

Christopher Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Director, Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency,
District of Columbia

Speaker Bio:

Dr. Christopher Rodriguez is the Director of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA). In this role, Dr. Rodriguez serves as the Homeland Security Advisor and State Coordinating Officer for the District of Columbia. He also is the State Administrative Agent for all homeland security federal grants awarded to the District and the National Capital Region which includes parts of Northern Virginia and Maryland. HSEMA is responsible for emergency planning, preparedness, response, and recovery for the City, including operations for a 24-hour emergency operations center and the District's intelligence fusion center. Under Dr. Rodriguez's leadership, HSEMA, in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Department and Mayor's Office of Religious Affairs, launched the Interfaith Preparedness Advisory Group to improve preparedness and the resiliency of the District's faith-based organizations for all types of hazards. Additionally, he has supported Mayor Muriel Bowser as Incident Commander for some of the District's most complex, simultaneous emergency responses between COVID-19, First Amendment demonstrations, election security, the January 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, and the 59th Presidential Inauguration.

Prior to HSEMA, Dr. Rodriguez served as Director of New Jersey's Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness from 2014-17, where he led statewide strategies, policies, and operations on counterterrorism, resiliency, and cybersecurity. While serving in New Jersey, his home state, Dr. Rodriguez led the office during the national rise of homegrown violent extremism and established close relationships with the private sector, federal government as well as state, and local law enforcement. Recognizing the critical role the public plays in stopping attacks before they happen, Dr. Rodriguez also increased the office's engagement with the public building and maintaining key relationships with faith-based communities.

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he joined the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), where he became a senior analyst in its Counterterrorism Center. In this position, he monitored terrorist groups in the Middle East and South

Asia, closely collaborating with U.S. Intelligence Community partners at the federal, state, and local levels to identify and counter persistent threats to the United States and its allies. During his time at the CIA, Dr. Rodriguez also oversaw an analytic unit that handled global economic and energy security, as well as related counterintelligence and cyber threats. From 2009-11, while deployed at the U.S. Embassy in Brussels, Dr. Rodriguez was a key U.S. interlocutor with the European Union during the height of the Euro crisis. He has been recognized by the CIA and Director of National Intelligence for his leadership and professional achievements.

Dr. Rodriguez received a BA from Williams College and an MA and Ph.D. in political science from the University of Notre Dame.

Presentation:

The Role of Misinformation, Disinformation, and Domestic Terrorism on the Insurrection at the U.S. Capitol

Misinformation and disinformation fueled the weeks and days leading up to the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. Organized and orchestrated by right-wing extremism, the breach nearly compromised the Congressional procedure required to certify the results of the 2020 Presidential election. Time and again, radical, violent movements have been rooted out; however, as these movements become more mainstream, emergency managers across the country must have a plan to address homegrown extremism and adjust operational posture based on intelligence assessments. DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) Director Dr. Christopher Rodriguez addresses the District's coordination leading up to and on January 6, how January 6 impacted planning for the 59th Presidential Inauguration, and how HSEMA and its public safety partners are reimagining safety and security for the District.