

Homeland Security

Irvin Varkonyi asks whether the current re-organisation programme underway at the US Department of Homeland Security is a significant step forward, or if the bureaucrats are just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic



A regular contributor to *Cargo Security International*, Irvin Varkonyi was a member of the DHS 2.0 Task Force. He is President of SCOPE Consulting, advising private and public sector organisations on collaborative preparedness models.

Surely no federal agency of the US Government has come under more scrutiny and more second-guessing than the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** since its creation less than three years ago. It was, some might say, a knee jerk reaction to the calls to do something after the horror of hi-jacked jet planes crashing into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon. Or as others say, it was about time to bring together more than 20 agencies which had more in common with each other than with the departments in which they were then housed.

In February 2005, a new DHS Secretary, Michael Chertoff, an established criminal justice administrator but without experience in managing more than a thousand subordinates and no track record in emergency management, took over the reins from the first Secretary, Tom Ridge, former Governor of Pennsylvania, US Congressman and US Marine. Chertoff was the second choice after Bernie Kerek, a former New York City Police Commissioner but without experience outside NYC.

Chertoff was in an excellent position to evaluate the fledgling DHS since he wasn't there at the creation. This process was called the 'Second Stage Review' (SSR), which was co-managed by Al Martinez-Fonts, the Private Sector Liaison within the DHS and Admiral Tim Sullivan, Senior Military Advisor to Chertoff. What follows is a description of some of the more critical and

'The US people's judgement on the success of the DHS organisation will probably be closely linked to how the DHS responds to the next large-scale disruption which takes place, whatever the cause of that disruption may be'

significant changes. It is noted that the changes being suggested require Congressional approval and thus politics will be a factor, as Congressmen consider how the suggested changes could benefit or hurt their individual districts.

The US public's perception of the DHS has recently been heavily influenced by the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina, which has essentially destroyed the city of New Orleans and much of the US Gulf Coast. The DHS and its components, most notably the **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**, are being widely criticised for critical delays in bringing relief supplies to thousands of stranded residents. Delays were also incurred in bringing in National Guard



troops to bring order to incredible chaos coming both from desperate residents as well as criminal elements taking advantage of the desperate plight of vulnerable people.

Chertoff issued a six-point agenda in July aimed at guiding the DHS in the near term and serving as the foundation for the re-organisation:

- increase overall preparedness, particularly for catastrophic events
- create better transportation security systems to move people and cargo securely and efficiently
- strengthen border security and interior enforcement and reform immigration process
- enhance information sharing with the DHS's partners
- improve financial management
- realign the DHS organisation to maximize mission performance.

What is the difference between the old and the new?

Let's look at some of the new goals set for the agency:

- centralise and improve policy development and coordination in a new Directorate of Policy.

Why? Policy was being decided in all 22 formerly disconnected agencies. Centralising policy would bring harmony to carrying out the DHS mission.

- strengthen intelligence functions and information sharing in a new Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

Why? The current Directorate of Information Analysis and Information Protection sought to protect the private sector's critical infrastructure, through information sharing and intelligence functions but it was plagued by technical policy problems. Cyber security is now elevated as a direct report to the DHS Secretary, a move long sought by the technology industry.

- improve coordination and efficiency of operations with a new Director of Operations

Coordination.

Why? To rectify the problem of inadequate internal operational coordination despite the oft-stated need for collaboration between the public and private sector. Agency operational collaboration was ineffectual.

- enhance coordination and deployment of preparedness assets in a new Directorate of Preparedness.

Consolidating preparedness across agencies would increase preparedness capabilities. It is here that the DHS intends to take away one of FEMA's main missions: to develop preparedness planning against natural disasters. The re-organisation seeks to set apart preparedness planning against all disruptions including natural disasters and terrorism. Chertoff decided that rather than improving collaboration and maintaining agency identity, preparedness functions would be consolidated and forced on everyone.

In July, Shaun Waterman, Homeland and National Security Editor for **United Press International (UPI)** made a point which has since taken on extra significance: 'The change that is likely to draw the most attention as the country braces itself for the annual hurricane season is that the department's Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate is being dismantled. FEMA currently makes up the bulk of the directorate, which will return to being a stand-alone entity within the department, with its own director, rather than the current undersecretary, reporting straight to Chertoff.'

Of course these changes have not yet taken place. Congress has heard testimony but recessed for August before approving or modifying Chertoff's SSR.

Certainly hindsight gives us 20/20 vision. On 13 July, *The Washington Post* described the changes proposed by Chertoff as 'a restructuring (which) could help the department better accomplish fundamental tasks such as protecting computer and financial networks, guiding local preparedness efforts, processing threat information and identifying key private sector vulnerabilities (to terrorism)'.

The DHS has told localities that in the event of a disaster, it would take the Federal Government 72-96 hours to respond. Thus

DHS decision makers

The current decision makers at the **Department of Homeland Security (DHS)** include:

Michael Chertoff, Secretary of DHS: Former Chief of Criminal Justice department, Department of Justice; has made management a top priority. He preaches the importance of balancing security with other values.

Michael Jackson, Deputy Secretary of DHS: essentially the Chief Operating Officer for DHS. Formerly Deputy Secretary of the Department of Transportation, Jackson launched the Government's first response to 9/11 by creating the **Transportation Security Administration (TSA)**.

Randy Beardsworth, Acting Undersecretary, Border and Transportation Security: responsible for aviation, rail, bus, and port and border security.

Janet Hale, Undersecretary for Management: struggles to loosen the grip which government unions have on approving personnel regulations.

Charles McQueary, Undersecretary for Science and Technology: oversees research and development wing of the DHS.

Admiral Tom Collins, Commandant, **US Coast Guard**: Reports directly to Chertoff.

Edmund Kip Hawley, TSA Administrator: A supply chain technology expert who helped set up the TSA. Experienced in air and rail cargo.

Brigadier General Matthew Broderick, Director of the **Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC)**: the HSOC monitors and responds to emergency and national security events. He retired after thirty years in the Marines.

we can conclude that the restructuring of the DHS and its mission to respond to protect the nation is principally geared toward protection against man-made disruptions such as terrorism. This was the political mandate accepted by the US Congress which must be followed in order to be re-elected to office.

How does the DHS SSR compare to the suggestions made by critics such as the **Heritage Foundation**? In a previous edition of this magazine I outlined the Foundation's recommendations in an article entitled *Winds of change* (see *Cargo Security International*, April/May 2005, page 50). The Foundation's recommendations were followed fairly closely:

- strengthen the Secretary with a centralised policymaking function
- establish a flatter organisation by consolidating and strengthening agencies with overlapping missions

- rationalise government spending by establishing a risk-based mechanism for department wide resource allocation

- clarify authorities and national leadership roles

- improve department oversight by rationalising the congressional committee structure.

All of the above were incorporated to some degree or another. Yet the events of Hurricane Katrina may lead some to question whether the DHS has the capabilities to re-organise itself, with its current group of decision-makers (see the 'DHS decision makers' panel on page 63). It is true that public perception is also fickle, demanding to be protected but not necessarily taking government warnings seriously, such as evacuating areas about to be hit by massive hurricanes. Finally, it has also become apparent that the general

public and the government seem to not have anticipated socio-economic conditions which will foil any preparedness plans. The nation discovered this when the poor, the elderly and the infirm struggled to evacuate New Orleans. It seems the government didn't allocate the resources to take care of this in a timely fashion.

The US people's judgement on the success of the DHS organisation will probably be closely linked to how the DHS responds to the next large-scale disruption which takes place, whatever the cause of that disruption may be.

Contact:

Irvin Varkonyi
 Tel: +1 703 863 9686
 Fax: +1 703 503 5685
 Email: ivarkonyi@scopedu.com

Cargo Security International

A unique source of intelligence on intermodal cargo security

Cargo Security International is read by thousands of transport, cargo and security professionals, and by governments, legislators and military experts in more than 40 countries. Why? Because it is the **ONLY** magazine that covers all modes of transportation – air, rail, road and maritime – with such a sharp focus on security.

The magazine is fully supported by the highly active 24/7 internet news and archive service, www.cargosecurityinternational.com, a wholly reliable source of information on all new security-related commercial and governmental initiatives around the world.

Subscribe today and find out more by visiting www.cargosecurityinternational.com

Be aware, be prepared, be involved

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

