

STATEMENT OF
ROGER RUFÉ, DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF OPERATIONS COORDINATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
BEFORE THE
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EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
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Good morning, Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Graves and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Roger Rufe, Director of the Office of Operations Coordination at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). I am pleased to appear today alongside Administrator Paulison and the other witnesses. Thank you for inviting me to provide you and your subcommittee my evaluation of the development of the National Response Framework (NRF) as it relates to the Office of Operations Coordination.

Under Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5), the Secretary of Homeland Security (Secretary) is the principal Federal official for domestic incident management, responsible for “coordinating Federal operations within the United States to prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies.” To carry out those responsibilities, the President directed all “Federal departments and agencies to cooperate with the Secretary in the Secretary’s domestic incident management role.” Thus, the Secretary is authorized by the President to coordinate Federal operations across all homeland security mission areas – including prevention, protection, response, and recovery. As the Director of Operations Coordination, I support the Secretary in executing these responsibilities. As such, I believe that the NRF will support our efforts in the implementation of national policy as it will formalize and codify the changes which we have made since the National Response Plan (NRP) was superseded by the development of the NRF. In addition, the NRF will articulate these changes to our partners and customers, as part of the new incident response processes.

Overview of the NRF

The draft National Response Framework (NRF) is a guide that describes how Federal, State and local governments conduct emergency response and incident management. Unlike the NRP, the NRF will offer flexible and adaptable coordinating structures to enable the linking of all levels of government, private sector businesses, and non-profit organizations.

The NRF is an important step forward for DHS and interagency coordination in that it captures the absolutely crucial structures and processes we are now using to provide situational awareness and manage a spectrum of incidents. The NRF will help to formalize ongoing efforts of DHS that are intended to fulfill statutory requirements as well as national policy, and to work in conjunction with not only other Federal departments, but with our critical State, local and private sector homeland security partners as well. I believe it is equally important to state that the NRF will assist the

Department with the often difficult task of communicating how we define roles and responsibilities.

Overview of Katrina Lessons Learned: National Operations Center

Since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, DHS has undertaken a systematic effort to ensure that there are more robust and coordinated preparedness and response structures in place to deal with all manner of incidents. As my colleague related, FEMA has made significant modifications to their operations and processes. My office has also undergone enhancements in the past year as we continue to grow our capabilities and mature organizationally. The mission of the Office of Operations Coordination (OPS) is to integrate DHS and interagency planning and operations coordination in order to prevent, deter, protect, respond to and recover from terrorists threats/attacks or threats from other manmade or natural disasters.

We have taken the post-Katrina recommendations provided by the White House, Congress, the GAO, and others very seriously and are making enhancements to DHS operations. We appreciate the recommendations GAO has offered regarding DHS operations centers including (1) our collaborative practices, (2) the existence of major barriers to executing our mission, and (3) the importance of defining common outcomes and joint strategies. The conclusions within these reports contain a number of key recommendations that served as a foundation for several specific improvements to OPS, which are formalized by the NRF. These include the National Operations Center (NOC) and its five elements, the national information reporting system, and a Federal contingency planning process.

The White House's report on the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina recommended that a National Operations Center be established and that it act as a single information reporting system for all Departments and agencies. To that end, my office has made significant advances in many operational capabilities that directly enhance the Secretary's ability to carry out his responsibilities as established in the Homeland Security Act and HSPDs 5 and 8. The NOC, together with our interagency partners, is incrementally implementing a comprehensive national information reporting system. This system enables the NOC, in coordination with interagency partners, to provide excellent situational awareness for national leadership.

The NOC was officially established on May 25, 2006, with the approval of the NRP Notice of Change that linked together and integrated the functions and personnel of the multi-agency Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC), the Office of Intelligence and Analysis element of the HSOC, FEMA's National Response Coordination Center, Infrastructure Protection's National Infrastructure Coordination Center (NICC), and the NOC Planning Element. Furthermore, according to authorities granted by the Post Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, the NOC is the principal operations center for DHS and provides situational awareness and a common operating picture for the entire Federal government, and for State, local, and tribal governments as appropriate, in the event of a natural disaster, act of terrorism, or other man-made disaster. The NOC is

responsible for ensuring that critical terrorism and disaster-related information reaches government decision-makers. By performing its mission, the NOC enables the Secretary and other leaders to make informed decisions and identify courses of action during an event or threat

The NOC is the primary point of access for the Secretary and senior administration officials to domestic situational awareness relating to the prevention of terrorist attacks and incident management within the United States. In addition, the NOC serves as the primary National-level hub for domestic situational awareness, common operating picture, information fusion, information sharing, communications, and operations coordination pertaining to the prevention of terrorist attacks and domestic incident management.

Likewise, the NOC serves as the National Fusion Center and in collaboration with the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, fuses all source information to quickly determine if there is a terrorism nexus. It synthesizes reporting from State Fusion Centers, law enforcement, national intelligence, emergency response, and private sector organizations. The NOC also works to disseminate homeland security information to appropriate intelligence and law enforcement agencies, other homeland security partners, and senior Federal officials.

The major situational awareness tool of the NOC is the Common Operating Picture (COP). This real-time, web-based tool ties together key homeland security partners primarily at the Federal, State, and Joint Field Office levels. The COP has been available since its inception beginning with the 2006 Hurricane season. Several essential capabilities of the COP include are:

- Accessibility through the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN);
- Capability to share critical information among the inter-agency community;
- Inter-agency common operating database;
- Shared inter-agency understanding of the situation;
- Information integrity for reporting requirements and;
- Timely, risk mitigated decision making;

In addition, the COP enables access to functional screens that provide National and International Situation Summaries, Executive Actions, Requests for Information, the status of responders, chronology of key events, that status of critical infrastructure impacted by an event, maps and imagery, media monitoring products, streaming video from the field, functional metrics, and HSIN information.

As part of our incremental approach, we are advancing the COP capabilities from natural disasters to all hazards and all threats. Our “next steps” are intended to advance the COP capabilities from unclassified, hurricanes/natural disasters to classified, terrorist threats and incidents. We are currently focusing on the worst-case scenario for nuclear/radiological incidents and will use national exercises and real world events to validate and continue its development.

In February 2004, DHS developed the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) based upon the Joint Regional Information Exchange System (JRIES) used by the Department of Defense. HSIN is now used as the primary, secure nationwide network through which DHS receives and shares critical information, including alerts and warnings, with its components and its public- and private-sector partners, including Federal, State, local, and tribal officials and the owners and operators of critical infrastructure. HSIN allows these parties to communicate on suspicious activities, threats, and infrastructure vulnerabilities; prepare for and mitigate natural or man-made disasters; and collaborate on restoration and recovery efforts following a serious incident. The content on HSIN is administered by OPS, which makes the network available, free of charge, to a broad array of homeland security partners. The network is actively embraced by State and local fusion centers across the country, many of which have created their own customized portals. HSIN enables OPS to quickly and efficiently share information with a large number of users, at multiple levels of government, across the United States and with foreign partners.

Several reports concluded that DHS needed to address planning limitations at the National level, including the creation of a permanent planning body within the NOC. DHS addressed this recommendation through the creation of the NOC Planning Element which reports to me. The mission of the NOC Planning Element is to provide contingency and crisis-action incident management planning in support of the Secretary's national level domestic incident management responsibilities articulated in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 and HSPD-5. The NOC Planning Element is comprised of two components: (1) a core group of 15 full-time planning representatives from key DHS elements (e.g., TSA, CBP, I&A, FEMA, Coast Guard, and ICE)¹ as well as other key interagency members (i.e., DOD, DOJ, FBI, HHS, DOT, DOE, EPA) and the American Red Cross²; and (2) an "on-call" staff of 38 planners from DHS as well as the interagency.

The initial actions of this planning element have been focused on the development of Federal interagency strategic plans that address each of the 15 National Planning Scenarios. Each plan identifies the roles and responsibilities of individual departments and agencies in the event a given scenario were to occur. This planning process serves two distinct purposes: it facilitates the ability of the Secretary to fulfill his/her coordination responsibilities under Presidential Directive by providing awareness of the individual capabilities that a specific agency plans to deliver; and it also identifies existing seams and gaps that exist within the interagency planning efforts for a particular scenario.

Another recommendation identified the need for a Federal planning process to unify the efforts of planning that occurs across the interagency. DHS addressed this recommendation through its development of the National Planning and Execution System

¹ Transportation Security Administration, Customs and Border Patrol, DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the United States Coast Guard.

² Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Health and Human Services, Department of Transportation, Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.

(NPES) which is a five phase National level planning process developed to support the Secretary of Homeland Security in his role as the principal Federal official for domestic incident management.

Conclusion and the Way Ahead

In summary, DHS is committed to ensuring that all possible steps are being taken to address the various threats and incidents that can endanger our citizens. DHS will continue to work together with all partners across the homeland security spectrum, including Congress, to ensure the best policies, practices, processes, and technologies are integrated into the daily DHS operations framework.

The efforts I have described, such as the COP, are now part of the day to day operations of DHS, OPS, and the NOC. They allow for better information flow, situational awareness, national reporting, and unity of effort in relation to all-threats and all-hazards events. I believe that the importance of the NRF is that it will help illustrate these efforts and the lines of communication for multiple participants ranging from Federal departments and agencies to State and local governments as well as private sector and foreign partners. We will continually enhance these efforts by implementing lessons learned during real world events and exercises.

As you seek to learn more about DHS preparedness and response efforts, I invite the Subcommittee and staff to visit the NOC so we can provide you with a more detailed briefing about the full range of my Office's activities. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today and I look forward to answering your questions.