

Interview Summary Form

Interview Details

Interviewee Name:	CAPT Brian Kelley	Date:	8/30/10	Time:	1:00pm
Interviewee Title:	Planning Section Chief, UAC	Interviewee Job Location:	USCG HQ		
Interviewer Name(s):	Team	Interview Location:	Washington, DC		

Interview Questions

Initial Question 1: What was your job/role and how did it evolve (if at all) during the DWH Incident?

	Question 1:	What was the role of the NRC?
Focus Area: Information Management	Question 2:	<p>What was the system that was in place to handle information management, both initially and eventually?</p> <p>Did you see instances of requests for information outside the established chain of command (i.e., the NIC)? Any examples?</p> <p>Did you ever have to stray outside the chain of command to get the information that you needed?</p> <p>If unsure of the fidelity of the information, how did you vet it before pushing it up the chain?</p> <p>How did you deal with feeding the beast in a timely manner and pushing approved information up to the NIC?</p>
Focus Area: UAC-ICPs	Question 3:	<p>Given that at the UAC level there isn't an operations section, how did the planning process work?</p> <p>How did you integrate information from all of the ICPs?</p>
Focus Area: UAC	Question 4:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who was in charge, and what was your interaction with the local ICPs? 2. What was the level of training of those in the UAC? (UAC vs. ICS training) 3. What was considered in the decision to make an operational group at the UAC?
Focus Area: External Communications	Question 5:	You identified that one of the focus areas that you could talk about was external communications. Given your role at Situation Unit and the Planning Section, could you discuss your role related to external communications?
Focus Area: Dispersants	Question 6:	Did you have a BP counterpart in either of your roles?
Focus Area: UAC	Question 7:	What were the elements included in the Area Command Operating Guide? What is its relationship to each ICP's IAP?
Focus Area: Lessons learned	Question 8:	Did you have access to lessons learned from prior incidents and exercises like SONS 10?
Final Question 1:		What were the top 2 "best practice(s)" during this incident, from your perspective?
Final Question 2:		What do you assess to be the top 2 "areas needing improvement" (or downright "failures") from your perspective, and do you have any related recommendations regarding these areas?
Final Question 3:		Is there anything else we should know?
Final Question 4:		Who else should we interview?

What was your job/role and how did it evolve (if at all) during the DWH Incident?

- I was the deputy commander of the Personnel Support Center when the incident occurred.
- Once it went from a local D8 incident to a major, district-spanning event, the PSC surge support branch started working to provide forces.
- I was down range from June 1 through July 7. My role started as Deputy Area Commander for Processes. This was a new position that came about as the incident evolved. We wanted to ensure that we were tied into NIMS. EMS coached us through the ICS nuances. Since this was such a diverse operation, we were constantly changing to meet the demands of the response. I also served as the Coast Guard Chief of Staff at the UAC. After the UAC moved from Robert to N.O., I served as the Planning Section Chief, which I did it for 10 days. When I left, I was replaced by two people, USCG Chief of Staff and Planning Section Chief.

Are you aware of the role the NRC played during this response?

- No. Based on my previous assignment as CG Command Center Chief, I would assume though that they were involved in the reporting (coordination/communication) process by relaying updates to the NRT.

Was there a particular information management system? Were there any instances when someone went around the Chain of Command to get information?

- Both inside and outside the beltway, Information is operations. Politics has become operations.
- For example, I am in all these UAC alert distribution lists. Even today, I am still on these legacy email lists coming out of the UAC.
- The UAC Situation Unit would send out near real-time information to key leadership so that they have situational awareness.
- It was a continual battle to beat CNN on the stories of the day. But we didn't have resources to do it, even though we tried. Similarly, you don't see CNN recanting stories, even if they were wrong. But we had to be right the first time and to be as timely as possible.
- We grew into the information management system we used over time. We definitely learned along the way.
- The structure did not always eliminate people from circumventing the chain of command. People did go around the system.
- There is a perceived need to know and a perceived needing to know information immediately. Both this perceived need to know and perceived urgency is something that impacts information flow. For example, high-level individuals would come through the UAC on tours. We would hand out business cards and that was perceived as an open invitation to contact those individuals directly, rather than going through the proper chain of command.
- What we ended up doing, we would answer the question these individuals posed to us directly, but we made sure that we kept the rest of the chain of command advised of what we said so that they had visibility.
- ADM Neffinger is the person to ask question about information flow/information management.
- We were definitely in information triage mode. Not only was it difficult to manage the quantity, but also the desire to get an answer to a question almost immediately.
- I literally would get 1000's of email a day. It became impossible to even read all of them. How did I triage my email? I figured if it was important, whoever those individuals were, they would call me.
- Eventually, I learned to set rules in Outlook. If I was in the cc line, the email got sent to a separate folder. I also made a rule that it would flag direct emails sent only to me.

Did you have people calling individuals in the UAC directly rather than waiting for their request to filter through the chain of command?

- We struggled with all of the reports that we were being asked to provide. I counted 32 required reports. Most of these reports were very parochial in that they dealt with a very narrow aspect of the response. The biggest problem with these reports is that we had reports leaving for different people at different times of the day and each had their own requirements. The recipients thought that the reports were reflective of entire UAC, but really they were only reflective of what the person writing the report was able to gather. Eventually,

what we did was that we got everyone together and decided that we were going to one report. The single, daily report, which was named the "Response at a Glance," was designed for DHS and WH. An individual from BP came up with this idea. We transitioned to this single report process over the 4th of July weekend. Initially, there was a lot of resistance. But we learned to tell people no and directed them to this report. We are now creating an online repository for all this information so there is an archive of all these reports that could be searched. Eventually, this was going to be loaded to HSIN with read capability so folks can look at it.

- Going to one report helped feed the beast. The hardest thing was providing the beast with something they liked. Early on, we took the time to figure out what was most important and establish a well-defined data set that focused on only the things that mattered to the principal readers, DHS and the White House.
- When we went to one report, the problems associated with different numbers started to go away. The problem that we kept running into was that there were folks who wanted to look at data one way and another group that wanted to look at it from another perspective. For example, one group wanted to show what we had done in terms of beach cleaned, whereas others wanted to know which beaches still had to be cleaned.

How did the planning process work in the UAC?

- We never completed the planning P cycle of meetings in the beginning of my tour. Towards the end of my tour, we were executing better, but I don't think we ended up getting there all the way in terms of holding all of the meetings. That said, I don't think that it had a detrimental impact to the response because we didn't have an operations section. We did focus a lot of our energy on setting priorities and that is what we focused on.

Should the IMH be changed to reflect this spill?

- Yes. I don't think we had contemplated something this large and that could release oil for this long.

What do you think about the UAC having an Operations section?

- We had a lot of philosophical discussions in the UAC. We decided to stick to the book, the IMH. It was on the fringes of the doctrine where we started to stray. For example, aircraft control, control of CG cutters. In my opinion, there wasn't a compelling need to have an operations section in the UAC.

You identified that one of the focus areas that you could talk about was external communications. Given your role in the Planning Section, could you discuss your role related to external communications?

- Requests came through the Situation Unit. When we moved from Robert, which wasn't an ideal set-up, to New Orleans, the new floor plan was well thought out and the Situation Unit and the public affairs folks were more closely linked. This was an exercise in relationships. Everyone knew who would give you good information. People did have a tendency to go straight to the person that they knew and those that they thought would give them the correct information.

How do you fight the process vs. the person you know?

- We have such a great ability to communicate at this point in time. Relationships within the organization were based on trust. As the organization grew and evolved, those relationships solidified. However, the Coast Guard had a big personnel turnover while I was there. Once that turnover happened, it took a few weeks until we all understood our new roles and we were able to really "gel".
- We used group meetings to ensure everyone had the same information, and then initiated the blast emails to get important information out.

How did the UAC sync up information with the ICPs?

- The UAC had a weekly IAP. The UAC set objectives and worked to sync with the ICPs. Paper, generally, was cumbersome. Paper was coming from everywhere. All of the paper reports were a legacy of ICS. We

had everything electronically, but often the system would crash. In the UAC, we needed a better way to display the information. We needed a way to post information and put it up on a board so people understood what was going on. We started putting up critical resource reports for boom, people, etc. so everyone had a general sense what was going on and that people in the UAC were able to better focus on what the UAC was there to do.

Were you in direct contract with the NSFCC?

- Only if they requested a specific resource. They were more of a force provider.

Did you have access to lessons learned from prior incidents and exercises like SONS 10?

- Personally, yes. Coming from my previous job, in my suite of things I had to do, I was responsible for the CG LL system. First thing I did was to look at Katrina Lessons Learned, let's see what we can do to repeat the mistakes of the past. One was surging people to the response. During Katrina, everyone showed up, even people who weren't ordered-reservists, civilians, auxiliary. This was a much more disciplined approach. Commanders submitted requests and the UAC was able to broker them.
- While I was there, we were surging everything we could, and were not scrutinizing requirements. If an IAP had a request, we worked to get the correct number/qualified personnel requested.
- Later when operations started to stabilize, we required requests for forces that identified the requirements. We did not accept "I need an O-4." We pushed back and required them to submit something more like "I need a person with environmental background, capable of briefing senior officials", which gave us some guidelines for selecting specific personnel.

Was there a formalization to let people know about LL from previous exercises or incidents?

- It is up to the individual to go and get it them-there isn't a formal organizational process to relook at lessons learned during a response.
- We need to do better than just capturing lessons learned. We need the discipline to check the old lessons learned early on so we can course correct response operations as they are happening.

Discuss your interaction with the ICPs and decisions related to tactical operations?

- There is no question that the UAC was in charge, and there was no question that tactical decisions were made at the ICPs. Communications flow was to go to your counterpart at the ICP. Familiarity, knew people, anything sensitive, felt empowered to make that call. We had 8 near misses with aircraft. We knew that we needed to do a better job to coordinate this. So we pulled air ops from the Houma ICP. There was capacity and capability at Tindale AFB. Going forward, I think when air operations get too big, it should be pulled out of ICP. In this case, air operations moved from a logistical support role to a much more tactical, active response role (i.e., using aircraft to find and spot oil directing the skimmers to the correct locations, etc.)

Are there any other specialized tasks that need to be separate or outside the management of the ICP?

- If you have something that goes beyond the geographical boundaries of an ICP's AOR, but don't have awareness of the entire area, it is difficult to do.
- There was also the "if I have it, I own it" mentality.
- We also had issues with fisheries closures and openings, medical transport, etc.

Were any ICS forms entered into ERMA?

- Not initially. Before we established ERMA as the COP, we started to build an awareness of the reports by having them roll through on the big screen in the UAC.
- ICPs gave their reports to the UAC. ICPs reports were being mined at the UAC for data to put into ERMA.

We've heard a lot of complaints that the decisions were made at too high of a level. Were a lot of decisions being made too high in the response organization?

- When you got to the local level, they were concerned about their locality and clearly lacked the big picture. We didn't have enough to cover everyone's need, so we had to broker resources. Complaints included: "where's my boom? Where's my skimmers?" Decisions needed to be made at a higher level, and the locals didn't understand that. To answer their concerns, we became much more responsive by assigning senior USCG officer to be merged at the hip with the Parish Presidents, but they got used to that level of access. In some cases, individuals in these localities became abusive to CG personnel. Political posturing became more important than the oil spill response. People were disrespectful of CG officials and politicians were disrespectful to senior CG officers. This happened at every level of government.

How were you able (or unable) to coordinate planning with the state/local levels?

- We received a lot of state criticism, but we tried to identify state representatives to speak for the Governor to come in as needed or to be there all the time, to represent the state's interest when allocating resources, etc. This provided an ability to coordinate better with the states.
- Said that if a State representative was there, we wanted confirmation that they would be able to speak for the Governor. I never had a problem or need for them to speak for the Governor. But just having access builds confidence. It showed that we had nothing to hide.

ICPs were using IAP software. Was the UAC also using IAP software? Was that helpful?

- Yes, we were using it and it was helpful. We generated reports from the software a lot. It was helpful.

Related to long-term sustainability, discuss the CG system any suggestions to improve this system you have?

- I would love to have a system that has all members (CG auxiliaries, reservists, civilians, officers, etc.) This would allow for easy selection when you have specific requirements to meet. It would be good to have a system to support surge staffing decisions.
- When I was in Baltimore, we organized our command based on the watch – if had to go to general quarters, everyone knew where they had to go. Organized everyone into incident types, what position in ICS they would have to fill. It then became each person's responsibility to ensure they had the proper training to fill their assigned role if there was an incident

Boom became the measure of the "success" of the response. Who decided that would be the metric for the success of the response?

- Politicians or senior leaders from the states. They thought that was what they needed to keep the oil out. They didn't understand that more boom wasn't better (i.e., we could place all the boom in the world and oil would still reach the beaches or marshes.)

Was it difficult to educate principals on boom and its availability?

- I am not aware if anyone briefed the Governors.
- I don't believe any education or briefing would have made a difference. It became the "big" issue and it was easy to bash us on it.

Was it difficult to educate principals on skimmers and its availability?

- When it became important to have skimmers, it was great to have the support of many states in sending skimmers down to help (given that they were doing this at their own risk). I hope when this all flushes out, that those States get the credit that they deserve for taking on risk that they didn't have to.

Was the VOO Program successful in actual collection of the oil?

- We were able to get two things done by using the VOOs: 1) it gave people a source of income that wasn't a handout. In a sense, it allowed them to be a productive, contributing member of the response; 2) we didn't have the resources to place all of the boom and the VOOs were able to help in that regard.

- The VOO Program got grief early on, because boats would sign up, and then didn't have work (because we didn't have work at that time). I think the VOO program ended up working well overall. If you have the capability, you need to use it, but there needs to have a degree of discipline included in the program.

What was the top “best practice” during this incident, from your perspective?

- We were very adaptable. Though we didn't do it right all the time, when we saw an opportunity to change, we changed. There was a lot of empowerment – a “get'r done mentality.” We relied on principles of CG to get things done.

What do you assess to be the top “area needing improvement” (or downright “failure”) from your perspective, and do you have any related recommendations regarding this area?

- Access to information breeds contempt. The degree of influence that many people had became cumbersome. We had to triage information. I would leave my desk to go to a planning meeting and have 300 emails from the hour while I was gone. It became hard to get anything done. There was no discipline in the flow of information.
 - Many voices, 1 message helped, but it was still a problem.
 - Folks just want real.

Having commands both ashore and afloat, is there anything else from your perspective we should know?

- When the CG went to sector commands, that was the right thing to do. Having the entire mission suite under one command is the right thing. We are capable of in-house surging.
- There is clearly a need for all CG missions. We need to have specialists, but when something comes up, everyone has a contribution to the fight and should be cross-trained. In my sector command, we had cuttermen performing ICS functions that had nothing to do with being a cutterman.