

Nunes steps into national security role

Surrounded by top military and government officials, Congressman Devin Nunes was part of the frontline defense in a simulated bio-terrorist attack today against the nation's agricultural industry.

From a command post near Washington, D.C., the strategic planning exercise put the participants through the paces of responding to an outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease.

As one of the key participants, Mr. Nunes and a handful of his colleagues in Congress helped decide how lawmakers might respond in the situation.

"The exercise was sobering," said Mr. Nunes, a member of the Agriculture and Resources committees. "What was most surprising was how quickly an outbreak of the disease could affect the nation's economy, military deployments and tourism."

Bio-terrorism against agriculture involves the deliberate introduction of a disease agent, either among livestock or in the food chain for purposes of undermining stability in the economy or generating fear.



Rep. Devin Nunes poses with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld following a strategic exercise Feb. 11 aimed at preparing for a bio-terrorist attack against agriculture.

Exercise "Silent Prairie" gave participants an opportunity to examine the gravity and complexity of such a major national-security crisis.

Mr. Nunes and others assessed the economic effects of a nationwide incident and how federal and state officials might respond. An agricultural bio-terrorism attack could affect many Congressional districts in the country, and have ripple effects through many sectors of the national economy, including agricultural product ex-

ports, the transportation industry, and the retail food industry.

Among other things, the exercise demonstrated that:

"In an era when we face the threat of terrorist attacks on our own soil, we are fortunate to have the Department of Homeland Security to take the lead in making our lives safer," Mr. Nunes said.

"Simulations such as these are important factors in identifying and minimizing threats against our citizens."

A response to an agricultural bio-terrorist attack could require significantly more resources than that of the attack on the World Trade Center. Department of Defense resources could be strained by supporting state and local government efforts to cope with the disaster.

State and local government organizations need to be prepared to effectively use military support during such an incident.



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ground here in Washington with a commitment to creating more water storage. Now, only a few weeks later, that idea is on its way to the President and he is going home with a victory for the Valley."

The proposed reservoir

at Temperance Flat would be a beneficial solution for users of the river by creating a general increase of river water available to Friant Water Users, enhance flood protection to residence living inside the San Joaquin flood zone,

and enabling the restoration of the fishery downstream of Friant. The study is expected to begin immediately.