



National Resilience Extranet Common Operating Picture Executive Summary

Author: Ian F G Dickinson

Publication Date: 15 January 2013

Reference Number: NW/Pj/ResComms/4902

Version No: 1.1

Document Status: Final (see distribution)

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Senior Commercial Manager
Director Technical
Defence Equipment and Support
Elm 1c #4130
MOD Abbey Wood
Bristol
BS34 8JH
Fax No. +44 117 913 3911
Tel: +44 117 913 1305

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Administration Page

Report Release

Author:	Ian FG Dickinson	
Signature:	Signed on Original	Date: 15/01/13
Technical Director:	Prof Mike Wilkinson	
Signature:	Signed on Original	Date: 15/01/13
Sector Director:	Rick Bounsall	
Signature:	Signed on Original	Date: 15/01/13

Initial Report Distribution

Name	Position
Laura Spanner	Principal Analyst, C4ISR Analysis Group, Dstl Land Battlespace Systems
Luana Avagliano	National Resilience Extranet Team Leader Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office
CWE Project Site	

Change History

Date	Version	Event/Amendments
21/12/12	0.1	Customer Draft
11/01/13	1.0	Final
15/01/13	1.1	Updated for Public Release

Brennan House, Farnborough Aerospace Centre, Farnborough, Hants GU14 6YU
Telephone: 01252 383934 Facsimile: 01252 383907

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context

The Resilient Communications programme is part of FY12/13 CTSTC decision support programme titled „Decision Support to NSC (O) (S&T) and to Cross-Government Collaboration on Counter Terrorism“. In consultation with the Cabinet Office customer, the focus of this year's Resilient Communications programme is supporting communications during national crises. Research is required to support the acquisition of the Next Generation National Resilience Extranet (NG-NRE), and provide advice on the implementation of the Common Alerting Protocol.

The current NRE Service provides the UK's Resilience Community with a single, secure means of electronic information sharing. The contract for the current NRE Service expires during September 2013; a decision on procurement is needed to continue the service. The Future NRE Service would address problems that arise from the fact that the Emergency Resilience Community, which includes the “Blue Light” Services, Local Authorities and Essential Services, does not work on a common ICT system and the majority do not have access to secure ICT. This significantly inhibits effective and efficient multiagency working and information sharing as mandated in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

Aim

The aim of this task is to:

- Provide de-risking advice on the feasibility of achieving a Common Operational Picture in the UK.
- Review the aims of the COP and improve understanding on how feasible it is against the current environment.
- Identify risks and gaps, and provide advice on how they can be addressed.

Note: The term ‘Operational’ used in the Task has a number of interpretations and the multi-agency agreed UK terminology is ‘Common Operating Picture’ (UK Civil Protection Lexicon, version 2.01 Cabinet Office 20012); this term has been used throughout this work.

Approach

The available documentation was reviewed and primary stakeholders consulted. This included stakeholders in Scotland to ensure inclusion of devolved administration.

The work conducted earlier this year to consult with the wider user community was examined and the summary of outputs integrated into the analysis of the position.

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The value of a Common Operating Picture has been examined previously in the context of UK multi agency emergency response; The principle study is comprehensive and the authors of this paper have not sought to replicate that work “Common Operating Pictures and Their Potential for Multi Agency Work” McMaster and Barber, BAe Systems 2009 – reference HFIDTC/2/WP3.1.4/4.

Various models which exist in military and overseas civil emergency management were examined and common issues reviewed. Notably the differences between the military and civil use of a Common Operating Picture were considered.

The application of value from military and overseas civil context was applied to the UK-unique model of multi-agency emergency management to develop a detailed model proposed for the inclusion of a Common Operating Picture in the next generation of NRE.

This outline model was considered from the context of Silver and Bronze multi agency command and from the perspective of agency staff who were not part of a formal hierarchical service to ensure that the 'situation assessment' development by staff unfamiliar with use of the NRE or practiced in emergency management could be optimised.

Conclusion

This report concludes that:

- The NG-NRE would benefit from the inclusion of a core (non-optional) COP functionality
- The COP would provide considerable benefit to UK resilience
- Such a COP should present information, in an accessible, readily-assimilated form with functionality that is capable of use by all of the Resilience Community, even staff unfamiliar with emergency management or the detailed functionality of the wider NRE system.
- The capability gaps being addressed by the current JESIP programme would be partly mitigated by the presence of an adequate COP functionality
- Geographic areas (LRFs), national agencies, government departments or any other publicly funded organisation should not be encouraged, as a matter of firm policy, to stand apart from a national Common Operating Picture system as described.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

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- In creating the requirement for the NG-NRE, the Cabinet Office considers the benefits and costs of including a scalable COP functionality as a core component
- The Cabinet Office considers sponsoring the creation of a national doctrine and process for the use of the NG-NRE COP functionality as an element of 'Emergency Response and Recovery' Guidance.