisis, the deputy secretary added, and now the United States is working with the Libyan authorities to secure and destroy chemical weapons.

In the same month, nearly 7,000 miles away in Japan, a 9.0-magnitude earthquake generated a 70-foot tsunami, devastating communities along Japan's coast and causing one of the world's worst nuclear disasters.

"You responded immediately from both the United States and Japan in Operation Tomodachi," Carter said.

"The United States has had a permanent presence at Yokota Air Base for arms control purposes, and that provided on-scene capability with all the backup consequence management capability of this great agency," he added, noting that a DTRA consequence management advisory team arrived in Japan within two days of the disaster.

There, DTRA experts provided technical assistance, modeling and simulation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with rotational liaison, planning and technical personnel on scene until the crisis was under control. They advised on radiation, monitoring and safety issues, and with Navy experts modified a software model to visualize the extent and trajectory of contaminated water around the damaged nuclear power plants in Japan.

"Your effective response was facilitated by the close relationships you had built with U.S. Forces Japan, with Japan's own Self Defense Forces, with our State Department colleagues prior to the disaster," Carter said.

Several DTRA personnel provided direct assistance at the U.S. Embassy and the Japanese Ministry of Defense, he said, and the work continues today, strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance and improving crisis response capability with U.S. partners and allies.

Describing other ways DTRA has fulfilled its core counter-WMD mission, Carter said the agency has become a premier government entity for research and a key partner for the Department of Homeland Security.

Specifically, he said, DTRA has continued to develop new capabilities to counter biological threats, including producing new candidate vaccines for deadly viral diseases like Ebola and Marburg.

DTRA personnel have played a technical role in New START Treaty negotiations, Carter added, and since the treaty entered into force DTRA teams have conducted 35 inspection missions at Russian strategic sites to verify weapon limits and locations.

“Going back all the way to the Manhattan Project, DTRA and its predecessors have performed a strong supporting role in preserving, protecting, understanding and advising the department on our overall nuclear stockpile and on the continuing need for a safe, secure and reliable nuclear deterrent for the United States,” the deputy secretary said.

Today DTRA performs critical functions, among them helping the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Air Force and the Navy conduct nuclear safety and security inspections; providing people, procedures and tools to perform U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile accounting and tracking; and serving as the DOD executive agent for sustaining emphasis on nuclear weapons training expertise, and response protocols, procedures and practices for potential nuclear weapons accidents and incidents.

DTRA is also part of the 20-year-old Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program, Carter said, and its contributions to preventing the spread of loose nukes in the former Soviet Union.

“And in the past two decades ... DTRA personnel -- scientists, weapons specialists, inspectors, program managers, action officers, interpreters -- have assisted former Soviet states in deactivating and properly disposing of over 13,000 warheads,” the deputy secretary said.

“Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus [are] all denuclearized,” he added. “And DTRA assisted the Albanian government in becoming the first nation to completely eliminate a chemical weapons stockpile.”

DTRA is an important protection against the increasing sophistication of terrorist organizations and leaps in technology that reduce barriers to WMD acquisition, Carter said. The agency also increasingly works with other government agencies and international partners to build capacity for among other things countering the threat of biological and chemical weapons.

“So we find ourselves today at an inflection point in our thinking and our strategy and wherever you look in that strategy you find a role for and a need for the work of DTRA,” the deputy secretary said.

And as DOD resources and global security interests shift, Carter added, “the department will continue to depend on you for the core intellectual, technical and operational support to counter the threat of weapons of mass destruction.”

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