

Global Response Service Award_Deployment Memo_Final

TO: RADM Kenneth P. Moritsugu, M.D., M.P.H.
Acting Surgeon General, USPHS Commissioned Corps

FROM: CDC and ATSDR SGPAC Representatives

Through: RADM Robert C. Williams, P.E., DEE, Chief of Staff, OGC _____
CAPT Austin Hayes, M.P.H., Director, OCCP/CDC _____

RE: Request for Global Response Service Award for deployed Commissioned Officers of the Panama Outbreak Investigation HHS Field Team (POIT)

Issue:

On October 2nd, 2006 representatives from the Panama Ministry of Health and the Gorgas Institute formally requested direct assistance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a series of unexplained illnesses, beginning on September 15th, which had a case fatality rate of 50%. At this time, there were 21 confirmed cases of illness and 12 fatalities. An initial field team of five scientists were notified on Oct 3rd, from two different coordinating centers, which deployed to Panama on October 4th. This initial CDC field team grew over the next two weeks to include 17 HHS personnel from two different agencies (15 CDC; 2 FDA) who with other partnering organizations and the Panama Ministry of Health formed the POIT. There are over 80 known cases of illness and over 40 fatalities. The etiology was ultimately determined to be diethylene glycol poisoning, resulting from contamination of a raw ingredient used in a prescription cough medication. Deployed Officers utilized their training in Incident Command Structure (ICS) and emergency response to rapidly establish a joint operations team, prioritized tasks and re-organized into what would ultimately become six separate sections focusing on: surveillance, case-control study, laboratory, communications, clinical case characterization, and an FDA field team. Command staff and five of the six section leads were PHS Officers.

Discussion:

The initial field team deployed within 24 hours of team member notification for an international public health crisis. The HHS field team provided direct consultation to the President and the Minister of Health of Panama and the scientific expertise which led to the:

- identification of the etiology by Day 7 and identification of the actual source of contamination (glycerin) by Day 11
- enrollment of almost 200 subjects and shipment of over 1000 biologic and environmental samples that confirmed the cough medication as the most likely etiology by Day 13

- science-based support for a medication recall from over 30,000 people and creation of a national public health prevention campaign (radio, television, print, local communicators)
- manual collection of over 160,000 bottles of medication by the PMOH
- reorganization of the Panamanian health system into a unified single system

As specified in Section L of INST 414.01 (Old CCPM: CC.26.3.1), PHS Officers are not permitted to wear the uniform outside of the US without explicit authorization by the SG. The wearing of the uniform in this international operation for a crisis involving a medication actually produced by a government pharmacy would have also severely jeopardized the mission.

Recommendation:

We recommend that you post-designate this response as an authorized crisis response Commissioned Corps deployment and the uniform requirement be waived. Thus, making the aforementioned team members eligible for the Global Response Service Award (GRSA) [CCI 511.03)

Decision:

Approved_____ Disapproved_____ Date_____

Patricia M. Simone, M.D.
CAPT, USPHS

Sven E. Rodenbeck, Sc.D., P.E., BCEE
CAPT, USPHS

Attachment