

Inter Agency Essay



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Interagency Planning Case Study: The Postal Model and Plan

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INTRODUCTION¹

It is difficult to lead a successful planning effort to the point that the end product, the plan, has sufficient content and consensus to be useful to the organizations tasked to develop it. This is especially true in agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) that lack the mature culture and uniform repeatable planning processes employed by other agencies. Nonetheless, planning is a critical skill. This essay describes a novel effort by DHS to establish a transparent process to develop, coordinate, and approve its portion of a plan assigned to multiple federal agencies. The coordination framework and lessons learned from this effort may be useful to planners in other agencies who experience similar difficulties developing and approving complex plans in organizations that lack robust planning cultures.

BACKGROUND

On December 30, 2009, President Obama signed “Executive Order (EO) 13527: Establishing Federal Capability for the Timely Provision of Medical Countermeasures Following a Biological Attack.” The EO is intended to speed the delivery of antibiotics to an affected population after a biological attack with anthrax. Speed is critical because the expected survival rate for anthrax-exposed people is highly dependent upon them receiving antibiotics soon after exposure. Programs previously existed and continue to provide antibiotics to the public if an anthrax attack occurs, and the EO requirements are intended to supplement and assist these programs to further reduce the amount of time between exposure to anthrax and receipt of antibiotics.

The EO is divided into four sections, with Sections 2, 3, and 4 describing specific planning deliverables to be completed, the federal agencies responsible for developing them, and the date these plans were to be finished and provided to the White House.² Section 2 of the EO is divided into three subsections:

- (a) The U.S. Postal Service [USPS] has the capacity for rapid residential delivery of [antibiotic] medical countermeasures for self administration across all communities in the United States. The federal government shall pursue a national USPS medical countermeasures dispensing

model [Postal Model] to respond to a large-scale biological attack.

(b) The Secretaries of Health and Human Services [HHS] and Homeland Security [DHS], in coordination with the USPS, within 180 days of the date of this order, shall establish a national USPS medical countermeasures dispensing model for U.S. cities to respond to a large-scale biological attack, with anthrax as the primary threat consideration.

(c) In support of the national Postal Model, the Secretaries of Homeland Security, Health and Human Services, and Defense [DoD], and the Attorney General [DOJ], in coordination with the USPS, and in consultation with State and local public health, emergency management, and law enforcement officials, within 180 days of the date of this order, shall develop an accompanying plan for supplementing local law enforcement personnel, as necessary and appropriate, with local federal law enforcement, as well as other appropriate personnel, to escort U.S. Postal workers delivering medical countermeasures.

The EO added momentum to anthrax preparedness and response planning DHS initiated in November 2009. To assign specific responsibilities within DHS and to provide guidance within the Department for completion of the EO, the DHS Deputy Secretary approved a memo on March 2, 2010, establishing the DHS Anthrax Preparedness and Response Steering Committee that assigned specific DHS components roles and responsibilities for completing the EO-tasked deliverables. The memo tasked responsibility for the development of Section 2(b) to the DHS Office of Health Affairs and Section 2(c) to the DHS Office of Operations Coordination and Planning. The deadline for completing the tasks was reaffirmed in the memo as 180 days from the date the EO was signed—June 30, 2010.

Steering Committee membership was intended to be both selective and senior to enable it to make decisions rapidly. It initially consisted of a Special Advisor to the Secretary, the heads of Health Affairs, the Office of Policy (Policy), Operations Coordination and Planning, the Science and Technology Directorate, the Military Advisor's Office, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These offices have clear duties related to a biological attack. As the need for additional DHS components with integral responsibilities became apparent, Steering Committee membership expanded to include the Office of the General Counsel, Intelligence and Analysis, and a few others.

The requirements and deadlines of the EO and the subsequent tasking memo were profoundly important to this planning effort. They established accountability by tasking specific departments and agencies to develop plans by a specified date, and they set the basic requirements for the plans. In addition, the general guidance provided in these documents allowed the participating agencies enough flexibility to meet the requirements via whatever means, processes, etc. they deemed necessary. Specific accountability coupled with planning flexibility greatly aided the planning effort described below.

ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

The federal government has a weak culture and short history of interagency planning. Therefore, the EO-required, interagency plans could not rely on well-established processes. The successful development of the Postal Model and supporting law enforcement plan required input, expertise, and concurrence from many offices within all the participating agencies. DHS played a particularly

important role because it has a large cadre of sworn law enforcement officers who could be asked to provide support during an anthrax attack, public health and medical response responsibilities, and disaster response and recovery missions. Three components of DHS are mentioned below because they played unique roles in the development of the Postal Model and Plan.

DHS OFFICE OF OPERATIONS COORDINATION AND PLANNING

The Operations Coordination and Planning mission is to provide decision support and enable the Secretary's execution of responsibilities across the homeland security enterprise by promoting situational awareness and information sharing, integrating and synchronizing strategic operations and planning, and administering the DHS continuity program.³ Plans Division was created within Operations Coordination and Planning to prepare for all threats and hazards, to include terrorism, and to establish a planning and execution capability for DHS. The Plans Division's mission is to facilitate, coordinate, and develop homeland security plans with DHS components and interagency partners in order to support the Secretary's execution of responsibilities across the homeland security enterprise.⁴ In other words, the Plans Division consists of **planning process experts** that coordinate the input of **subject-matter experts** from a variety of disciplines to create operations plans and decision tools for senior DHS leadership.

Operations Coordination and Planning served as the planning process expert and DHS internal coordination lead for this effort. The figure on page six illustrates the planning framework developed by Operations Coordination and Planning. It displays the Operations Coordination and Planning role as the information sharing conduit for the effort. However, the chart does not illustrate the role of Operations Coordination and Planning as the planning process expert that organized stakeholder input for inclusion into concise planning documents.

DHS OFFICE OF HEALTH AFFAIRS

The Health Affairs mission is to provide medical, health, and scientific expertise in support of the DHS mission to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all threats.⁵ Health Affairs is led by the Assistant Secretary for Health Affairs, who also serves as the Chief Medical Officer for DHS. Health Affairs possessed the medical subject-matter expertise necessary to support the Postal Plan development. Many of the health and medical subjects were addressed in close collaboration with interagency public health partners, and the Chief Medical Officer possesses the authority to advise on medical questions within and on behalf of DHS. Health Affairs played a particularly important role in development of the Postal Model and Plan as the DHS lead for coordination of specific medical preparedness and response policy and programs. Health Affairs coordinated directly with HHS to provide the DHS position on issues requiring medical expertise.

DHS OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

General Counsel is responsible for "implementation of the Department's statutory responsibilities and policies as set forth by the Administration, the Secretary, and senior officials within the Department." The General Counsel is the Department's chief legal officer and principal legal advisor to the Secretary to Homeland Security and has final authority and responsibility for legal policy determinations within the Department and its Components. General Counsel ensures that legal compliance is achieved in every aspect of the Department's work, and the office provides

legal counsel for all Departmental offices.⁶

For this planning effort, General Counsel served a critical role by ensuring the legal and policy issues outlined within the Postal Model and Plan were properly addressed from the outset. As described in greater detail later in this article, General Counsel expertise was critical to ensuring interagency support for the Postal Model and Plan. If General Counsel had not been involved from the beginning as full partners, the planning effort would very possibly have veered too far off track to clear the interagency legal hurdles during the final clearance negotiations.

Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, and General Counsel together provided the procedural expertise in planning and also the medical and legal subject-matter expertise critical throughout. Without the participation of these DHS Components, the effort would not have succeeded. Operations Coordination and Planning organized the meetings and supervised the planning process, and Health Affairs and General Counsel representatives attending all three stakeholder groups provided the critical subject-matter expertise on medical and legal issues the other group members sought. More importantly, these offices had the authority to decide contentious issues within their mission areas, and this authority greatly reduced confusion and argument over certain unclear or controversial issues related to the plans.

DHS ANTHRAX PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee played a crucial and unique role throughout the planning process. The Steering Committee consisted of senior leaders from the Operational and Support Components of DHS with missions most closely related to anthrax preparedness and response. For most of the anthrax-related planning efforts DHS undertook during this time, the Steering Committee had a central role in advising and approving the content of the planning products. However, the situation concerning the Postal Model and Plan was unique because the EO implied that the existing Postal Program and the antibiotic delivery would be the core of the new National Postal Model. In addition, the legal authorities and jurisdiction language developed by DHS General Counsel and DOJ for the Postal Model and Plan further limited the ability of senior leadership to provide additional guidance. However, the Steering Committee played the critical role in the final coordination leading to concurrence described in greater detail later in this essay.

PLANNING OBSTACLES

Deliberate planning—also known as contingency planning—creates plans in anticipation of future incidents based on the most current information, and it facilitates the transition to crisis-action planning. Producing a robust plan requires the time and effort of all agencies with responsibilities for the situation and, thus, commits scarce agency resources for incidents that may never occur. Legal and jurisdictional issues can also limit agency actions and create turf conflicts among agencies with competing, opposing, and overlapping missions. There is an obvious value, however, in defusing as many of these conflicts as possible prior to an actual incident. These conflicts existed during the development of the Postal Model and Plan, but they were particularly evident concerning the development of law enforcement plan required by Section 2(c).

The interagency planning team assembled to complete the Postal Model and Plan was greatly benefitted by the existing USPS antibiotic delivery pilot program it developed in coordination with HHS and the voluntary participation of state and local leaders beginning in 2004. This pilot

program served as the basis for the EO Section 2(b) deliverable and was informed by several years of program development and lessons learned from dispensing exercises in five cities prior to issuance of the EO. The Postal Pilot describes how antibiotics released from the Strategic National Stockpile can be transferred to USPS facilities and delivered to residential addresses by USPS personnel under the protection of local law enforcement officers (officers). Since the Postal Model was to be a dispensing plan primarily executed by the USPS, the USPS had the authority to dictate that the EO-required dispensing operation would be organized according to the preexisting pilot program. However, the EO required the Postal Plan required by Section 2(b) to be approved by DoD, DOJ, and DHS—three agencies that were to varying degrees unfamiliar with the preexisting postal pilot.

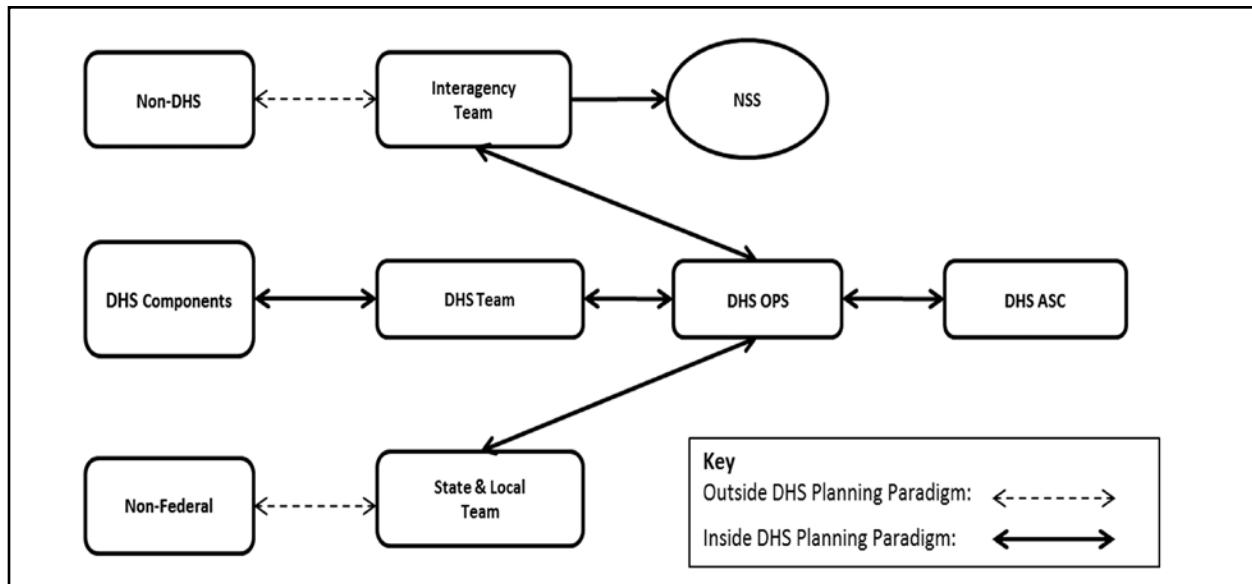
It was clear early on that the Plan was also going to be difficult to develop. The largest obstacles the Plan had to overcome were:

1. The preexisting Postal Pilot was developed with the assumption that federal officers would not be available to protect USPS personnel following an anthrax attack in a major city as required by the EO. It was assumed that these officers would be occupied performing their agency-specific law enforcement missions, would not be present in sufficient numbers to significantly impact the dispensing operation, or if located outside the affected jurisdiction, would likely not be able to travel to an affected city in sufficient time to participate in the dispensing operation.
2. The jurisdiction of federal officers is limited to varying degrees according to agency, and these prohibitions limit the role that federal officers can serve during a USPS-led antibiotic dispensing operation. Several federal law enforcement agencies also noted that their agency missions (investigations, security, etc.) must continue even if an anthrax attack occurs.
3. To further complicate the law enforcement issue, multiple state and local law enforcement leaders and professional associations made it known they were concerned with this planning effort. They feared that poorly prepared or overzealous plans would place undue resource constraints on their agencies or could waste valuable resources operationalizing what they worried could be a potentially useless effort.

Despite these obstacles, the EO was clear as to what agencies were required to develop the plans and the deadline required to submit them to the White House. This required an innovative solution.

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Action officers from Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, and General Counsel realized at the start of this effort that it was going to be difficult to gain the necessary input and consensus within DHS to provide the interagency partners and state and local stakeholders with a unified and coherent DHS position. To remedy this, DHS needed stakeholder working groups at the federal, DHS, and state and local levels.⁷ Members of each working group or “team” would represent the organizational equities of their home offices and agencies, whose participation and support was vital to the effort, and they would provide unique subject-matter expertise that better informed the planning effort (legal, medical, law enforcement, etc.) In addition to the three teams, a planning framework was established to coordinate input from these groups, to accommodate



EO 13527 Section 2 (Postal Model and Plan) Planning Framework

senior guidance provided by the Steering Committee, and ultimately to feed up to the National Security Staff as a finished interagency product. (See figure above)

INTERAGENCY TEAM

It was evident that an interagency stakeholder group should be established consisting of representatives from the EO-tasked agencies. This group included many subject-matter experts needed to draft and coordinate the Postal Model and Plan, but more importantly, the interagency team members represented the EO-tasked agencies responsible for developing them. The meetings were called by the USPS program manager and included representatives from the following agencies:

- DHS: Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, FEMA, and General Counsel.
- HHS: Centers for Disease Control and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response.
- DOJ: Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.
- DoD: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs.

The initial teleconferences and meetings attended by the interagency team focused on establishing a baseline understanding for all group members regarding the EO requirements, previous efforts relevant to this task, and any significant problems that were evident in the early planning stages.

DHS TEAM

DHS has almost 30 operational and support components, each with some degree of autonomy from the other components. Every one of these components had to approve the Postal Model and Plan before an official “DHS position” could be forwarded to the interagency team. This was problematic because the consent required from components with unique and diverse equities and varying levels of interest in the Postal Model and Plan depended upon how their equities were impacted by the requirements of the EO. It was rightly assumed that getting 20+ DHS components to understand and support a planning effort was going to be difficult. To address these concerns, Operations Coordination and Planning organized a stakeholder group consisting of DHS-component personnel once the interagency team had a basic understanding of the planning requirements. Establishing this group allowed Operations Coordination and Planning to gain enough expertise to speak on behalf of the DHS at interagency meetings. More importantly, establishing the DHS team allowed the DHS members of the interagency team to communicate very quickly and informally with the personnel from within DHS whose support was critical. In addition to Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, and General Counsel, members included components with officers and those with law enforcement policy or liaison duties:

- Customs and Border Protection.
- U.S. Secret Service.
- Transportation Security Administration.
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement.
- U.S. Coast Guard.
- Office of Intergovernmental Affairs.
- National Protection and Programs Directorate.
- U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- Office of Policy.
- FEMA.

The team lacked full regular participation from every DHS component because several components did not feel their input was required or equities were impacted. They provided comments and consensus through the formal Executive Secretariat staffing that occurred toward the end of the planning process and maintained situational awareness of the effort throughout the process through the meeting notes described later in this article.

STATE AND LOCAL TEAM

Because the EO required state and local stakeholders be involved in the planning process, a state and local stakeholder team was developed. The input of state and local stakeholders was recognized as valuable by members of both the DHS and interagency. In addition, several DHS components have liaison missions with these stakeholders that could not be ignored. The state and local team was organized with representatives from multiple DHS components as well as with

members from several police and sheriffs associations, major city police departments, and local public health agencies.

PLANNING PROCESS

The Postal Model and Plan needed additional refinement to make it operational. This refinement would involve the organized planning team working through course of action development, analysis, and approval steps central to most operations planning efforts.⁸ The core of these efforts is usually the development and then approval of courses of action based on senior leader guidance, threat, available time and capabilities, and the desired outcome. The options for the Postal Model and Plan were constrained by specific guidance contained in the EO, USPS guidance regarding the use of their pilot program, and the legal considerations regarding the use of federal officers. As the planning effort progressed, the communication among stakeholder groups made it increasingly apparent only one course was feasible. However, refinement of that course into robust plans acceptable to all the EO-identified agencies was not going to be an easy task, and it became the focus of all three teams.

MEETING STRUCTURE

The initial meeting for each planning team was held via teleconference. The format was always the same: participant introductions, an overview briefing of the planning task, and a question and answer session. The format was chosen to create a common understanding of the task, and more importantly, establish relationships among the planners. Over time, the groups began to discuss the planning task as it pertained to them and the equities they shared with the group members.

A certain amount of distance was maintained between the groups so that pre-decisional discussion details were not shared prior to the groups achieving consensus on the topics. However, memoranda for record (MFR) were prepared by Operations Coordination and Planning following every team meeting to record and report general topics discussed and specific decisions made by the various groups. Operations Coordination and Planning then distributed the MFR to the members of all three teams, which ensured everyone understood not only the direction their group was headed, but also the direction that the other groups were headed as well. This understanding bred trust among Operations Coordination and Planning and the various planning teams, and it increased the planning pace because it allowed the planning teams to better synchronize their efforts.

DRAFTING THE PLANS

The interagency team debated what the draft plan should contain for several weeks before someone made an attempt to pen an initial draft. In late April, Operations Coordination and Planning developed a barebones draft plan using a standard planning template, the basic information from the EO tasking, the USPS pilot program, and conclusions reached thus far by the various teams. The plan required additional detail, and it included assumptions that were later identified as incorrect, but it was critical to the success of the effort because it provided a place to start the editing process. The interagency team discussed, added to, and edited the draft multiple times during a three-week period in April 2010. Once they had a working draft to comment on, the planning pace quickened.

During this time, General Counsel provided a critical service to the planning effort. The General

Counsel representatives volunteered to work with their DOJ counterparts to edit the input provided by the interagency team using language that was acceptable to the DHS and DOJ legal offices as well as the interagency team members. This effort not only ensured greater cooperation at the interagency level, but it had a great impact on the concurrence review that followed. Many of the legal, jurisdictional, and policy concerns voiced by members of the DHS and state and local teams were assuaged by the knowledge that both DHS General Counsel and DOJ approved the language and commitments described in the plans. In other words, the expertise and coordination present at the interagency level positively impacted all levels of planning.

COORDINATING THE DRAFT PLANS AND DHS COORDINATION

Once the interagency stakeholders were satisfied that the draft plans could be distributed for formal review within their agencies, the draft passed to the DHS team. This team was eager to see how the plans would affect their offices, and they were quick to provide specific detail regarding their missions, capabilities, and limitations. Providing the drafts was critical to obtaining support from the components, but it also allowed the documents to gain the specific detail that only those most affected by a plan could provide. Since the DHS team was already aware of the core aspects of the Postal Model and Plan via the MFR and regular meetings with Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, and General Counsel, the members were well-prepared to review the drafts. Their input was primarily focused on adding greater detail since they had previously agreed to the core tenets of the plans.

Once the DHS team was satisfied with the content of the plans, formal comments were requested from all DHS components. However, the DHS team assumed that it was going to be difficult to get each DHS component, especially those that did not join the DHS team, to approve the Postal Model and Plan by the deadline. To overcome this obstacle, Operations Coordination and Planning leveraged the tasking provided by the DHS Deputy Secretary to encourage all DHS components to participate in the planning process by reviewing the drafts and approving them without requiring major edits. The draft Postal Model and Plan was provided as PDF documents through official Executive Secretariat channels for accountability and passed informally at the same time to component reviewers to ensure they received a copy with sufficient time to review. Fact sheets and question and answer papers were also prepared and provided as attachments to the plans as they circulated for clearance. The bullet lists of summary points and most common questions clarified issues and provided context that senior leaders used to fully understand the plans.

A simple adjudication spreadsheet was provided with the drafts for the collection of comments. The matrix included space for identifying the specific location within the plans where the reviewers recommended edits, the reviewer's name, and the specific rationale justifying each recommended edit. This approach saved time and prevented misunderstandings. Once received, all comments were consolidated into a single adjudication matrix, and the plans were edited during roundtable adjudication meetings attended by representatives from every DHS component. The adjudication results were then presented to the interagency team as the consolidated DHS edits to the draft document.

The open, matrix-based approach to comment reconciliation did not use the "tracked changes" feature available on word processing software, and it did not allow individuals to approve/

disapprove comments without the consent of the group. Tracked changes is a helpful tool if there are few contributors, but when multiple people add, delete, and rearrange major portions of a document, it becomes impossible to adjudicate comments in an orderly manner. Furthermore, assigning an individual to adjudicate comments in private rather than as a team deprives the team members of the opportunity to defend or explain their edits and equities, and this decreases the likelihood that the document will be approved by team members. The transparent, matrix-based, comment adjudication approach used by the DHS team greatly aided the review process.

STATE AND LOCAL COORDINATION

One of the most important activities conducted by Operations Coordination and Planning was regularly soliciting individual concerns, addressing them, and providing the answers to larger groups. This was especially true regarding the state and local team. Members of this team recognized that the execution of the Postal Model and Plan would greatly affect the state and local jurisdictions and federal law enforcement agencies asked to respond. However, the non-federal members of the state and local team were not part of the regular interagency and DHS discussions where these concerns were raised and addressed by the authoritative agencies or the consensus of the group.

Once solicited, Operations Coordination and Planning received much feedback on the concepts briefed to the state and local team via the memoranda, even though most of these stakeholders did not review the actual draft plans. The support of this team was absolutely critical to the overall success of the effort, so Operations Coordination and Planning addressed every question raised by the state and local team—even when the answer was the occasional “We don’t yet know.” This process built trust among the groups, and it also allayed the concerns these members had with the planning effort.

FINAL COORDINATION

The internal clearance process was easier for DHS than for several other agencies on the interagency team. These agencies did not establish their own internal mechanisms for coordinating the draft Postal Model and Plan among all the offices required to approve them during final coordination. Instead, only the offices most affected by the effort had situational awareness of the effort. In several cases, offices unfamiliar with the Postal Model and Plan did not readily provide concurrence with the work their colleagues performed. This slowed the interagency approval process and required Operations Coordination and Planning, Health Affairs, and others to lead informational briefings with interagency personnel who had to approve plans they did not previously review or understand. The failure to include all the relevant stakeholders early in the effort cost several crucial days at the end.

In addition, frequent turnover of several interagency representatives required the interagency team to again quickly brief the plans and reasoning behind them before it could gain the support of the new representatives. The clearance difficulties experienced by the interagency partners reinforced the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships and understanding throughout the agency early in the planning effort. In a large agency such as DHS, the Postal Model and Plan would never have been approved by the deadline without early and enduring coordination at all levels.

PLAN APPROVAL AND SUBMISSION

The Postal Model and Plan successfully navigated the formal DHS clearance process, but it was unclear whether or not the interagency team would have similar luck navigating the clearance structures of USPS, HHS, DoD, USPS, and DOJ and receive Secretary-level signatures by the 30 June deadline. By the second week of June, it became increasingly apparent that this was not possible. At this point, the Steering Committee members chose an approval course of action that would allow the plans to meet the deadline without circumventing the interagency approval requirements.

Health Affairs in consultation with their HHS counterparts on the interagency team developed a solution that included having the Postal Model and Plan signed by the assistant secretaries from the federal agencies whose staff formed the interagency team. The idea was that the plans would be coordinated throughout the participating agencies, signed by the assistant secretaries from those agencies, and forwarded to the National Security Staff. However, both the interagency team and the Steering Committee members realized that it would be inappropriate for only assistant secretary-level officials to provide the President plans tasked to entire agencies.

The solution was refined during the Steering Committee meetings when it was suggested that DHS prepare a formal letter signed by the secretaries of DHS and HHS for the President stating that the Postal Model and Plan were completed by the deadline. This memo would accompany the plans when submitted to the White House and would require staffing the memos through to the DHS and HHS Secretaries. The memo would not include signatures from DOJ, DoD, or the USPS. The interagency team discussed this issue and came to the conclusion that the equities of those agencies were adequately captured by assistant-secretary-level staffing of the plans, and all recognized that increasing the number of Cabinet Secretary signatures on the memo to the President would result in a missed deadline for all participating agencies. This novel approach developed by the Steering Committee saved the day. Splitting the plan and cover letter into separate packages for separate recipients—the President and the National Security Staff—allowed the planners to overcome the last major obstacle. This final staffing hurdle only took a few days to draft, vet, and submit, and this allowed the Postal Model and Plan to be delivered by the deadline established in the EO.

LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout this effort, Operations Coordination and Planning identified the practices that proved helpful and recommendations to improve future efforts. They are general enough to apply to a variety of planning and coordination efforts:

1. **Communication builds trust, and trust brings results.** Early coordination at all levels is critical to success. Plans require extensive coordination and editing prior to their approval. Successfully navigating the coordination cycles involves constant communication with stakeholders to identify and resolve concerns. This communication requires consistent participation by representatives familiar with the planning effort and the equities of their home offices. In addition, developing one pagers, fact sheets, and MFR prior to and during coordination and approval can greatly assist by reducing coordination time and helping to build the trust necessary to get a plan approved.
2. **Be specific, but be general.** Planning guidance should specify the parties responsible for

developing the plan, the deadline for completing the plan, and the minimum requirements to be met within the plan. However, the guidance should provide enough flexibility for the planning team to develop the process that most efficiently allows them to meet the deadline and planning requirements.

3. **Transparency is key.** All stakeholders have a right to know the status of a planning effort they are asked to support. Even if certain groups cannot participate in a discussion, they deserve to know the issues and decisions that emerge from the discussion.
4. **Leverage the decision-making authority of your partners.** Subject-matter experts involved in planning efforts often disagree. However, there are also often individuals who have the authority to arbitrate or decide contentious issues based on the authority vested in their office (legal, medical, intelligence, etc.). Leverage the expertise of all experts, but use the official authority of their offices to settle contentious issues when the experts disagree.
5. **Put something on paper early.** It is easier to edit a draft document than to create one. The sooner a draft is authored, the easier it is to add content and edit it to the satisfaction of the planning team.

CONCLUSION

The Postal Model and supporting law enforcement plan required a novel planning framework to coordinate the equities and inputs of a diverse group of planning stakeholders. This framework divided stakeholders into tiered planning teams, included guidance from senior DHS leadership, and included mechanisms for coordinating within and among groups. The success of the planning effort depended on communication and trust built among these groups. *IAE*

ENDNOTES

- 1 The history of state-run weapons programs involving *B. anthracis* and the current threat of *B. anthracis* as the causative agent used in an anthrax attack are both well-known and outside of the scope of this article. This article focuses exclusively on the planning framework used to write anthrax plans, not the contents of those plans.
- 2 EO Sections 3 and 4 require very different plans and were developed using different models including a different set of stakeholders. Therefore, the plans required by EO Sections 3 and 4 are also outside the scope of this article.
- 3 Office of Operations Coordination and Planning (OPS), Department of Homeland Security, <<http://dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/comp/ops/Pages/default.aspx>>, accessed on July 25, 2012.
- 4 “Welcome to Plans,” Department of Homeland Security, <<http://dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/comp/ops/plans/Pages/default.aspx>>, accessed on July 25, 2012.
- 5 “Welcome to the Office of Health Affairs,” Department of Homeland Security, <<http://dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/comp/oha/Pages/Main%20OHA%20landing%20page.aspx>>, accessed on January 14, 2011.
- 6 “Welcome to the Office of the General Counsel,” Department of Homeland Security, <<http://dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/comp/ogc/Pages/default.aspx>>, accessed on February 7, 2011.
- 7 The working group structure was designed by Operations Coordination and Planning to build consensus within DHS. The interagency and non-federal stakeholders developed or utilized their own internal processes for achieving consensus within their agencies, and these efforts were outside the scope of the DHS-developed planning framework described in this paper.
- 8 For more information regarding planning processes, see: <<http://www.hlswatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/dhs-integrated-planning-system-january-2009.pdf>> or <<http://www.fema.gov/prepared/plan.shtm>>.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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