Homeland Security

Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness

FY 2005

ICTAP Bulletin

Connecting First Responders, Keeping America Safe

SLGCP Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) provides on-site, comprehensive interoperability technical assistance to DHS grant recipients.

The Interoperable Communications Technical Assistance Program (ICTAP) provides free technical assistance to enhance interoperable communications between local, State, and Federal emergency responders and public safety officials to cities and States that have received grants from the Department of Homeland Security, Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness (SLGCP)

February Highlights

- ICTAP provides operational, on-site technical assistance for the new DHS requirement to develop a Tactical Interoperability Plan. FY05 UASI grantees must have a plan for tactical interoperability by September, 2005 and have exercised that plan within the year following.

- Miami – ICTAP demonstration of the Communications Asset Surveying (CAS) and Communications Asset Mapping (CAM) tools is enthusiastically received. The region would like to roll the tools out to all dispatch centers—the largest application of the tools to date.

- Kansas City – Releases an RFP for RAMBIS, a regional interoperability system. ICTAP supported this RFP with feasibility studies in 2004, and in 2005, will support the release of the RFP and evaluation of vendor proposals.

- Baton Rouge – Interoperability Committee praises ICTAP for good engineering work on coverage maps generated with available data.

- Denver– ICTAP holds a highly successful tabletop exercise to identify interoperability gaps. The tabletop provided good information and validation of gaps and possible solutions for this UASI site.

- Hawaii – ICTAP completes design for Federal Building, Honolulu Municipal Building, and the Honolulu Police Department to provide direct interoperability connections between local, State, and Federal agencies, including military organizations like the Regional Operations Command and Control Center (ROCCC) and the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG).

- Oakland – Holds tabletop exercise in February, with a quick look report available in early March. The exercise was a great success with over 100 participants and observers.

Tactical Operability Goals

By September 30, 2005, FY05 UASI grantees must develop a plan to achieve tactical interoperability. Grantees must test the plan within one year as part of the cycle of multi-jurisdictional exercise activities required for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Improvised Explosive Device (IED) scenario.

What is tactical interoperability?

For the purposes of this DHS requirement, tactical interoperable communication is defined as the rapid provision of on-scene, incident-based, mission-critical voice communications among all first responder (EMS, fire, and law enforcement) agencies, structured within the National Incident Management System (NIMS) model. Tactical interoperable communications must be rapidly deployable at any time and should be fully operational within an hour of an incident.

How can sites achieve tactical interoperability?

Jurisdictions can achieve tactical interoperable communications through common equipment such as common radio channels, cached radios, or shared systems; through the use of gateways between dissimilar systems and/ or radio frequency bands; and through fixed and/or mobile/ portable solutions. To achieve true tactical interoperability, the technical solution is only the first step. Proper training and regular exercises are critical to the implementation of a successful interoperability solution. Staff to support equipment deployment must be trained as Communications Unit Leaders, as defined within the NIMS. Responders should use equipment on a regular basis, train on communications-specific procedures, and follow documented interoperability plans and standard operating procedures used regularly for incident response.

What technical assistance is available for achieving tactical interoperability?

ICTAP can assist in developing and reviewing the technical content and operational procedures for Tactical Interoperable Communications Plans, as well as facilitating meetings. Once the plan is developed, ICTAP can assist by providing a baseline assessment of current interoperability capabilities and communications infrastructure through the use of the Communications Asset Surveying (CAS) and Communication Assets Mapping (CAM) tools, performing interoperability gap analysis, and providing recommendations and suggested solutions for gap reduction.

ICTAP can assist in validating operational procedures and plans through tabletop exercises and developing training plans. ICTAP technical assistance for tactical interoperability can be part of a region's ongoing development of regional short and long-term interoperability plans or the first step in such plans.

How can sites learn more specifics about the tactical interoperability requirement?

SLGCP will release a guidance document entitled, *The State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness Tactical Interoperable Communications Planning Guidance and Template*, which focuses on compliance with the planning and exercise requirement, along with the release of the *National Planning Guidance,* in March 2005.

For more information, contact the ODP Centralized Scheduling and Information Desk (CSID):

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