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NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT LOGISTICS
DURING A DOMESTIC CRISIS RESPONSE

by

Kirstin Riesbeck

Civilian, U.S. Coast Guard

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal view and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: _____

27 October 2010

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Abstract

Over the past decade, our Nation has been faced with multiple natural and man-made disasters resulting in the need for unprecedented federal responses. Since 1980, the annual number of declared national disasters requiring a federal response has nearly tripled. Increased pressure comes from a twenty-four hour news cycle, social media and public involvement that have generated a zero-tolerance-for-failure environment. The success of any such emergency response is critically dependent on the effectiveness of coordinated logistics operations. Moreover, the unique challenges posed by threats that cross geographic, expertise, and social boundaries require whole-of-government solutions. Although progress has been made over the past five years, the federal government still struggles with its efforts to develop a coordinated mechanism for logistics response. Therefore, the federal government must improve its whole-of-government approach to providing logistics during a domestic response in order to enable the success of the emergency responders. Through clearly articulated doctrine, government-wide logistics standards, increased training and awareness and national exercises that deliberately challenge the logistics framework, the federal government can better ensure the success of domestic response operations.

*For want of a nail, the shoe was lost –
For want of a shoe, the horse was lost –
For want of a horse, the rider was lost –
For want of a rider, the battle was lost.
- Benjamin Franklin*

Introduction

Over the past decade, our Nation has been faced with multiple natural and man-made disasters resulting in the need for unprecedented federal responses. Since 1980, the annual number of declared national disasters requiring a federal response has nearly tripled.ⁱ Whether it be the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, or the DEEPWATER HORIZON oil spill, requirements have exceeded the state and local authorities' capabilities and have required a multi-agency response at the federal level. Increased pressure comes from a twenty-four hour news cycle, social media and public involvement that have generated a zero-tolerance-for-failure environment. The success of any such emergency response is critically dependent on the effectiveness of coordinated logistics operations.

The concept of logistics is well rooted in military history and has long been heralded as a multi-dimensional and complex entity that constitutes one of the most important and essential components of warfare.”ⁱⁱ Admiral Ernest J. King, Chief of Naval Operations during World War II is quoted as saying, “I don’t know what the hell this ‘logistics’ is that [U.S. Chief of Staff, General George] Marshall is always talking about, but I want some of it.”ⁱⁱⁱ While most military definitions discuss the processes of “planning and executing the movement and support of forces,”^{iv} a similar definition can be applied to the execution of emergency response operations.

Ultimately, the objective of crisis response logistics is to efficiently provide resources to emergency responders in order sustain operations aimed at minimizing

human suffering and protecting property. Increased dependence on critical infrastructures and the growing populations within the United States are directly related to the magnitude of disruption caused by a disaster of any kind precipitating a multi-faceted response. However, as observed throughout the course of the events mentioned above, the federal government still struggles with its efforts to develop a coordinated mechanism for logistics response. Therefore, the federal government must improve its whole-of-government approach to providing logistics during a domestic response in order to enable the success of the emergency responders.

To be clear, the United States approach to crisis response includes an intra-governmental approach which relies on crisis resolution by the most local authority possible. Therefore, federal crisis planning accounts for participation from state, local and tribal governments, as well as non-governmental and non-profit organizations, and private sector. However, this paper will only explore the relationships and efficiencies to be gained from a whole-of-government approach at the federal level.

This paper will begin by establishing legal authority for a Lead Federal Agency (LFA) during a domestic crisis response. It will then discuss the functions and authorities delegated to the LFA and the effectiveness of the current structure for interagency involvement. This will be followed by an exploration of the unique functions that interagency partners can provide during a crisis response and the requirement for an improved “whole-of-government” approach. The paper will then conclude with recommendations for enhancing federal partnerships with respect to logistics during a domestic response.

Establishing Lead Federal Agency during a Domestic Response

The Homeland Security Act of 2002 established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by combining new and established agencies, one of which was the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in order to prevent, recover from, and respond to terrorist attacks and other natural and manmade disasters.^v In addition, this Act requires that all functions and obligations maintained by the DHS agencies prior to the establishment of the department remain in effect unless specifically changed in law. Specific to a federal response, this Act went further to clearly articulate that FEMA is to remain the LFA for the National Response Plan – recently renamed the National Response Framework.^{vi} In concert with the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD 5) reinforces DHS as the LFA during a domestic response by appointing the Secretary of Homeland Security as the Principal Federal Official for domestic incident management.^{vii} Furthermore, the Secretary shall “coordinate the Federal Government’s resources utilized in response to or recovery from terrorist attacks, major disasters, or other emergencies.”^{viii} However, HSPD 5 also makes it clear that this directive does not alter or impede the authority of other Federal agencies and departments from carrying out their legal responsibilities.^{ix}

FEMA’s Authorities and Functions

Prior to the establishment of the Disaster Assistance Program in 1950, the federal government funded domestic disasters on a case-by-case basis. While the 1969 Disaster Relief Act furthered the federal coordination effort, it was the 1979 Executive Order 12127 that actually established FEMA. This was followed in the same year by Executive Order 12148 which transferred all federal emergency functions to FEMA. Nearly a decade later in 1988, the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act was

passed to ensure “orderly and continuing” federal assistance to state and local governments during a crisis response.^x This Act explains in great detail what the federal government will and will not provide and under what conditions. The majority of FEMA’s functions and authorities are prescribed in the Stafford Act, which was most recently amended in 2007.

In addition to FEMA’s role, the Stafford Act recognizes the need for a coordinated federal response and addresses the involvement of other federal departments and agencies such as the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation. Further direction for a coordinated federal response comes once again from the Homeland Security Act of 2002 which dictates that FEMA, in its mission to protect the Nation from all hazards, will lead and support the Nation in a “comprehensive, risk-based emergency management program.”^{xi} To that end, FEMA is responsible for the maintenance and oversight of the National Response Framework (NRF).

Last modified in 2008, the NRF provides guidance to federal agencies with respect to National response to all-hazards. Response operations are broken down into fifteen Emergency Support Functions (ESF). The General Services Administration (GSA) and FEMA are identified as co-leads for coordination for Logistics Management and Resource Support, ESF #7.^{xii} Together, they are responsible for leading the federal response for a “comprehensive, national incident logistics planning, management and sustainment capability,” as well as resource support for such items as facilities, supplies, and contracting services.^{xiii} While FEMA generally takes the lead for coordination, GSA provides access to and execution of contracts providing for supplies, services and

transportation requirements through the use of its GSA Global Supply, GSA Schedules, Blanket Purchase Agreements and Government-wide Acquisition Contracts.^{xiv}

Effectiveness of Current Logistics Structures

Despite clear legislation and direction for FEMA's position as federal coordinator for logistics, the execution of ESF #7 has come under much scrutiny. As recognized in the 2006 Congressional Special Report – *Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared*, obvious failures in FEMA's ability to provide primary requirements for the citizens of the Gulf Coast after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita highlighted inherent issues with its ability to manage logistics during a domestic crisis.^{xv} During the response, FEMA realized significant deficiencies within its planning, contracting, logistics management and capacity. In fact, the *Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina* found that "FEMA management lacked situational awareness of existing requirements and of resources in the supply chain. An overwhelmed logistics system made it challenging to get supplies, equipment, and personnel where and when needed."^{xvi}

Post-Katrina findings and lessons learned forced FEMA to address its inadequate logistics processes. The Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 required that the FEMA Administrator "develop an efficient, transparent, and flexible logistics system for procurement and delivery of goods and services necessary for an effective and timely response to natural disasters, acts of terrorism, and other man-made disasters and for real-time visibility of items at each point throughout the logistics system."^{xvii} As a result, the Logistics Management Directorate (LMD) was established in 2007 as a "full-spectrum logistics organization."^{xviii} By organizing around the four core

competencies: logistics operations, logistics plans and exercises, distribution management and property management, LMD aimed to –effectively **Plan, Manage** and **Sustain** the national logistics response and recovery operations, in support of domestic emergencies and special events – to act as the National Logistics Coordinator (NLC) or Single Logistics Integrator for National incident support [Emphasis in the original].^{xxix} As the NLC, FEMA must coordinate across federal agencies, state and local governments, nongovernmental organizations and the private sector to ensure integrated supply chains for disaster response logistics requirements. Federal agencies include, but are not limited to: GSA, United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the Defense Logistics Agency, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the National Guard Bureau. In addition, FEMA has nearly tripled its number of permanent full-time logisticians and has reprogrammed fifteen headquarters positions to the field to enhance regional logistics efficiencies.^{xx}

While FEMA has shown marked progress, substantial challenges to interagency effectiveness remain, primarily in contract management, visibility of the sourcing process, total asset visibility, and coordination with federal partners. In May 2009, the DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG) commissioned an independent audit of FEMA’s contracting practices. This report found that FEMA was often not in compliance with the Federal Acquisition Regulation or Acquisition Management Division’s contracting policies and procedures for emergency acquisitions.^{xxi} Again in August 2009, a DHS OIG report cited duplication and waste due to stovepipes within the FEMA sourcing processes.^{xxii} Multiple and excess purchases were being made due to a lack of visibility during the sourcing process. In a July 2010 report, the DHS OIG noted

~~the~~ inability of FEMA's information systems to communicate directly with the systems of federal partners, including GSA, the Defense Logistics Agency, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.^{xxiii} The same report contributes part of the federal coordination problem to delays in the implementation of the Total Asset Visibility (TAV) Program (recently renamed the Logistics Supply Chain Management System (LSCMS)), which is designed to provide electronic management of assets and visibility at all points during the supply chain.^{xxiv} The development of the LSCMS program was a direct result of multiple episodes during Hurricane Katrina when a lack of asset visibility and tracking led to inefficient distribution of resources.^{xxv} A lack of accepted standards for federal logistics has permitted the creation of multiple approaches to resource typing (i.e., lexicon) and logistics tracking across the inter-agency making communication ever more challenging.^{xxvi} But perhaps most critical is the disjointed efforts among interagency partners. A lack of clear doctrine for logistics operations has perpetuated ad hoc responses from interagency partners despite the authorities and response structures previously discussed. Recent efforts by Lieutenant General Kathleen Gainey, Director for Logistics, J4, The Joint Staff, DoD, to develop an Interagency Logistics Program has gained the interest of USNORTHCOM, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Agency for International Development, Department of State and GSA, but has received limited participation from FEMA who, unlike the other agencies, is unable to provide a permanent representative due to budgetary constraints.

Contributions of the Inter-Agency

While legal authority for LFA during a domestic disaster clearly resides with the Department of Homeland Security, and FEMA in particular, it also clearly articulates the

requirement for a coordinated federal approach. Agencies and departments across the federal government have assets, capability and capacity to contribute. Since FEMA has limited directive authority over other agencies and departments, it must find collaborative solutions to take advantage of sister-agency resources. This is typically accomplished either by accessing the contract authorities of sister-agencies or through reimbursable work orders.

While the Stafford Act requires use of local contractors when feasible, extreme conditions can quickly overwhelm local capabilities.^{xxvii} Therefore, inter-agency contracting authorities can be utilized during a crisis. As mentioned earlier, GSA provides access to a swath of government contractors, while the Defense Logistics Agency also supports emergency response efforts by working through USNORTHCOM to provide unique contracting assistance to FEMA for resources such as water, emergency meals, cots, blankets, and fuel.^{xxviii} Furthermore, the Defense Production Act (DPA) provides authorities for specified federal departments (originally DoD and the Department of Commerce) to determine a priority rating for contracts in support of national defense.^{xxix} By Executive Order 12919 (E.O. 12919), the definition of “national defense” was broadened to include emergency preparedness efforts conducted pursuant to Title VI of the Stafford Act and protection and restoration of critical infrastructure.^{xxx} Additionally, E.O. 12919 delegated authorities to supplementary agencies and departments providing unique resource capabilities such as the Department of Agriculture with respect to food resources, the Secretary of Energy with respect to energy, the Secretary of Health and Human Services with respect to health resources and the Secretary of Transportation with respect to civil transportation.^{xxxi} Most recently in

March 2006, the Department of Commerce delegated its DPA authorities to DHS.^{xxxii}

The FEMA Director of the Office of Policy and Program Analysis manages DPA authorities for DHS and in May 2010, permitted the use of DPA authority for six program areas within DHS to include, ~~Programs involving emergency preparedness activities~~ conducted pursuant to title VI of the Stafford Act.^{xxxiii}

Despite FEMA's recent determination, DPA authorities continue to be underutilized for domestic emergency response. Although many of the federal departments are modifying their DPA policies, few have been as proactive as DoD. The Department of Defense maintains access to over 300,000 priority rated contracts annually.^{xxxiv} By placing priority ratings on the majority of its contracts before a requirement emerges, DoD is positioned for immediate response when needed.^{xxxv} In contrast, DHS does not request the priority rating for their contracts until delivery requirements are determined, potentially delaying access to critical resources.^{xxxvi}

In addition to enhanced contracting options, the inter-agency contributes assets and capacity. To facilitate the process of requesting assistance, Title 44 Code of Federal Regulations ((44 CFR) 206.2(18))^{xxxvii} and the 2007 Revised Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act^{xxxviii} provide authority for FEMA to develop Mission Assignments (MA). Mission Assignments are reimbursable work orders issued to agency partners to provide for direct essential assistance.^{xxxix} Mission Assignments can cover resources, services or expertise. There are three types of MAs: Federal Operations Support – federal support to federal operations, Technical Assistance – federal expert advice to state and local governments, and Direct Federal Assistance – resources needed beyond the State's capability.^{xl} Only Federal Operations Support can be authorized prior

to a disaster declaration. However, in advance of a major event, FEMA has drafted Pre-Scripted MAs with over thirty federal agencies which can be activated after a disaster declaration allowing for expedited execution of standard mission tasks.^{xli} What is not clear is the incorporation of the MAs into the strategic framework of logistics operations. While there appears to be knowledgeable staff at the action officer level of the various agencies, senior visibility of these commitments is inconsistent. This brings into question priority given to these capabilities at the highest organizational levels in terms of maintenance of expertise and budgetary resources.

Why Adopt a Whole-of-Government Approach

Given recent experiences such as Hurricane Katrina, some would point to FEMA, as the LFA, as the weak link in the logistics chain. While it is true that FEMA has suffered from re-organizational fatigue and archaic logistics systems, responsibility for domestic response lies with the federal government as a whole. Modern challenges with critical infrastructure, large populations, mass communications and the resulting requirements are far too great for the independent efforts of multiple agencies. A lack of visibility between agency activities leads to duplication and waste; in today's budget-constrained environment, it is even more important to leverage resources across the government. Furthermore, modern technology, which allows for greater information exchanges, has also enabled unprecedented public involvement in response efforts. Emphatically, the public is demanding a strong federal response in times of national crisis and is holding the federal government, as a whole, accountable.

The whole-of-government concept is a rather new trend in public administration. Increasingly interconnected societies operating within the context of globalization are

confronted with issues that cross the traditional boundaries of professions, geography and public/private sectors.^{xlii} The purpose of a whole-of-government approach is to break from the stove-piped, single-purpose agencies of the Cold-War era that are viewed as attributing to the disaggregation of national policy and operations.^{xliii} The addition of horizontal coordination (as opposed to only vertical coordination) creates synergies between stakeholders, contributes to better stewardship of resources, and provides the public with seamless access to government services.^{xliv} This is particularly important in a heightened security environment where governments must avoid contradictory outcomes and insure information sharing.^{xlv} However, overcoming the current federal government structure requires addressing entrenched interests and the bureaucracy of current budgeting and policy procedures.^{xlvi} Specifically related to crisis response efforts, a unified response requires overcoming agency cultures and perspectives in order to build a shared mental model for the problem to facilitate effective and collaborative solutions.^{xlvii} In discussing the crux of whole-of-government efforts during a crisis response, U.S. Coast Guard Admiral (retired) Thad W. Allen, the Principal Federal Officer during Hurricane Katrina and the National Incident Commander during the 2010 DEEPWATER Horizon Oil Spill, explained that, “you have to understand at a very large, macro level what the problem is that you’re dealing with and what needs to be done to achieve the effects you want—and you have to be able to communicate that. You also have to create a set of shared values that everybody involved can subscribe to.”^{xlviii} The Department of Defense recognizes these difficulties and considers the whole-of-government approach crucial to defense support for civil authorities. The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review states that DoD will support DHS and other civilian agencies “as part of a whole-of-

government, whole-of-nation approach to both domestic security and domestic incident response. It is essential that DoD improve its capabilities for contributing to civilian-led activities and operations, supporting ‘unity of effort’ in homeland security.”^{xlix} Mr. Eric Smith, Director of LMD at FEMA, told Congress that whole-of-government efforts allows FEMA to be “good stewards of federal dollars by limiting readiness costs and ensuring that we pay for services only at the time of request.”^l

However, whole-of-government is not only an effective public administration tool, it is also demanded by the public. With modern technology, both communication volume and speed continues to exponentially increase. The twenty-four hour news cycle, social networking, and citizen participation generates a zero-tolerance-for-failure environment for response workers with the public holding the federal government accountable when faced with a national crisis. Leysia Palen, an Associate Professor of Computer Science at the University of Colorado at Boulder who studies Crisis Informatics (the social, technical and informational nodes in crises and disasters), describes peer-to-peer communication during a crisis as “*emotive and evaluative* (including expressions of anger, grief, humor, wishes of support, political statements, and religious content) [Emphasis in the original].”^{li} Such expressions were most recently heard throughout the federal response to the DEEPWATER HORIZON oil spill in the summer of 2010, when Gulf Coast political leaders and residents demanded increased direct involvement by the federal government. In a poll conducted by the Washington Post in June 2010, 69 percent of Americans felt that the federal government was doing a “not so good” or “poor” job of responding to the spill.^{lii} Media influences perceptions and perceptions supplant realities during critical events. During his testimony before the

Presidential Oil Spill Commission, Admiral (retired) Thad W. Allen, National Incident Commander, observed the effects of public opinion on the response efforts stating, "When you have what I call the social and political nullification of a national contingency plan based on the perception of the role of the [responsible party], we have to deal with the perception."^{liii} In order to manage perceptions and maintain public confidence during a crisis response, the federal government must demonstrate a concerted effort incorporating all national assets available.

Recommendations for an Enhanced Whole-of-Government Approach to Logistics

As demonstrated, there is an abundance of documentation providing broad guidance regarding federal logistical operations during a domestic response. It is clear that a whole-of-government approach shall be utilized and that FEMA, as part of DHS, is the Lead Federal Agency for the response and co-lead for the logistics Emergency Support Function, ESF #7. However, the disparate documentation does not provide a comprehensive doctrine to clarify roles and expectations during a given event. Federal agencies aside from FEMA appear to have only a partial understanding of the inner workings of the Incident Command System described in the NRF and NIMS.^{liv} Furthermore, it can be argued that FEMA focuses too heavily on state and local resources, assuming the availability of an informed, cohesive, and functional federal capability as a fall-back option rather than an integrated component of the overall response. Modifications that have been made since Hurricane Katrina have been efforts largely internal to FEMA with little knowledge or coordination with the interagency. Therefore, as the federal government works to enhance its whole-of-government approach for logistics during a domestic response, it should consider the following:

Increased training and awareness of the National Response Framework and National Incident Management System across the federal government

FEMA must continue to partner with sister-agencies to increase training and awareness of the National Response Framework and the National Incident Management System. Training should include familiarization with related legislation and existing mechanisms available for execution of the responsibilities outlined. Training should address all organizational levels to ensure full engagement across the agency or department.

Development of doctrine that clearly articulates agency roles and expectations

With FEMA leading the effort, the interagency must reach consensus on a doctrine that articulates, in detail, agency roles and expectations while maintaining established legal authorities. This doctrine would serve as a basis for both operations and strategic planning for national response coordination and senior management decisions at the various agencies. Understanding priorities, responsibilities and expectations will allow agencies to appropriately budget and resource missions and assets, as well as to better coordinate between partner agencies. By identifying an operational construct, the doctrine will also assist in establishing a level of trust and confidence among the interagency.

Development of a national standard for logistics operations

Agencies providing logistics services must come to agreement on a national standard for logistics operations. This includes a common lexicon, interoperable sourcing and tracking systems, and common measures of performance. While the

establishment of standards may pose a significant investment in the beginning, in the long term it will help to mitigate redundant processes and procurements

Deliberate inclusion of logistics operations in national response exercises

In an August 2010 memo from Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate, she writes,

I believe an effective exercise program is the cornerstone of our nation's collective preparedness and resilience. Only by testing the ways we leverage our federal, state, local and tribal partnerships can we be sure of the effectiveness of our plans for preventing, responding to and recovering from disasters and acts of terrorism and the preparedness of those charged with supporting and protecting the American people.^{lv}

To date, national crisis response exercises have largely assumed a functional logistics system in order to concentrate on other areas of interest during a response.^{lvi} However, real-world scenarios such as the lack of visibility of assets during Hurricane Katrina and the challenges faced with limited air and maritime domain awareness during the DEEPWATER HORIZON oil spill response have reminded responders of the seams and limitations of the federal logistics construct. In the future, national level exercises should incorporate more robust scenarios to test the effectiveness and adaptability of the current logistics structure, identify overlap and seams in agency roles and serve as a basis for modified planning for future operations.

Conclusion

As the consequences of domestic and man-made disasters continue to increase, it is ever more important to maintain a robust national response system. The success of any response effort is critically dependent on the effectiveness of the logistics to sustain the operation. Moreover, the unique challenges posed by threats that cross geographic,

expertise, and social boundaries require whole-of-government solutions. All else equal, the public holds the federal government responsible during a domestic response.

Although progress has been made over the past five years, the solutions have not enjoyed the contribution of a robust interagency dialogue. Thus, the federal government must continue to enhance whole-of-government logistics operations. Through clearly articulated doctrine, government-wide logistics standards, increased training and awareness and national exercises that deliberately challenge the logistics framework, the federal government can better ensure the success of domestic response operations.

Notes

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