

## Interview Summary Form

Revision #3

## Interview Details

Interviewee Name:	<b>Heidi Avery</b>	Date:	<b>11/9/10</b>	Time:	<b>11:30am EST</b>
	<b>White House</b>	Interviewee			
Interviewee Title:	<b>Deputy Homeland Security Advisor</b>	Job Location	<b>Washington, DC</b>		
		Interview			
Interviewer Name(s):	<b>Roger Rufe, Alex Joves</b>	Location:	<b>White House Executive Offices</b>		

## Interview Questions

Focus Area:	<b>Question 1:</b>	Could you discuss your role (and the role of the National Security staff) during this incident? Was this effective for this type of response?
Focus Area: Political Demands	<b>Question 2:</b>	What was role of other WH officials, initially and as the incident extended over several months?
Focus Area: Political Demands	<b>Question 3:</b>	Who was advising the President during DWH? Please explain how information flowed to the President. Were these processes effective?
Focus Area: NIC	<b>Question 4:</b>	Was the NIC effective in terms of the role he played? Should this process be a lessoned learned for the future?
Focus Area: NCP vs. NRF	<b>Question 5:</b>	There was confusion as to whether DWH was an NCP or Stafford Act response. Did the WH staff understand that this was an NCP response? Did tension exist w/ the National Security staff on this issue?
Focus Area: HSPD-5	<b>Question 6:</b>	How did you perceive the HSPD-5 role of Secretary Napolitano? Was that accepted and respected at the WH level?
Focus Area: Lessons Learned	<b>Question 7:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 8:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 9:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 10:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 11:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 12:</b>	
Focus Area:	<b>Question 13:</b>	

Final Question 1: What was the top "best practice" during this incident, from your perspective?

Final Question 2: What do you assess to be the top "area needing improvement" (or downright "failures") from your perspective, and do you have any related recommendations regarding these area(s)?

**Could you discuss your role (and the role of the National Security staff) during this incident? Was this effective for this type of response?**

- The construct that exists was very effective. Depending on the type of incident, different players in the White House take the lead role. Fugate leads Stafford Act incidents; Brennan leads National Security incidents; S-1 serves as PFO.
- The President made his roles and responsibilities very clear during the incident

**What was role of other WH officials, initially and as the incident extended over several months?**

- For the first 2 months, the WH National Security staff handled the White House's involvement with this incident. Carol Browner picked up this responsibility and continued serving as the President's advisor for the DWH incident.

**Was the NIC effective in terms of the role he played? Should this process be a lesson learned for the future?**

- The declaration of a NIC was an excellent decision; his role was invaluable
- The NIC had a thankless job; he experienced political pressures from all directions
- The primary role of the NIC was "whole of government"; he relieved much of the political burden and insulated the FOSC from external influences
- The enormity of the oil spill warranted the need for a NIC
- We need to retain flexibility in the federal government, so additional regulations for more NIC designations is not necessary. There should not be regulatory requirements to name a NIC for future incidents

**During the incident, there was confusion as to whether DWH was an NCP or Stafford Act response. Did the WH staff understand that this was an NCP response? Did tension exist w/ the National Security staff on this issue?**

- This was not an issue; there was no confusion among White House National Security staff. By law, the NCP is very scripted, and the regulation was very clear to everyone involved on my staff.
- The Stafford Act became a topic of conversation because there was no mechanism available to offer assistance to the states and local jurisdictions. The NCP response was not clear to state/locals because they are not familiar; their frame of reference is Stafford Act
- To my knowledge, there were NO Stafford Act requests for funding from the States
- There was a clear distinction b/t the offshore and inshore DWH response; the White House advocated getting the state emergency managers involved because of the increased pressure from state and local officials

**How did you perceive the HSPD-5 role of Secretary Napolitano? Was that accepted and respected at the WH level?**

- HSPD-5 is a policy statement originally signed by President Bush and is supported by President Obama. It is a statutory governance construct for incidents such as DWH
- During Deepwater Horizon, the White House fully supported and recognized S-1's role under HSPD-5; she acted as the lead principal among principals of the federal government

**Were the high level conference calls and meetings (NRT, Deputies, Principals) effective?**

- The Deputy meetings and Principals meetings were highly effective
- Their purpose was coordination of information flow across the federal government; to provide clear communications w/ the American people
- JIC function should be emphasized during an incident of this magnitude
- These meetings highlighted areas that need immediate attention; they were designed to add value and provide a useful forum; not designed to interfere w/ operations
- Spawned work groups for discussion of important issues; channel energy and policy development

**Did the NRT perform an important role during this incident?**

- NRT performed a key role during this incident; it is imperative to let the NRT conduct their work
- There was criticism from the media that the White House was not involved in decision making, but we were involved, but tried to stay behind the scenes (SHE WANTS TO HIGHLIGHT THIS POINT); the White House was being respectful of the governance structure; did not want to interfere w/ operations

**What is something that worked well during the DWH incident, and what is something that did not go well, and how would you improve it?**

- GOOD; teamwork among cabinet members was outstanding
- BAD; there was not a defined internal playbook for an incident of this size and scope, I must stress the importance of good communications and a better, open, and clear dialogue
- BAD; The Coast Guard took a long time to deploy additional personnel and equipment to the Gulf Coast; we should also leverage international offers for assistance early on
- BAD; the NCP does not accommodate governors/parishes during an incident; we need a mechanism that allows for their involvement from the beginning