

Department of Defense (DoD) Liaison to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Purpose

This joint position orchestrates collaboration between the DoD and the CDC in order to protect lives and promote both agencies' global missions through their shared equities. It operates independently, at-large and directly with offices and leadership throughout both agencies.

Background

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the subsequent anthrax letter mailings later that same year highlighted the need for close and regular coordination between the DoD and the CDC. Consequently, the position of DoD Liaison to the CDC was created in 2003 by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (ASD/HA), Dr. William Winkenwerder, and the CDC Director, Dr. Julie Gerberding. Justification and implementation of the DoD Liaison position was based on the Presidential Decision Directive on Emerging Infectious Diseases (PDD/NSTC-7) and the need for greater connectivity between these two agencies across their global missions.

All three Services have filled this joint liaison role: Col Don Noah, DVM, US Air Force, served as the first DoD Liaison from May 2003 through December 2006. COL Ted Cieslak, MD, US Army, served from December 2006 through July 2010. CAPT Jesse Geibe, MD, MPH, MBA, US Navy, served from September 2010 through November 2014. CAPT Eric Sergienko, MD, MPH, US Navy, served November 2014 through August 2016. The current DoD Liaison is CDR Eric Deussing, MD, MPH, US Navy.

Key Activities

General Advisory Capacity: The DoD Liaison serves as the at-large advisor on capabilities of the US military and facilitates coordination between the DoD and CDC on issues of mutual interest and responsibility. In this role, ongoing information is shared between the offices of the CDC Director, ASD/HA, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations/Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD/SOLIC), Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs (ASD/NCB), Joint Staff, Combatant Commands, DHA and the Services. The DoD Liaison is the only at-large liaison between these two agencies; as a result, the DoD Liaison is often required to provide his or her unique perspective and regularly 'translate' nuanced messages, priorities and concerns between the two agencies. This regular shuttle diplomacy occurs bilaterally across the entire interagency surface area and encompasses the diverse mission portfolios.

Combatant Commands and Global Health Security: The DoD Liaison fosters collaboration on various projects related to Global Health Security, disease surveillance and outbreak response between the CDC, Joint Staff and the Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs). Ongoing efforts include linking CDC programs to GCC planning, exercise integration and placement of

LNOs. The goal is to enhance complementary work through a regional approach, working through partner nation ministries of defense and ministries of health.

Public Health Emergency Operations: The DoD Liaison represents the military within CDC's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), providing a critical link to DoD assets and expertise during public health emergencies, and improving civilian/military integration. The DoD Liaison facilitates information exchange, requests for assistance and response coordination between the two agencies. Past responses which the DoD Liaison has participated in include: H1N1 influenza pandemic, Haiti earthquake and subsequent cholera outbreak, Japan earthquake with resulting radiation concerns, Northern Germany E. coli outbreak, multistate outbreak of fungal meningitis, Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in the Republic of Korea, Ebola 2014 response, Zika 2016 response and global Polio eradication. Moreover, the DoD Liaison serves as "Lead Liaison Officer" within the EOC, working closely with representatives of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the American Red Cross (ARC). In addition, the DoD Liaison facilitates the DoD Public Health emergency Management (PHEM) course for Public Health Emergency Officers (PHEOs) and Medical Treatment Facility Emergency Managers (MEMs), providing introductory and refresher training to DoD PHEOs and MEMs.

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) Defense: Both CDC and DoD have significant responsibilities for counterterrorism planning and CBRN defense. The DoD Liaison helps to coordinate such efforts as needed and works closely with ASD/NCB and Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). The DoD Liaison participates in related exercises and meetings hosted by both CDC and DoD in order to support coordinated USG preparedness and response to CBRN threats. Additionally, the DoD Liaison works with CDC CBRN experts to help plan and participate in DoD led events. Furthermore, the DoD liaison works closely with liaisons between CDC and DTRA to synchronize their overall efforts.

Pandemic Influenza Planning: The DoD Liaison holds a lead role through the office of the ASD/HA for pandemic and influenza issues, and represents the DoD at weekly CDC influenza and pandemic preparedness strategy meetings. In accordance with the National Strategy for Pandemic Influenza, each cabinet-level Department has drafted agency specific preparedness and response guidance. The DoD Liaison provides comments and recommendations for both the DoD and CDC operational plans and facilitates mutual coordination throughout the planning process. Additionally, the DoD Liaison assists GCCs and Services in integrating their pandemic and infectious disease plans with the CDC's plan through CDC expert review. The DoD Liaison also facilitates communication lines between the two agencies on medical countermeasure and personal protective equipment issues related to pandemic preparedness.

Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP): The DoD Liaison holds the DoD ex-officio seat on this committee (and participates with its relevant work groups), which makes immunization policy for the nation. The DoD Liaison also connects DoD experts with ACIP work groups and meetings to ensure DoD equities are well represented in ongoing policy and planning discussions.

Clinical and Public Health Outreach: Each day, CDC receives dozens of inquiries from clinicians, public health officials and the public. Many of these originate from military sources (including a large number from deployed personnel, dependents or family members) or concern military matters. The DoD Liaison fields these inquiries from CDC's Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity (COCA), as well as other telephonic and web-based public service programs, thereby providing an opportunity for uniformity of message between CDC and DoD. Examples of topics of interest include influenza, tuberculosis, rabies, dengue fever, Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), malaria, vaccine adverse events (e.g., smallpox), vaccine policy and availability and toxic exposures. Additionally, the DoD Liaison is often asked to speak to both military and civilian audiences on public health topics and the interface between the DoD and CDC in the public health mission space.

CDC's Office of Public Health Preparedness and Response (OPHPR) Board of Scientific Counselors (BSC): The DoD Liaison serves as the alternate DoD representative on this Board, as well as the Office of Infectious Disease (OID) BSC. The BSCs are advisory panels made up of experts, external to CDC, who advise on CDC's priorities, programs and challenges.

Hosting of Official Visitors: Due to the global scope of its mission, CDC is a frequent host to military medical and public health officials. The DoD Liaison helps to coordinate these visits (e.g., ASD/HA, Service Surgeon Generals, Joint Staff Surgeon, US Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID), Combatant Command Surgeons, USG Health Attachés).

At-Large Connectivity: Below is a representative, though not comprehensive, list of areas which the DoD Liaison facilitates connectivity.

- **Laboratory Response Network (LRN):** The DoD Liaison helps coordinate biosurveillance collaborative efforts between CDC and DoD. DoD has many laboratories which participate in CDC's LRN (2 of the 3 National labs, 20+ reference labs, and 92 sentinel labs). There is an ongoing effort to link LRN labs, as well as DoD veterinary labs, into a more standardized, coordinated organization within the USG.
- **Overseas Military Laboratory Collaboration with CDC:** The DoD Liaison assists with fostering collaboration between CDC and the NAMRUs and laboratories in Egypt/Italy, Ghana, Singapore/Cambodia and Peru, as well as with the Army laboratories in Thailand and Kenya. These efforts have included placement of CDC researchers at these DoD labs as well as coordination on disease-specific issues across the two agencies.
- **Global Emerging Infectious Disease Surveillance (GEIS) Program:** The DoD Liaison has been instrumental in weaving together CDC and DoD-GEIS surveillance efforts with GCC priorities. These activities have included: bringing CDC SMEs to GEIS hosted surveillance strategy meetings at GCCs, coordinating CDC proposal submission for GEIS funding and placing CDC SMEs on GEIS steering committees. Additionally, the DoD Liaison hosts GEIS leadership at CDC to facilitate dialogue on disease-specific issues.
- **ASD/NCB and DTRA Collaborative CDC Projects:** The DoD Liaison has been involved in assisting with and coordinating communication between the CDC and DoD on

collaborative ASD/NCB and DTRA related projects. Examples include expanding GHS pilot programs in Uganda and Vietnam, as well as establishing a BSL-3 laboratory in the Republic of Georgia.

- **Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Connectivity:** Though the SNS program has recently moved from CDC to the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR/HHS). The DoD Liaison assists at a tactical level, addressing questions and issues surrounding SNS connectivity between HHS and the DoD. Points of Dispensing (PODs), Receipt and Storage Sites (RSS) and DoD access to SNS materials continue to be important DoD issues.
- **Select Agent Program and National Interagency Biodefense Campus (NIBC):** The DoD Liaison serves as a point of contact between DoD and CDC on issues regarding select agents. The DoD liaison communicates with CDC regarding oversight of DoD select agent programs, and facilitates communication with CDC's Division of Select Agents and Toxins (DSAT) and Environmental Microbiology Working Group. This effort principally includes USAMRIID and the NIBC. CDC regulates use of select agents by laboratories throughout the US, including DoD labs. USAMRIID, US Army Medical Research Institute of Chemical Defense (USAMRICD), and Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR) are the three largest DoD users of select agents, and the DoD Liaison helps maintain their lines of communication with the CDC.
- **Containment Care and Transport/Repatriation:** The DoD Liaison assists with overarching Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) which will set forth the conditions under which CDC, DoD, Emory University, NIH, and the University of Nebraska will collaborate and provide mutual support for transport and treatment of contaminated patients (with BSL-3 and 4 type agents). High-level containment care consists of transportation and hospitalization. Only three such hospitalization facilities exist in the US (two beds at Emory, five beds at NIH and 10 beds at University of Nebraska).
- **DoD Participation in Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS):** The DoD Liaison meets with the DoD tri-service EIS Officers to discuss the program, as well as attends and briefs at the weekly Tuesday conference when appropriate. The DoD has provided input into CDC's EIS program, averaging 1.5 'starts' per year over the past decade, with the vast majority of those coming from the Air Force.
- **Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI):** The DoD Liaison facilitates on issues related to STIs. DoD has conducted STI research for many years, as has the CDC, which makes this a fruitful area for collaborative work.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases and Behavioral Health:** The DoD Liaison facilitates communication and coordination to address various issues of mutual interest on healthy lifestyle issues including: tobacco cessation, alcohol issues, obesity and suicide. This principally involves subject matter exchanges and use of CDC data repositories by DoD researchers and public health leaders.

- **Environmental Health:** The DoD Liaison has worked to link DoD and CDC's Center for Environmental Health on issues ranging from PFOA/PFOS on bases to cancer clusters and asbestos exposures. These activities have included site visits, expert consultations and coordination of policy and congressional queries.