Briefing Memo 1

Objectives

- To develop your understanding of important policy issues related to homeland security.
- To develop your ability to summarize large amounts of complex information.
- To develop the skill of writing a concise memorandum for a specific audience.

Instructions

Write a memo that analytically summarizes one of the National Planning Framework documents (see your document and team Assignment below) for a busy new boss. Your task is the place one of the five mission areas -- **prevention, protection, mitigation, response and recovery** -- within the context of the National Preparedness Goal (hint: read this document first!).

Don't get bogged down by details. Focus on what information will be most useful to those who haven't read this document. Be sure to be brief, clear, and objective.

- **Brevity:** The busy reader seeks a concise memo. Your memo is not to exceed 750 words (not including the reference page and heading). Do **not** exceed this length limit.
- **Clarity:** Memos are written for "uninformed but intelligent" readers. Be direct, specific, consistent, and avoid jargon or highly academic language.
- **Objectivity**: An informational memo differs from other types of memos in that you must exclude your opinions, conclusions, or recommendations.

Read Writing and Briefing for the Intelligence Community and The Craft of Memo Writing for excellent tips on how to write concisely, coherently, and informatively.

Organization

1. Include a professional **heading** (To, From, Subject, Date).

- TO: CRIM/POSC3350: Homeland Security
  FROM:
  SUBJECT:
  DATE:

1. Use your **first sentence** to convey the **purpose** of your document and to convince your very busy audience that the rest of your memo (or, at least, your next sentence) is a must read. Use your first sentence to persuade them that your few pages are precisely what they need to know to solve one of their most pressing problems.
2. Your **purpose statement** should be the first sentence of the **introduction (do not include an "Introduction" subheading).** In five brief sentences or less, recount the entire memo. Its placement as the first section allows a reader who does not need to know

the details to stop reading. You will not include an executive summary; this IS your executive summary.

3. The **body** of your memo should form the bulk of your memo. Use subheadings as necessary to organize the information and facilitate transitions. Discuss the most important points of the document and the key takeaways. Think about how this document fits into the broader them of response, recovery, mitigation, prevention, and protection. Avoid long paragraphs and sentences.
    o   Please (please?) do not simply go through and summarize each section of the report and then give each section its own paragraph. Read the document holistically: figure out the how, why, what, where, when, and how. Then distill the main point(s) into a document that follows a logical organization of your own making. I recommend asking a question (in your head) and organizing the document in a way that then answers that question.
    o   Remember: **Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)** format. In the BLUF format, the first statement for each point should sum up all of the information in that section of the memo. A good BLUF should cover all of the information in a section, like an umbrella. If the section contains any information that doesn't fall under the BLUF's umbrella, that information should be moved to a more appropriate section or the BLUF should be changed to include the additional information. Following the BLUF, the component statements in the section should be arranged from the most to least important ([How to Write an Intelligence Product in the Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF)](#)).

4. Your final paragraph should **conclude.** Provide your key takeaways. Do not re-summarize the document. You do not introduce new ideas but you may include new information to buttress your points.

5. Include **footnotes** using Chicago citation style (Author-Date) for first entry, then just page numbers of the document after that. See the [Chicago Manual of Style](#) and the [APSA Style Manual](#) for assistance. **Please do not include a reference page.**

Formatting

Upon submission to Canvas, the format of your memo should be as follows:

-   12-point font Times New Roman
-   left justified
-   one-inch margins
-   footnotes with citations (page numbers in this case)
-   page numbers on every page (bottom center)
-   paragraphs should be single-spaced and separated by a double space
-   submit a PDF, not Word document; a Word document signals "draft" and a PDF signals "polished."
-   maximum of 750 words
-   only one member from each team needs to submit the document