

STATEMENT OF
PETER BOYNTON, DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
PRE-DESIGNATED DEPUTY REGIONAL PRINCIPAL FEDERAL OFFICIAL FOR PANDEMIC
INFLUENZA REGION A
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS, CYBERSECURITY, AND SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY
JULY 22, 2008

Good morning, Chairman Langevin, Ranking Member McCaul, and Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Committee to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's role in a Pandemic Influenza outbreak. I am Peter Boynton, and I currently serve as a Federal Security Director for the Transportation Security Administration. I am also the Deputy Regional Principal Federal Official for the northeast region (termed "Region A") of the United States in the event of a Pandemic or biological event.

I am here today on behalf of Regional Principal Federal Official Rear Admiral (Retired) George Naccara, who was pre-designated by Secretary Chertoff in December 2006 to serve as the Regional PFO for these issues. Region A encompasses FEMA Regions I and II, which is all of New England, New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

To begin, I would like to take a few moments to review some basic facts about pandemics and their potential impacts on our nation. Pandemic influenza occurs when a novel strain of influenza virus emerges that has the ability to infect humans and to cause severe disease, and when efficient and sustained transmission between humans occurs. This scenario creates unique challenges. Unlike other incidents, a pandemic is not a singular event, but is likely to come in waves, each lasting weeks or months, passing through communities of all sizes across the nation and the world simultaneously

making mutual aid difficult if not impossible. The complete event may last as long as 18 months. Based on projections from prior pandemics, an influenza pandemic could result in 200,000 to 2 million deaths in the United States, depending on its severity. Further, an influenza pandemic could have major impacts on society and the economy, including our nation's critical infrastructure and key resources, as many of our nation's workforce could be absent for extended periods of time, either sick themselves or caring for loved ones at home.

Under the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5, in order to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from terrorist attacks, major disasters, and other emergencies, the United States Government has established a single, comprehensive approach to domestic incident management, with the Secretary of Homeland Security designated as the Principal Federal Official for domestic incident management.

Understanding the complex effects resulting from a Pandemic, in December 2006, the Secretary pre-designated Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, of the U.S. Coast Guard, as the National Principal Federal Official, and five Regional Principal Federal Officials to assist States, local and tribal governments by overseeing a coordinated federal response. Five "Pandemic" regions were established by the Secretary in order to create a manageable span of control. Each region consists of two FEMA regions combined into one "Pandemic" region. In March 2008, the Secretary issued an updated pre-designation of PFOs letter to the States and to each federal department/agency. This letter expanded the role of the Principal Federal Officials for Pandemic Influenza to include other similar nationwide biological events. Also, with the anticipation that Joint Field Offices in each of the standard federal regions would be established in a Pandemic or other similar nationwide biological event, the Secretary pre-designated two Deputy Regional Principal Federal Officials to assist each of the five Regional Principal Federal Officials.

The Principal Federal Officials serve as the Secretary's representatives to ensure consistency of Federal support as well as the overall effectiveness of the Federal incident management. The PFOs would identify and present to the Homeland Security Secretary, in coordination with the DHS Office of Policy and the Office of Health Affairs, any policy issues that require resolution. The PFOs promote collaboration and as much as possible resolve any Federal interagency conflicts that may arise at the operational level. The PFOs serve as part of a Unified Coordination Group at a Joint Field Office.

Since the initial pre-designation in December 2006, we have received great cooperation from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Defense, and components within the Department of Homeland Security by the pre-designation of Senior Officials, Defense Coordinating Officers, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officers, and DHS/Infrastructure Protection Liaisons for Pandemic Influenza and other similar nationwide biological events. Pandemic/Biological Threat PFO Teams have been created, so these participating federal agencies/departments may work together now before the catastrophic event may occur as well as to conduct outreach to States, local and tribal governments and the private sector. Each of the five Regional PFO teams would be comprised of the same members in a Unified Coordination Group described in the National Response Framework. However, by working together before a Pandemic or biological threat occurs, these PFO teams have forged professional relationships, and an understanding of each of their key roles and responsibilities. In fact, our PFO cell and the FEMA Regional Administrator met with the Governor of Rhode Island and his senior staff last fall; coincidentally in our parallel role of PFO for hurricanes, we exercised with the Governor and staff and held a mock press event with the Governor and with Chairman Langevin during the hurricane exercise in April of 2007. Also, the States, private sector, local and tribal

governments will have familiarity of these key federal government officials prior to a catastrophic event.

Since the initial December 2006 pre-designation, the PFO teams have performed a myriad of training, exercise, and outreach activities. Activities have included the following: Pandemic PFO training in February 2007; PFO Orientation in January 2007; meetings with State governors, and State officials in both public health and emergency management operations; exercise with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in their Pandemic Influenza activities; participation in the National Governors Association Pandemic Influenza Workshops; participation in the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers (ASTHO) Pandemic Influenza Table Top Exercises; participation in an internal PFO Team Exercise Workshop in November 2007; and participation in the Assistant-Secretary Principal Level Exercise at the White House in February 2008. In December 2007, Region A with great support from FEMA Regions I and II held a regional Pandemic Influenza exercise whereby a Regional Joint Field Office was established in Maynard, Massachusetts and the Region A States stood up their Emergency Operations Centers. In April 2008 and May 2008, Region C under Mr. Edward Buikema, the Regional PFO, hosted two Pandemic Influenza summits in Chicago, Illinois and Denver, Colorado, respectively, with invitations to the States in Region C to participate. Both events included a tabletop exercise sponsored by the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

Both the national and five regional PFO teams will continue to conduct training, outreach, and exercise activities. In September 2008, Region B PFO and Vice Admiral Crea will participate in a CDC Pandemic Influenza Tabletop Exercise. In late October 2008, the Department of Homeland Security will conduct an intra-departmental exercise with participation from the pre-designated PFOs, the Office of Health Affairs, FEMA Federal Coordinating Officers, and DHS/Infrastructure Protection

Liaisons. Finally, the Homeland Security Secretary recently requested the Attorney General pre-designate a national and five regional Senior Federal Law Enforcement Officers to join our respective teams.

In closing, many of these accomplishments can be incorporated into an all-hazards framework to promote the national culture of preparedness, effective outreach and partnering. DHS, through this PFO framework will continue to surface State and local issues to policy officials at headquarters for resolution, to foster and improve upon the partnership with the federal interagency, state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector stakeholders to complete the work of pandemic and biological threat preparedness, to promote the culture of preparedness in general and to further the nation's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all-hazards.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security on these issues of critical importance to our nation's security and well-being. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.