

Utilizing CRISIS-MANAGEMENT INFORMATION as INTELLIGENCE

THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION SHARING AND COORDINATION AMONG ORGANIZATIONS



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Larger scale natural disasters, expanding infectious diseases and the global threat of terrorism. As the risks surrounding our society grow, crisis management has become more important than ever. Tom Ridge, who has held responsibilities as Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Governor of Pennsylvania, recently spoke about these issues with Toru Yamashita, Executive Vice President of NTT DATA.

Coordination among Organizations Key to Crisis Management

Yamashita: There is a growing amount of risk, such as natural disasters, infectious diseases and terrorism that surrounds our society. How does the American government deal with this?

Ridge: As you know, there is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on a federal government level, and under that we have the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). On a state or municipality level, we have established Emergency Operations Centers (EOC). We train and prepare for disasters to make sure that all levels of government play a coordinated role in preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Additionally, during large-scale disasters, the involvement of private companies, educational institutions and individuals are crucial. In the United States, security is very much a national mission, not a singular federal responsibility.

Yamashita: Before becoming Secretary of Homeland Security, you were governor of Pennsylvania and before that served as a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives. What is it that you see from your past roles as being crucial elements of coordination between the federal government and the municipalities?

Ridge: In the United States, there is a program called the National Response Plan (NRP), which was established by DHS, but also approved by all members of President Bush's Cabinet. When there is a large-scale disaster, a pre-nominated cabinet member can secure resources without having to negotiate with other ministries. In Hurricane Katrina's case, there was no formal imposition, but there are criticisms that there should have been.

There is also a crisis management structure called the Incident Command System (ICS). It is a system that lays out organizations that are involved in disaster response and standardizes the various procedures. There are also very detailed regulations on the different functions of each organization involved and the command channel. We utilize this system at all levels.

Information Sharing on a Worldwide Level by Utilizing IT.

Yamashita: Information sharing is inevitable in making the coordination among organizations work smoothly. I personally believe that IT plays a very important role in making this happen, but I would like to hear your views on this.

Ridge: I believe there are two important elements to information sharing. The first is the importance of getting people to share information with each other. The second is regarding how we utilize IT to enable this. As any other country, the United States still has some issues to resolve in this area. Take for instance 9/11. The communication between the police department and the fire department wasn't as smooth as it should have been. In order to act readily and effectively in times of crisis, there should be an information sharing infrastructure that not only supports voice communications, but also data and pictures. Although the United States still doesn't have such a system in place, the technology is available, and I personally believe that materializing such a system is of utmost importance.

Yamashita: I agree with you. The Japanese government also faces the same issue, and is putting a lot of effort into resolving this. One detailed example is the government-

led development for a common platform called the Disaster Information Management System. Various information regarding weather and traffic are overlaid on a map, and the institutions involved can coordinate accordingly, as needed. I strongly believe that such systems should be spread worldwide in the near future.

Disasters and infectious diseases, such as typhoons and bird flu epidemics, easily cross borders. The threat that we face does not necessarily affect a sole country. And as long as this is the case, we must coordinate and collaborate beyond the borders of a country. For example, we could be tackling disasters by having people from affected countries utilize the Common Operational Picture (COP) system. It would be a good idea to have not only the United States and Japan, but also to see various countries get involved in putting a system into place.

Ridge: As you said, it is true that there are no boundaries to disasters. That's why it's absolutely crucial that we deal with natural disasters and diseases clearly and openly. For instance, if there were an indication of an infectious disease breakout, the government has to react honestly and quickly to release this information and work together among concerned governments to lessen the threat toward human life. We also must work to share information with the World Health Organization which in turn can share this information with the rest of the world.

Moving from "Individually Optimum" to "Total Optimum" and "Circumstantial Optimum"

Yamashita: The harm done by disasters is growing, and the prompt action by the government and municipalities is becoming increasingly important. There are even more risks than before, such as terrorism, that have to be taken into consideration. With that perspective, the viewpoints of "regional scale," "effectiveness" and "variance" is necessary for crisis management. The optimization within organizations, such as the police department and the municipalities, has already been carried out individually. But the combination of these organizations, and with the three viewpoints mentioned, is what is needed to attain optimum effectiveness as a total.

Ridge: It is also very important to know how to utilize the available resources effectively. This is the center issue of crisis management. DHS has a program called READY. It is a guide on how to act under crisis situations. There is a READY program meant for the public, and there are Ready programs both for schools and for companies.

In order for us to stand against crises, we all have to be prepared. Not only the government, but each and every one of us has to understand our responsibilities and act accordingly when a crisis approaches. This is why information sharing is essential. In addition, the public's own vigilance and preparedness efforts have to be in place to hold damage to a minimum.

Yamashita: Even if we prepare thoroughly, it is possible that crises can exceed the expectation, and there can be times when certain regions become isolated. For those cases, not only the holistic approach of "Total Optimum" but also a case-by case solution or "Circumstantial Optimum" prescribed by the government and municipalities becomes necessary.

I agree that we need to manage risks from the perspective of "Circumstantial Optimum" at not only the society level but also the global level to prepare for unexpected disasters. Thus, development of information sharing infrastructure by utilizing IT is an urgent task.

PROFILE The Honorable Tom Ridge

Tom Ridge was born in Pennsylvania and brought up in veterans' public housing and later earned a scholarship to Harvard University and graduated with honors in 1967. After entering Dickinson School of Law, he was soon drafted into the U.S. Army, where he served as an infantry staff sergeant during the Vietnam War. He was awarded numerous medals, including the Bronze Star for Valor and the Combat Infantry Badge. After returning from Vietnam, he completed his law degree at Dickinson and entered private practice. Ridge successfully ran for Congress in 1982. He became one of the first Vietnam combat veterans to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and was overwhelmingly re-elected five times. He served as Governor of Pennsylvania from 1995-2001, and beginning in October 2001, served as the nation's first Assistant to the President for Homeland Security. In 2003, Thomas J. Ridge became the nation's first Secretary of Homeland Security, where he established a broad base of protective measures and established strategic partnerships with America's friends and allies around the world. Still serving his nation in other ways, Tom Ridge now consults on a range of domestic and international issues.