

**STRATEGY
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**DoD VETERINARY SERVICE ACTIVITY ROLE
IN DoD FOOD SAFETY**

BY

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DoD Veterinary Service Activity Role in DoD Food Safety

by

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ABSTRACT

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As the Department of Defense Executive Agent for Veterinary Services, the U.S. Army Veterinary Service has broad responsibilities for providing support to all parts of the Department of Defense (DoD). That support includes medical care for all government owned animals; veterinary support to medical research and development; zoonotic disease prevention and control; and food safety and quality assurance. The latter mission is not all encompassing within DoD. This paper reviews the division of responsibilities, within DoD, for food safety and quality assurance. The complexity of the division and the problem it causes joint operations planners are explored. A proposal for integrating overall strategic responsibility for food safety and quality assurance into the DoD Veterinary Service Activity is developed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vii

BACKGROUND 1

THE PROBLEM 6

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES 7

DOD WHOLESALE/RETAIL FOOD SERVICE 19

RESULTANT SITUATION 23

COURSES OF ACTION 24

RECOMMENDATION 29

ENDNOTES 31

BIBLIOGRAPHY 35

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BACKGROUND

Food safety (including water) has been a significant concern for military planners since ancient times. In the early 10th Century the clinician Rhazes, when discussing military hygiene, stated that food and drink cause many diseases and should be inspected with great caution.¹ The profound importance of safe food supplies follows the course of military history. One of the earliest references in United States military history dates back to the Revolutionary War. General George Washington, in one of his first actions as Commander-in-Chief of the colonial forces, issued the following order.

Next to cleanliness, nothing is more conducive to a soldier's health than dressing his provisions in a decent and proper manner. The officers commanding companies should therefore daily inspect the camp kitchen, and see the men dress their food in a wholesome way.²

Despite Washington's admonition, the operation of the American Commissariat was plagued with delivery of poor quality or underweight food throughout the conduct of the Revolutionary War.³ This undoubtedly contributed to General Washington's additional action near the end of the war. He extended his instructions regarding safe food by directing that all cattle destined for consumption by the Army be inspected before or at the time of purchase.⁴ By the time of the Civil War, the Commissary General's instructions included requirements to

inspect rations before award of a contract and periodically upon delivery of goods under provisions of that contract.⁵

It is generally accepted that, prior to the 20th Century, more military personnel were lost to disease than to hostile action.⁶ Consequently, it is not surprising that the significance of safe food in the military continued to increase over the years. By World War II, over one-half of the Army's Mess Manual was devoted to food inspection and sanitation.⁷ History is replete with examples of battles that have been won or lost over the respective success or failure of a military force's supply trains, of which food is an integral part. One of many classic examples is related to the German Army's Russian campaigns during World War II. Overextended supply lines, poor weather, and the Russian "scorched-earth" policy combined to cause a disastrous collapse in resupply of food, along with most other classes of supply, to German soldiers on the Eastern front.⁸

Rhazes' sage 10th Century observation is no less true today. Concerns continue to be voiced by military leaders up through present day operations. After approximately two months into Operation Desert Storm, major day-to-day challenges of most soldiers and leaders were related not to the enemy threat but to living conditions; primarily safe food and water, sanitation, and shelter.⁹ A significant finding in the Joint Universal Lessons

Learned from Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm was that joint planners did not include food safety experts soon enough in the build-up stage of Desert Shield.^{10,11} A similar finding resulted from the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) sponsored Operation WINTEX-CIMEX 89.¹² Indeed, it seems that the old cliché, "An army moves on its stomach," is supported by the military's historical reliance on a safe, wholesome food supply.

The importance of food safety transcends the military. It is one of the most discussed topics in all forms of international public media today.¹³ A 1996 survey of US newspaper editors and members of the general public revealed that consumers are becoming increasingly concerned about the safety of their food supply.¹⁴ Food Safety is the subject of numerous congressional inquiries and was a subset of a 1996 General Accounting Office (GAO) report.^{15,16} Since hunger and thirst are two of the most essential requirements in Maslow's hierarchy of needs,¹⁷ it is logical that food safety has some degree of importance to every person in the world.

With food borne diseases accounting for the majority of all acute illnesses, it follows that safe food must be an integral part of successful military operations.¹⁸ In fact, the nature of military operations serves to greatly amplify the significance of a safe food supply, particularly during deployments. During military operations, service members are frequently in highly

stressful situations; they work, eat, and sleep in close quarters; and they have little control over their food source or food preparation methods. Consequently, it is incumbent on operational planners, logisticians, and commanders at all levels to assure safe food supplies are available to all military personnel.

The relevance of military food safety has been elevated in recent years for two main reasons. First, since the end of the Cold War there has been a significantly increased rate of military deployments to developing countries and areas affected by natural or man-made disasters. These deployments have taken the form of either direct application of military force or any of the various Operations Other Than War (OOTW) actions described in current doctrine. Regardless of the form, the trend toward increased operational tempo is not likely to change. Two of the cornerstones of the 1997 National Security Strategy (NSS), "Shaping the International Environment" and "Responding to Crises", both recognize the significant role that developing countries play in determining regional stability.¹⁹ The current National Military Strategy (NMS) appropriately parallels and supports the NSS policy in this arena.²⁰ Further, the NMS's guidance regarding responses to the full spectrum of crises amplifies the need to rapidly respond to all manner of situations in all environments.²¹ In these developing regions of our world, or even in developed regions ravaged by war or disaster,

sanitation is frequently poor and food sources are questionable. Locating and properly evaluating safe food sources becomes a significant challenge.

The second condition increasing the relevance of food safety is related to the tendency to rely more on joint, combined, and multinational operations. The need for assuring a safe food supply is no more important in these operations than in single-service or single-country operations. However, the complexity of planning for food safety support in multi-service or multinational operations is increased and sometimes overlooked. For example, tens of thousands of U.S. Army and Air Force personnel were on the ground in the early stages of Operation Desert Shield before a coherent strategy was worked out between those two services for providing a full range of food inspection support to the Theater of Operations.²²

Food Safety is now included as an integral part of Joint Operation health service support planning.²³ Joint Publication 4-02 states, in part, that the Army Veterinary Service is responsible for inspection and laboratory examination of subsistence items for wholesomeness and quality. It goes on to state that the Army Veterinary Service is responsible for inspection of facilities supplying, storing, and issuing subsistence items for Army, Navy and Marine Corps components. The Air Force is given these responsibilities on Air Force installations.²⁴

THE PROBLEM

The caveat in Joint Publication 4-02 giving the Air Force responsibility for food inspection on Air Force installations provides a glimpse at the current status of food safety in the Department of Defense (DoD). Within the DoD, there are several key players in the food safety arena. The primary ones are the Army Veterinary Service, the Air Force Military Public Health Service, Navy Preventive Medicine, and Army Preventive Medicine. Obviously, other individuals are involved: food service personnel, logisticians, commanders/leaders at all levels, and individual soldiers to name a few. But the onus for developing and implementing the DoD food safety program resides with the four activities listed above.

Doctrinal publications from each of the services and DoD attempt to clearly delineate the duties and responsibilities of their respective organizations. This will be discussed in detail in the following sections. Some of the delineations have political underpinnings, some are historical in nature, and others are quite arbitrary or artificial. Although most of the managers and leaders in each of these four entities have developed a working understanding of the division of responsibilities among them, many of their subordinates have not. Individuals working outside the DoD food safety arena find the program particularly confusing. Taken a step further, it is not

surprising that operational planners may experience difficulty when developing subsistence support plans for their mission(s).

This is an untenable situation in an era defined by highly mobile, contingency-based armed forces. Joint planners need a clearly defined point of contact to provide food safety guidance for all operations, regardless of branch(es) of service involved or planned theater(s) of operation. The organizations charged with insuring that a safe food supply is readily available for our service members owe it to the operational and logistics communities to remove some of the obfuscation that currently exists. Joint Doctrine should be expanded or modified to clearly define the lead activity or organization responsible for assuring food safety during military operations.

DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Joint Doctrine

Present joint doctrine places emphasis on the criticality of evaluating the operational reach of a military force when planning joint exercises. Part of operational reach is determined by the ability to establish sufficient infrastructure to support the operational and sustaining requirements of the deploying force.²⁵ While all classes of supply are important to any military operation, interruption of the flow of Class I (subsistence) brings operations to a halt as fast or faster than

any other class. The subsistence distribution system has two complicating factors not normally associated with other classes of supplies. First, many food items are highly perishable and require special handling throughout the storage, transportation and distribution system. Second, if food supplies are not wholesome when they reach the consumer, disease-non-battle-injury (DNBI) rates can quickly cripple a commander's ability to perform his mission.

Both of these factors dictate the need for a coherent and comprehensive food safety program for all military operations. Highly mobile, complex joint operations do not change this reality, they exacerbate it. Another magnitude of complexity is added to the planning process when considering combined or multinational operations. These operations increase the level of complexity while they decrease the degree of flexibility normally found in a national logistics support system.²⁶

Joint logistics doctrine (Joint Publication 4-0) states that each service is responsible for the logistics support of its own forces except when the support is provided by assignment to a joint activity or other agreement.²⁷ The previously discussed language in Joint Publication 4-02 assigns the Army Veterinary Service responsibility for many aspects of food safety at the DoD level and for the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. However, the specific exclusion of Air Force installations gives rise to the question as to whether or not food safety should be considered a

joint activity assignment to the Army Veterinary Service. An analysis of each service's role in DoD food safety helps clarify the current situation.

Army Veterinary Service

There are two separate issues which seemingly preclude food safety from being a joint activity assignment, as prescribed in Joint Publication 4-0. The first issue involves the division of responsibilities between the Army Veterinary Service and Air Force Military Public Health. The second relates to the division of responsibilities between veterinary services and preventive medicine. The Veterinary Service - Military Public Health issue will be discussed first.

The Army Veterinary Service is designated as the DoD Executive Agent for Veterinary Services. Movement toward this role began in the late 1970s. Based on a 1979 DoD Program Decision Memorandum, the FY 1980 Defense Appropriations Bill directed that the U.S. Air Force Veterinary Service be disestablished not later than 31 March 1980 and that the U.S. Army assume Executive Agency for all DoD veterinary functions.^{28,29} DoD Directive 6015.5 outlined specific responsibilities for DoD veterinary services and appointed the Secretary of the Army as Executive Agent.³⁰ For reasons that have never been resolved, the final version of DoD Directive 6015.5 placed several functions that were traditionally "veterinary service" functions

in a separate paragraph entitled, "Preventive Medicine".

Specifically, these functions were:

- 1) inspection of food products and sanitary inspection of establishments supplying food products to DoD components
- 2) use of approved lists of food suppliers published by the Department of the Army
- 3) laboratory examination of food products
- 4) development of sanitary military standards for commercial food plants³¹

Further, the Directive stated that the Army would furnish the above functions to the Department of the Navy.³² The Department of the Air Force was not included in this statement.

Department of the Army Preventive Medicine assets were neither trained nor staffed to perform these food safety functions, traditionally accomplished by the Veterinary Service, for the Army or the Navy. The issue was partially resolved in a promulgating letter from the Army Surgeon General in which the Chief, U.S. Army Veterinary Corps was designated as the Executive Agent for DoD Veterinary Services. Veterinary service responsibilities in the Surgeon General's letter included the functions listed in the "Preventive Medicine" portion of the DoD Directive.³³ The information pertaining to the DoD Veterinary Services is included in a revision of DoD Directive 1010.10 which is currently being staffed within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. This revision corrects the erroneous veterinary services - preventive medicine split described above.³⁴

Since the Air Force was not specifically addressed in the original Directive, the Air Force Surgeon General chose to retain responsibility for the food safety functions outlined in the Directive when only Air Force installations were involved. This left the Army Veterinary Corps Chief responsible for developing wholesale level food safety policy for the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and DoD level subsistence activities. DoD activities include the Defense Logistics Agency and the Defense Commissary Agency. The only exceptions within DoD at the wholesale level are facilities on Air Force installations.

The second issue hindering the Army Veterinary Service from being the single point of contact for DoD food safety relates to the relationship between the Army Veterinary Service and the preventive medicine services in the Departments of Army and Navy. Generally speaking, veterinary service responsibilities are at wholesale level activities such as food production, assembly, transportation, and storage facilities. Preventive medicine responsibilities are primarily restricted to the retail level, such as dining facilities, cafeterias, and other food preparation facilities. There are exceptions, however. For example, even though commissaries and exchange system stores are retail level outlets, the Army Veterinary Service has responsibility, except on Air Force installations, for food safety in them. Differences also exist between continental United States (CONUS) and overseas installations. Army Preventive Medicine has responsibility for

commercial ice manufacturing plants in overseas areas while Veterinary Services has responsibility for them in CONUS locations.³⁵

Detailed implementing guidance regarding food safety for Army veterinary units worldwide is contained in several documents: primarily Army Field Manual 8-10-18 and Army Regulations 40-70, 40-656, 40-657, and 40-660. However, because of many caveats, exceptions, and differences in implementation or interpretation, these regulations are heavily supplemented by all major and subordinate commands. The resulting situation at the operating level is often confusing, conflicting, and inconsistent guidance. The confusion is amplified during joint operations when Army Veterinary Service and Air Force Military Public Health personnel work closely with one another.

Since its inception in 1916, a primary mission of the Army Veterinary Service has been to assure a continuous supply of safe, wholesome food to U.S. forces.³⁶ Food quality assurance is a duty performed by the Army Veterinary Service concurrently with its food safety mission. Although a food can be safe (not cause illness) but not be of high quality, military commanders and service members traditionally demand and deserve the highest-quality, safest food possible, consistent with the mission being performed. Consequently, it is the philosophy of the Army Veterinary Service that food safety and quality assurance are inextricably linked.³⁷ Food safety is unquestionably the most

important of the two. But food safety and quality assurance evaluations are normally performed simultaneously with little additional manpower expenditure and significant benefits to the service member. When time or other operational considerations require it, food inspections are prioritized in favor of food safety.

The commitment of the Army Veterinary Service to food safety and quality assurance is also illustrated by the composition of its personnel assets. Approximately one-third of the veterinarians in the Army Veterinary Corps, all of the warrant officers and over two-thirds of the enlisted personnel in the veterinary service are dedicated to the food safety and quality assurance mission.³⁸ The warrant officers are Veterinary Service Technicians (Military Occupational Specialty 640A). The 640A program was instituted in the early 1980's concurrent with the expanded role of the Army Veterinary Service due to the disestablishment of the Air Force Veterinary Corps. These highly trained and skilled warrant officers are involved solely in the DoD food safety program. They frequently have advanced degrees in a food related field and often train with other federal agencies, such as the Food and Drug Administration, the US Department of Agriculture, or the US Department of Commerce. It was the Veterinary Service Technicians who developed and put into place Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) requirements and programs throughout DoD. HACCP is the food industry accepted

standard of excellence for food safety and has become the standard by which negligence cases are decided in courts of law.³⁹ The professional expertise of veterinarians along with the specialized training of the warrant officers and enlisted food inspectors provides a cadre of professionals trained and dedicated solely to DoD food safety and quality assurance.

Air Force Military Public Health

The Air Force Military Public Health Service is a part of the Air Force Biomedical Sciences Corps. It is administered by the Chief, Military Public Health in the Office of the Air Force Surgeon General. The Air Force's Military Public Health Service traces its genesis back to Air Force Veterinary Corps, established in 1949.⁴⁰ When the Air Force Veterinary Corps was disestablished in 1980, Air Force Veterinarians were offered the opportunity to remain in the Air Force and transfer to the Biomedical Sciences Corps as Environmental Health Officers. If they chose not to do that, they could apply for transfer to the Army Veterinary Corps or leave active military service.⁴¹ Those who chose to become Environmental Health Officers assumed responsibility for managing programs in communicable disease control, epidemiology, preventive medicine and public health, medical zoology, occupational health and occupational health

education, as well as the food safety mission which the Air Force chose to retain for their own installations.⁴²

In 1990, Air Force Environmental Health Officers were redesignated as Military Public Health officers. This was a move to reflect the divergent pathways environmental health followed in the military and civilian sectors. Along with the name change, Military Public Health officers picked up another responsibility, federal hazard communication training, in addition to those listed above for Environmental Health Officers.⁴³ The enlisted airmen working with Military Public Health Officers are expected to have the same broad range of expertise as the officers.

Concurrent with this broadening scope of responsibilities for Military Public Health, the Air Force philosophy on food safety shifted from evaluating both the quality and safety of the full spectrum of food products to a tight focus only on the safety of those considered to be "potentially hazardous".⁴⁴ Potentially hazardous foods are those that are at highest risk for causing food borne illness such as meat, fish, dairy products, and eggs. It is a somewhat misleading term in that essentially any food has the potential for causing food borne illness. Those that are specifically designated as "potentially hazardous" carry the highest risk. The stated purpose of narrowing the focus of food inspections to food safety only and to "potentially hazardous" foods only was to best utilize

available manpower required to fulfill the many responsibilities of the Air Force Military Public Health Service.⁴⁵ This observation is consistent with current Air Force food safety doctrine, Air Force Instruction 48-116.⁴⁶

Alternatively, Army Regulation 40-657 is the basis of food inspection doctrine for the DoD Veterinary Service Activity. Prior to the 1988 version of AR 40-657, the document was a quad-service regulation. Endorsed by the Army, Navy, Marines, and Air Force, it carried document identification numbers from each of those services. However, when the document was revised and reissued in 1988, the Air Force withdrew its support and developed its own guidance. During negotiations in 1993 between the Army Veterinary Service and the Air Force Military Public Health offices, the Air Force reaffirmed its desire not to support a quad-service regulation. AR 40-657 continues today as a tri-service regulation.

Army Preventive Medicine

The Army Preventive Medicine Program is a part of the Army Medical Service Corps and is administered by the Chief, Preventive and Military Medicine in the Office of the Army Surgeon General. Army Preventive Medicine is a wide ranging program with fifteen functional areas such as radiation safety, Occupational Health, pest control, toxicology, and sanitation. Specially trained personnel are assigned to the various

functional areas. The functional area of sanitation is further subdivided into seventeen specific areas, one of which is food service sanitation. The Army's basic food service sanitation doctrine states, in part, that veterinary personnel will conduct necessary sanitary inspections related to procurement, processing, storage, shipment, receipt, and distribution of food.⁴⁷ Collectively, these are generally referred to as wholesale level functions. Sanitation in commissaries and troop issue subsistence activities is specifically assigned to veterinary personnel. The doctrine further states that preventive medicine personnel will assess the adequacy of food service sanitation and storage practices at food preparation facilities.⁴⁸

Although this division of responsibilities is somewhat artificial, it traditionally has been relatively straightforward and understood by both veterinary and preventive medicine personnel. However, both services recognized there were redundancies involved and that efficiencies could be effected by combining veterinary and preventive medicine visits to some of the facilities. Three recent changes in food service practices within DoD have increased the artificiality of this division of responsibilities. These are the introduction of delicatessens into commissaries; the movement toward contract dining facilities during deployments; and the advent of the prime vendor program. These changes will be discussed in a separate section, since

their impact applies to the relationship between the Army Veterinary Service and both the Army and Navy Preventive Medicine programs.

Navy Preventive Medicine

Similar to Army Preventive Medicine, the Navy Preventive Medicine Program is divided into several functional areas, one of which is food service sanitation. Because of the nature of naval operations, with frequent sea deployments requiring almost total shipboard self-sufficiency, Navy food service sanitation is a more inclusive program than that of Army Preventive Medicine.⁴⁹ On Navy and Marine Corps fixed installations, the division of responsibilities between veterinary services and preventive medicine is similar to that found on Army installations. However, when ships deploy, they traditionally do not have any veterinary support available. Consequently, selected Navy Preventive Medicine specialists receive additional training in food inspection techniques. Navy food service sanitation doctrine does state that veterinary service personnel will be used whenever possible. Provisions are established for requesting veterinary support if deemed necessary. When veterinary service personnel are not available it is incumbent on the supply officer to ensure that technically qualified personnel organic to the naval command are utilized.⁵⁰

The Army Veterinary Service recently initiated a cooperative program with the Navy in which Army food inspectors are deployed with Navy supply ships to provide shipboard food safety surveillance and off-shore subsistence procurement inspection support.⁵¹ Thus far, the effectiveness of this program appears good but has not yet been fully evaluated. This evaluation and a manpower analysis will need to be completed before a decision can be made regarding expanding this program to ships other than Navy supply ships. Another joint Army/Navy initiative involves placing an Army Veterinary Service Food Inspection Non-commissioned Officer on each of the seven worldwide Navy Food Management Teams.⁵² These individuals will provide training for Navy personnel; on-the-spot assistance as required; and liaison between Army veterinary service and Navy food service personnel. The original intent of these two initiatives was to provide better food inspection service to the Navy. This intent is being fulfilled. A beneficial second-order consequence is that it is reducing the effect of the blurred division of responsibilities between Army Veterinary Service and Navy Preventive Medicine.

DoD WHOLESALE/RETAIL FOOD SERVICE

As discussed earlier, there are three issues that have served to blur the distinction between wholesale and retail food service (and, consequently, the division of responsibilities

between veterinary services and preventive medicine) within DoD. These issues are the introduction of delicatessens into commissaries; the movement toward contract dining facilities during deployments; and the advent of the prime vendor program. Delicatessens are food preparation areas in every respect but they are in commissaries, which fall under the responsibility of veterinary services. By mutual agreement, veterinary services assumed responsibility for providing sanitation support for the commissary delicatessens, leading to another exception to the wholesale verses retail rule for veterinary services and preventive medicine services, respectively. It also moved veterinary food inspectors further into the field of food service sanitation, traditionally assigned to preventive medicine. Experience gained in providing food safety support for delicatessens is directly applicable to other types of food preparation facilities.

Increased reliance on contract food service during deployments is the second issue. Operation Desert Shield/Storm provides a prime example of the significance of this issue. Numerous contractor operated dining facilities were established during the conduct of this operation, with some contractors providing substandard or unsatisfactory food products.⁵³ Although some US origin subsistence items were used in these facilities, the majority of the food was directly procured by the contractors from local sources. Consequently, for the sake of

determining food safety responsibilities, these dining facilities were both wholesale and retail level operations. Veterinary personnel worked with the contractors as much as possible to determine their food sources and conduct sanitary inspections of them. Inspection of the food preparation methods was usually conducted by preventive medicine personnel. Evaluation of the food transportation and storage methods was worked out on a case-by-case basis, with redundancies or omissions being the occasional result.⁵⁴ In areas where Air Force Military Public Health personnel were present, additional coordination was required. Overall, the mission was accomplished but efficiencies and improvements were possible.

The third change, the advent of the Prime Vendor program, has a profound effect on the division of responsibilities for the veterinary and preventive medicine services. There is also a secondary effect on the relationship between the Veterinary Service and the Air Force Military Public Health which will be discussed subsequently. Prime Vendor is the name applied to the program in which specially selected subsistence suppliers deliver their products directly to dining facilities. This is in contrast to the system used for many years in which suppliers delivered their products to central, government-owned distribution points. Ownership of the product was transferred to the government at these distribution points and veterinary personnel conducted receipt inspections at that time.

The Prime Vendor initiative is one of the results of a 1993 GAO study which recommended that significant savings could be realized by reducing or eliminating the Defense Logistics Agency and individual Service Department's subsistence warehouse systems.^{55,56} Prime Vendor has virtually eliminated DoD's wholesale subsistence distribution system in CONUS and will probably do so in overseas areas within the next year. In response to this program, the veterinary service is shifting its emphasis from end-item inspection to contract preaward inspections. This evaluates the suppliers' own quality assurance programs and ability to consistently provide high-quality, wholesome product.⁵⁷ Unfortunately, non-conforming, poor quality, or unwholesome products still occasionally work their way through the system and end up at a dining facility. Since commercial suppliers are delivering directly to the dining facilities, in essence they have become both wholesale and retail level facilities at the same time. This provides yet another opportunity for veterinary and preventive medicine responsibilities to overlap or, more significantly, to be overlooked, allowing substandard products to be introduced into the military field feeding system.

A second, unexpected consequence of Prime Vendor relates to the relationship between the Veterinary Service and Air Force Military Public Health. Defense Supply Center - Philadelphia (DSCP) relies on field inspection data to evaluate vendor

performance for current contract compliance and future contract awards. Due to personnel constraints and the Air Force's shift away from quality assurance, discussed previously, there is a significant discrepancy in the inspection data received from the Air Force when compared to that received from the Army. This complicates contractual evaluations at DSCP.⁵⁸

RESULTANT SITUATION

In spite of the somewhat confusing and illogical division of responsibilities discussed above, soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and DoD civilians enjoy one of the safest food service systems on earth. Like most Americans, service members have come to expect that food provided them is safe. In the vast majority of cases, it is. Endless debates could ensue over relative perspectives of food quality, particularly when operational rations are the subject of discussion. But at the end of a day, most service members have no reason to say they are hungry.

In garrison situations, the four activities primarily involved in food safety manage to operate within their respective areas of responsibility and are relatively effective. There is room for some efficiency gains particularly in the veterinary and preventive medicine services. The full impact of prime vendor is not yet known and doctrinal guidance is not yet codified. But,

so far, veterinary and preventive medicine personnel have seemed to accomplish effective local coordination.

In contrast to the garrison situation, during joint/combined deployments or exercises there is a potential for mission failures that can place the health of service members at undue risk. Increased efficiencies are always important and should be implemented whenever possible. However it is this potential for mission failure and increased risk to service members that requires pursuit of a better way to firmly establish, in joint doctrine, a lead agent for food safety.

COURSES OF ACTION

With four different organizations involved--Army Veterinary Service, Air Force Military Public Health, Army Preventive Medicine and Navy Preventive Medicine--numerous permutations of possible courses of action (COA) theoretically exist. Only those considered reasonably viable will be discussed. These are:

1. Maintain *status quo*.
2. Assign Army and/or Navy food service sanitation responsibilities to the Army Veterinary Service.
3. Assign all DoD food safety responsibilities to the Army Veterinary Service.
4. Adopt some combination or modification of the above courses of action.

Course of Action 1

The positive side of this COA is that the present system is working. There are philosophical differences between Army and Air Force food safety policies and there are blurred, artificial lines drawn between veterinary and preventive medicine policies. However, the collective efforts of the activities involved contribute to low food borne illness rates and high food quality in the military. What detracts from this COA is that there are potential improvements and efficiencies, discussed below that are not being exploited.

There are three separate issues involved in implementing this COA. The first issue is the philosophical policy difference between Army and Air Force. This must be resolved between the two respective Surgeons General before consistency across DoD can be achieved. It is actually a much larger subject regarding the role of quality assurance in DoD subsistence programs. It involves DoD and Service procurement officials, health care professionals, and logisticians. A DoD level decision will ultimately be required if full resolution is to be achieved. The result will be consistent application of food safety policies across DoD.

The second issue associates the relevance of this philosophical difference between Army and Air Force to joint operations. It boils down to the question, "Who's in charge of food safety in a joint theater of operation?" This can easily be

resolved independent of the Army/Air Force philosophy issue through revision of Joint Publication 4-02. A lead agent for joint food safety planning can be appointed.

The third issue relates to the division between veterinary and preventive medicine responsibilities. Efficiencies and improvements, discussed in COA 2, can be realized simply by removing this artificial division.

Course of Action 2

Merging traditional preventive medicine food service sanitation responsibilities into Veterinary Services is a feasible alternative. Veterinary Service personnel receive excellent basic food sanitation training. Minimal additional training would be necessary to become proficient in food service sanitation regulatory responsibilities. Additionally, veterinary personnel are generally located at or in the vicinity of food preparation facilities. Some manpower transfers would be required, but efficiencies in the form of overall manpower reductions and more consistent, improved customer support would probably occur. The down side of this COA is that an abrupt transition would be disruptive to services provided and could detract from the excellent working relationship currently enjoyed between veterinary and preventive medicine personnel.

Course of Action 3

This COA is an expansion of COA 2 in that it folds Air Force Military Public Health food safety responsibilities as well as preventive medicine food sanitation responsibilities into Veterinary Services. From a Joint planner's perspective, this is the best alternative. If there is a food safety issue, Veterinary Service would be the single POC. From a managerial perspective, this COA provides the most efficient and effective support to DoD. From an individual Service perspective, this would be the most difficult COA on which to gain concurrence. The same comments contained in COA 2 apply to the Preventive Medicine portion of this alternative. However, the issue of merging the Air Force Military Public Health food safety mission into Army Veterinary Services is another subject. Air Force is very satisfied with their food safety program and will not be amenable to any consideration for consolidating this responsibility with Army Veterinary Services. Although it makes smart business sense, it is probably not worth the turbulence it would cause at the present time.

Course of Action 4

This COA contains three primary objectives. The first is to revise Joint Publication 4-02, designating Army Veterinary Service as the Point of Contact for all DoD food safety issues. Army Veterinary Service is the logical choice to fill this role

because it currently has the broadest base and the widest area of responsibility for food safety. This would significantly improve the joint planning process by clearly defining the lead agent for food safety issues. It would not, however, resolve the underlying issue of artificial divisions of responsibility between Air Force Military Public Health, Army Veterinary Services, and Army and Navy Preventive Medicine.

The second objective is to renew efforts to develop joint doctrine common to all services rather than have one doctrine (AR 40-657/NAVSUPINST 4355.4F/MCO P10110.31G) applicable to Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps while another (AFI 48-116) is applicable only to the Air Force. This would provide consistent support across DoD and resolve the issue of inconsistent data feedback to DSCP.

The third objective is to continue efforts to find ways to more fully integrate Veterinary Service and Preventive Medicine areas of commonality. This would include such things as ongoing Army/Navy cooperative programs involving assigning Army food inspectors to Navy supply ships and including Army Food Inspection NCOs on Navy Food Management Teams. To facilitate Army Preventive Medicine and Veterinary Service integration, a Veterinary Corps Officer was recently assigned to the U.S. Army Center for Health Promotions and Preventive Medicine. Senior veterinary and preventive medicine personnel are currently

working closely to explore ways to expand or add to these initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt Course of Action 4. Revising Joint Publication 4-02 resolves this issue for joint planners. The remaining two objectives of this COA are politically the most feasible way to resolve the underlying division of responsibilities issue. This COA does not capitalize on the potential efficiency improvements to be gained by merging all food safety responsibilities into one program. It does, however, represent a way to smoothly transition to a seamless DoD food safety program with minimal disruption to the current level of support.

WORD COUNT: 5,934

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- ⁷ Department of the Army, Army Food and Messing (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Publishing Company, March 1943), 247-412.
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- ¹⁰ Department of Defense, "Industrial Preparedness for Subsistence is Insufficient," [JULLS number 31642-78091] Joint Universal Lessons Learned System, JMP 961 (Washington, D.C.: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 25 March 1996).
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