TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents ........................................................................................................................................... 1
Executive Summary .......................................................................................................................... 2
Scope and Methodology .................................................................................................................. 6
Key Action #1: Adapting Staffing Preparation & Requirements ................................................. 8
Key Action #2: Developing Innovative Processes ......................................................................... 14
Key Action #3: Providing Decision Support to Leadership ......................................................... 18
Key Action #4: Developing and Enhancing Policies .................................................................... 24
Key Action #5: Providing Technical Assistance ......................................................................... 29
Conclusion .................................................................................................................................... 34
Appendix A: Improvement Plan .................................................................................................. 36
Appendix B: Glossary .................................................................................................................... 38
In response to COVID-19, the Chief and Advisory Section International Affairs Advisor (CAS IAA) Cadre [hereafter collectively referred to as the CAS IAA Cadre] supported the National Response Coordination Center (NRCC) leadership’s response priorities, decision-making, and resource allocation. In accordance with the International Assistance System (IAS) Concept of Operations (CONOPS), the CAS IAA Cadre facilitated foreign offers of assistance and procurement from foreign governments and partners. Additionally, the CAS IAA Cadre supported the COVID-19 response by vetting and routing offers from foreign and domestic private sector entities, including domestic enterprises with foreign manufacturing.

The National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS) CAS IAA Cadre position reports to and advises the NRCS Chief and Deputy. During the COVID-19 response, a Unified Coordination Group (UCG) was created to provide dual leadership from FEMA and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The UCG was designed to provide senior leadership and expertise tailored to the response requirements unique to a pandemic. The newly established operational task forces and workgroups supported the UCG. However, the unprecedented scale and scope of COVID-19’s impact placed unique pressure on leadership and those deployed to the response. The CAS IAA Cadre adapted to the evolving challenges by providing tailored expertise and advice to the NRCS Chief and Deputy.

Offer of assistance from the Government of Turkey is unloaded from cargo plane at Joint Base Andrews.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The CAS IAA Cadre led the International Resources Coordination Group (IRCG) to facilitate review of offers of assistance or requests for procurement of life-saving foreign aid. Interagency IRCG representatives included the Department of State (DoS), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Defense (DoD), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), HHS HQ, and the HHS Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

In consultation with the IRCG, the CAS IAA Cadre made recommendations regarding foreign offers of assistance based upon response resource requirements or U.S. Government diplomatic interests, within governing legal and regulatory requirements. In coordination with FEMA partners, the CAS IAA Cadre facilitated communications with foreign partners offering assistance, and supported logistics and transportation coordination to ultimately oversee the allocation of the foreign assistance.

In addition to the NRCC-driven response, the CAS IAA Cadre continues its coordination efforts with numerous bilateral partners and multilateral organizations, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), to exchange information on respective response approaches and discuss guidelines for reopening economies and societies during the COVID-19 response.

FEMA's Pandemic Response to COVID-19: Initial Assessment Report

U.S. Air Force senior officials greet Government of Turkey officials at Joint Base Andrews.
The CAS IAA Cadre’s position in the NRCC manages the International Assistance System (IAS) Concept of Operations (CONOPS). The IAS CONOPS\(^1\) is a dual-natured support system that addresses the critical needs of response operators as well as U.S. diplomatic considerations. Following a Stafford Act declaration, the IAS CONOPS outlines standard operating procedures for:

- Reviewing foreign offers of assistance and determining whether to accept or decline these offers.
- Managing the logistics of transporting, receiving, and distributing foreign assistance.
- Procuring resources internationally when deemed necessary by FEMA or a FEMA mission-assigned (MA) agency.

The following agencies come together under the IAS CONOPS to successfully manage the flow of foreign offers: FEMA, DoS, USAID, DoD, CBP, HHS, FDA, and other United States Government (USG) regulatory agencies.

Once the President has issued a Stafford Act declaration, FEMA leverages the IAS CONOPS to review and accept or decline these offers as well as to solicit offers to meet validated response requirements. The IAS CONOPS addresses both the critical needs of disaster survivors, as well as the diplomatic interests of the USG arising from a domestic disaster.

Key Actions from the COVID-19 response are predominantly rooted in the application and adaptation of the IAS CONOPS to reflect procedure and process considerations for a historic, global pandemic, and further the FEMA mission.

During COVID-19 response operations, the CAS IAA Cadre identified several findings across three priority focus areas for the Agency:

- **Priority 1**: Preserve the Force - take a proactive posture in informing and protecting our employees.
- **Priority 2**: Conduct mission essential functions continuously and be prepared to do so in a COVID-19 degraded environment. (Be prepared to suspend nonessential functions if required).
- **Priority 3**: Support HHS-led COVID-19 response efforts.

### Table 1: Summary of Key Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Actions-Meeting the Mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key Action #1: Adapting Staffing Preparation &amp; Requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Action #2: Developing Innovative Processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Key Action #3: Providing Decision Support to Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Action #4: Developing and Enhancing Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Action #5: Providing Technical Assistance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) International Assistance System, Concept of Operations (IAS/CONOPS) 2015
While FEMA’s role as lead federal agency for the COVID-19 response concluded in late 2020, the CAS IAA Cadre continues to work with foreign governments on pending offers of humanitarian aid. The CAS IAA Cadre is committed to supporting the Agency in strengthening capabilities and supporting the homeland security enterprise through its international partnerships. In addition, the CAS IAA Cadre has already begun action on various recommendations to improve future pandemic-related disaster response operations.

**Figure 1: CAS IAA Deployment Timeline**

- **March 13, 2020**
  - The COVID-19 Pandemic is declared a national emergency

- **March 18-September, 2020**
  - CAS IAA is deployed in support of the COVID-19 response

- **October 2020-Present**
  - CAS IAA continues supporting the federal response to the pandemic and is deployed effective January 18 to support COVID-19 Vaccine Operations
SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This IAR includes information collected between March and September 2020. Observations were developed based on data collected from a variety of sources.

Data Collection
This report reviews the CAS IAA Cadre’s preparations for and response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to meet the emerging and surging requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic, some roles within the CAS IAA Cadre were modified. The response posture of the CAS IAA Cadre grew from 7 to 11 and included significant reach-back capability to the more senior staff members. This report focuses on efforts of FEMA’s International Affairs Division (IAD) working with other federal government partners to engage and work with the international community.

The CAS IAA Cadre Initial Assessment Report reflects a wide variety of feedback acquired from working with our whole community partners during the COVID-19 response, including but not limited to, HHS, FDA, CBP, DoD and DoS. To collect data for this report, International Affairs collected information from the following sources:

- **INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM (IAS) CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS (CONOPS)**. Foundational guidance applicable to a federally managed and coordinated response to declared National Emergencies.

- **AFTER-ACTION HOTWASH**. IAD participated in and gleaned information from multiple hotwashes, conducted by the Continuous Improvement Program and International Affairs Division, focusing on three key areas: preserving the workforce, coordinating operations, and maintaining mission essential functions. An International Resources Coordination Group (IRCG) Hotwash will be scheduled for 2021 based on stakeholder availability.

- **FOREIGN ASSISTANCE OFFER COORDINATION GROUPS**. IAD convened work groups comprised of subject-matter experts and stakeholders representing different FEMA components and federal departments and agencies, who provided data and validations for processes and best practices. Examples include U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), HHS Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Joint Base Andrews representatives. It should be noted that this response was unique in that FEMA was also seeking, receiving, and distributing personal protective equipment (PPE) on behalf of the HHS.
KEY ACTIONS

KEY ACTION 1
ADAPTING STAFFING PREPARATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

KEY ACTION 2
DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PROCESSES

KEY ACTION 3
PROVIDING DECISION SUPPORT TO LEADERSHIP

KEY ACTION 4
DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING POLICIES

KEY ACTION 5
PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
KEY ACTION 1
ADAPTING STAFFING PREPARATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS
ADAPTING STAFFING PREPARATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

After assessing the most critical categories for Key Actions, Staffing Preparation and Requirements was identified as one of the five most important for the CAS IAA Cadre. This Key Action is fundamental to the execution of the CAS IAA Cadre’s mission.

Observations

• OBSERVATION #1: The existing CAS IAA Cadre structure (one seat) in the NRCC was inadequate to satisfy mission requirements. The CAS IAA Cadre is a very specialized position reporting directly to the NRCS Chief and Deputy Chief.

Potential Best Practice

• OBSERVATION #2: In order to meet the mission, the CAS IAA Cadre needed to recruit, onboard, and train at least four new team members.

Potential Best Practice

• OBSERVATION #3: The CAS IAA Cadre implemented new tools and standard operating procedures to support the increased areas of responsibility and a remote/telework posture. With increased structure and responsibilities came the need to update standard operating procedures.

Potential Best Practice

• OBSERVATION #4: Administrative support to the Cadre was identified as a requirement. At the time of activation, the Cadre did not have certain administrative features in place, such as an updated Position Task Book (PTB), a structured roster for the NRCC support staff, or desk-side reference guidance. Remediation of these gaps began during the COVID-19 response and will be finalized upon deactivation of the COVID-19 engagement by IAD.

Area for Improvement

Strategic Goals

☑ 1. Build a Culture of Preparedness

☑ 2. Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters

☐ 3. Reduce the Complexity of FEMA

Discussion

For most NRCC deployments, the Chief and Advisory Section (CAS) of the NRCC required only one team member in the CAS IAA Cadre. This translated to the NRCC roster only having space for one team member on day shifts and one on night shifts. The COVID-19 response that activated on March 15, 2020, required significantly more Cadre support to the Chief.
FEMA’s IAD Director is also the Section Chief for the CAS IAA Cadre. The Director responded to the challenge of this unprecedented pandemic response by reimagining the Cadre structure. With approval from the NRCS Chief and Deputy Chief, the CAS IAA Cadre deployed all steady-state International Affairs Division (IAD) staff and implemented a new structure to meet the urgency of the COVID-19 crisis.

The Roster Coordinator position evolved within the CAS IAA Cadre during the COVID-19 activation. This Roster Coordinator, much like those of other Cadres, is responsible for the recruiting, interviewing, placing, onboarding, training, and retention of the Cadre staff. On March 30, 2020, the CAS IAA Cadre appointed a new Roster Coordinator who was deployed and began recruiting new personnel for immediate onboarding. Within a few weeks, the team expanded by four personnel, bringing the total deployed to 11 staff.

Additionally, the Roster Coordinator developed and implemented a new structure based on roles and responsibilities and lines of effort. There were three lines of effort identified in this Response: Strategic Coordination, Facilitating and Leading the International Resources Coordination Group (IRCG), and staffing the NRCC’s CAS IAA Desk (Desk Officers). In early April, this new structure was rolled out to the staff and the new schedule aligned accordingly. The IAD Director also began a new activity (now a best practice) by issuing daily Priorities email messages to the Cadre with clear expectations, assignment of responsibility, and updated weekly schedules.

The lines of effort and sample roster schedules are included below. Please note the distinct difference between the first (April) and second (July) examples on page 14. This reflects the Cadre’s newfound ability to expand and contract as a result of responding to the COVID-19 activation.

**Figure 2: March 2020 CAS IAA Cadre COVID-19 Response Organizational Structure**

**FEMA International Affairs Team**

**Strategic Coordination**
- **FEMA Leadership**
- **Private Sector**

Strat Position: IANS-A

Areas of Responsibility:
- Private Sector Contributions
- CAS IAA/IAD Priorities
- Donation Action Officers
- SCTF
- CAS IAA Backup
- Steady State IAD Director

**IRCG**
- Daily Coordination Calls
- Activity Tracker
- Procurement

IRCG Position: IANS-B, IANS-C

Areas of Responsibility:
- Donation Checklist/Facilitation
- International Activity Tracker / 2x Daily
- IRCG Facilitation/Engagement
- Daily IRCG Meeting Materials
- IRCG Meeting Notes/Actions

**NRCC (CAS IAA Desk)**
- Information Flow
- Meeting Coverage
- Coordinate with Virtual IANS

NRCC Position: IANS-D

Areas of Responsibility:
- SLB Input / 2x Daily
- Coordination with NRCC Sections
- DoS POC / Mission Assignment
- Engagement
- Leadership Briefings
- End of Shift Report
A variety of tools were leveraged to support this new Cadre size and organizational structure. In particular, the team used Microsoft OneNote and Microsoft Teams. All Cadre members were invited to use the OneNote notebook established, which held tabs on useful tools and information for Desk Officers. This included points of contact, the operations tempo, a Daily Shift Report template, and a place to archive all daily reporting as well as brief-outs to the NRCS Chief and Deputy Chief.

A new and adaptive operations tempo was developed and used throughout the activation. The new tempo involved multiple meetings where the CAS IAA Cadre was expected to brief senior leadership. The Desk Officers could download the operations tempo from OneNote and follow the guided timeline of deliverables and meetings that were due throughout the day.
ADAPTING STAFFING PREPARATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The following is an example from April 2020 of the operational tempo tab in OneNote.

**Table 4: Example of the Operations Tempo from April 2020**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>NRCC Desk Officer Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0615-0630</td>
<td>Arrival; sign in to WebEOC; check in to DTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0700</td>
<td>Check in with RSS/RCBD and MCC; connect with DoS LNO via email/phone; connect with NATO LNO for anything high vis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0830</td>
<td>Review IAT update from DoS LNO; prepare Talking Points/SLB input for Director to review/approve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0900</td>
<td>BRIEF OUT: NRCS Chief's Huddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0930</td>
<td>BRIEF OUT: RSS Huddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>Update Shift Report on brief out; update Talking Points/SLB input accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide SLB input (no more than 3 bullets, in the format identified on Daily SLB Input tab)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1100</td>
<td>RSS Call (close-hold dial in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1230</td>
<td>Daily FEMA-HHS Interagency Call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>SLB input cutoff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400</td>
<td>IRCG Call-elicit IAT update from DoS (Tuesdays and Thursdays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Shift Change-Transition notes from Day Shift to Night Shift</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>BRIEF OUT: NRCC Chief Huddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800</td>
<td>BRIEF OUT: RSS Chief Huddle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Update Shift Report on brief out, update talking points/SLB accordingly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Embassy Beijing daily conference call (Monday and Thursday only)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2200</td>
<td>Night Shift ends; Desk Officer(s) finalize daily shift report in OneNote &amp; MS Teams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative support to the Cadre was identified early as an area for improvement. The Cadre was very specialized during previous activations and, with only one NRCC seat, did not require strong administrative support. With the COVID-19 activation, this support evolved to reflect the new size and structure of the Cadre.

The Director worked closely with a smaller team of Cadre members assigned to build a new Position Task Book (PTB) that could be added to FEMA’s Deployment Tracking System (DTS). The team built the new PTB, and the Roster Coordinator trained Cadre members on the new requirement. Cadre members with Coach & Evaluator certifications were assigned to specific personnel and conducted interviews with them to validate activities completed during this activation.

For the first time since the Cadre’s inception, all IAD staff are qualified. A “CAS IAA Desk Reference Guide” is under development that will be posted in OneNote for all future deployments. This will include newly developed tools such as the Shift Report, standard operating procedures, operational tempo, and templates for all meeting notes and checklists regarding foreign offers of assistance.
ADAPTING STAFFING PREPARATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Potential Courses of Action

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** Maintain the current roster of CAS IAA Cadre members. Continue monthly updates from the Roster Coordinator to the CAS IAA Cadre and offer IAS CONOPS training (conducted twice since July 2020), as well as any other relevant NRCC training moving forward. Develop the CAS IAA Desk Reference Guide.

- **COA 1:** Continue to recruit and onboard new CAS IAA Cadre members. Once the CAS IAA Cadre's in-person deployments to the NRCC resume, it may still be necessary to have more than one Desk Officer deployed at a time as needed. A strong roster with personnel who are trained and ready to support the mission is required. This also supports Cadre members who need coverage due to scheduled or unscheduled leave.

- **COA 2:** Finalize the Desk Officer Desk Reference Guide. This Guide will include (at a minimum): templates, operational tempo, standard operating procedures, points of contact (HQ, Regions, interagency partners), PTB instructions, and training materials (with a copy of the IAS CONOPS).

*U.S. Government and military personnel participate in the arrival of an offer of assistance from the Government of Turkey.*
KEY ACTION 2
DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PROCESSES
The CAS IAA Cadre developed innovative processes and applied the IAS CONOPS to manage offers of foreign assistance, but gaps in pre-disaster training and education of key partners and stakeholders hampered operational coordination.

**Observations**

- **OBSERVATION #1:** CAS IAA Cadre members demonstrated flexibility and strong coordination skills in managing the process of reviewing and accepting foreign offers of assistance.
  
  **Strength**

- **OBSERVATION #2:** Key partners and stakeholders were unaware of IAS processes for accepting foreign offers of assistance.
  
  **Area for Improvement**

- **OBSERVATION #3:** The CAS IAA Cadre created a standardized offer specification form and checklist to facilitate the interagency process for reviewing foreign offers of assistance.
  
  **Potential Best Practice**

- **OBSERVATION #4:** Cadre command structure and areas of responsibility were defined and documented for cadre members, improving execution of foreign offers of assistance and providing clarity around new processes.
  
  **Potential Best Practice**

**Strategic Goals**

- ✔️ 1. Build a Culture of Preparedness
- ✔️ 2. Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters
- ☐ 3. Reduce the Complexity of FEMA

**Discussion**

The federal government’s COVID-19 response efforts required coordination of many foreign offers of assistance from a wide array of partners. These offers came from foreign governments as well as foreign and U.S. businesses and far exceeded the 35 million pieces of PPE which were eventually accepted. Building on the foundational guidance contained in the 2015 IAS CONOPS, CAS IAA Cadre members worked closely with HHS and developed processes to address the unique challenges around U.S. Government acceptance of medical supplies.
The Cadre designed forms and checklists to standardize offer review based on regulatory requirements. Cadre staff led interagency coordination calls to forge a common operational picture and drive offer execution. Through these and other processes, the CAS IAA Cadre balanced multiple stakeholders’ needs to prioritize survivor safety while also addressing political and foreign policy priorities.

Countervailing the Cadre’s coordination efforts was a lack of awareness among key partners and stakeholders of the IAS CONOPS and its associated principles and processes. For example, a diplomatic cable sent from Washington, DC to U.S. embassies and consulates abroad requesting foreign assistance with PPE sourcing was drafted with virtually no input from FEMA and did not mention the IAS CONOPS. IAS CONOPS knowledge gaps among FEMA partners greatly increased the amount of time required in order to adjudicate foreign offers of assistance. These observations suggest that enhanced IAS CONOPS training and education for partners and stakeholders under steady state conditions is needed to improve the CAS IAA Cadre’s mission effectiveness when disasters occur.

During the COVID-19 activation, the CAS IAA Cadre expanded its structure as it handled a large number of foreign offers of assistance. As a result, more defined roles within the Cadre beyond the NRCC Desk Officer position were needed. CAS IAA Cadre leadership assigned specific roles and responsibilities to each Cadre member. The figure below shows a breakdown of the different roles. Besides the Desk Officer position, roles were defined for foreign offer of assistance action officers, coordinator of the IRCG and strategic and policy coordination. The CAS IAA Cadre established clear lines of effort to ensure accountability and coverage across the spectrum of duties during this deployment. This course of action is a potential best practice to be leveraged in the future.

**Figure 3: CAS IAA Cadre Roles**

- **NRCC Desk Officer**: Provide NRCC meeting coverage
- **IRCG**: Organize and run IRCG Meetings and manage interagency distribution list
- **Strategic Coordination**: Liaise with FEMA Leadership
- **Foreign Offers Action Officers**: Manage foreign government and private sector offers of assistance
- **Strategic Coordination**: Handle critical policy items and lead IAD priorities
- **Foreign Offers Action Officers**: Assign Foreign Assistance Offer Action Officers
- **Strategic Coordination**: Coordinate regulatory review and offer logistics
DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE PROCESSES

In addition, to better facilitate the review and coordination process for foreign offers of assistance, the CAS IAA Cadre developed a new, standardized offer specification form and foreign offer of assistance checklist to guide Cadre members. The offer specification form included fields for key information required to adjudicate offers and facilitate regulatory agency review. The forms also created a record of offers to be included in the International Activity Tracker (IAT) for tracking and reporting purposes. The IAT was placed on the shared Microsoft Teams platform so that all CAS IAA Cadre members could maintain situational awareness and respond to requests for information.

These process improvements kept the Cadre organized and ready to track, manage, and close out the dozens of adjudicated foreign offers of assistance. The COVID-19 pandemic response environment demanded flexibility and adaptability. The process innovations created to meet this demand made the Cadre better equipped for future responses.

Potential Courses of Action

DESIGNED OUTCOME: Federal partners and stakeholders are aware of IAS CONOPS principles and processes before disasters occur and adhere to them during disaster response.

• COA 1: Finalize offer specification form and foreign offer of assistance execution checklist and ensure all Cadre staff understand how to use them.

• COA 2: Institutionalize Cadre staffing procedures in guidance documents.

• COA 3: Develop an internal training and education program including messaging and communication products about the foreign offer of assistance process. Materials should be adapted to internal (i.e. FEMA components) or external partners and communication channels as appropriate. This program will allow CAS IAA Cadre members to build and maintain IAS CONOPS coordination skills. Update training and education materials on an annual basis.

• COA 4: Develop a training and education system for key partners and stakeholders in the foreign offer of assistance process. Materials should be adapted to internal (i.e. FEMA components) or external partners, as appropriate. Schedule briefings and trainings with key internal and external partners on an annual basis.
KEY ACTION 3
PROVIDING EXPERTISE TO LEADERSHIP
The NRCS CAS IAA Cadre position reports to and advises the NRCS Chief and Deputy Chief. During the COVID-19 response, a Unified Coordination Group (UCG) was created to provide dual leadership from FEMA and HHS.

The UCG was designed to provide senior leadership and expertise tailored to the response requirements unique to a pandemic. The newly established operational task forces and workgroups supported the UCG. However, the unprecedented scale of COVID-19’s impact placed pressure on leadership and those deployed to the response. The CAS IAA Cadre adapted to the evolving challenges by providing subject matter expertise and advice to NRCS and senior leadership.

Observations

• **OBSERVATION #1:** The CAS IAA Cadre continually adapted to the COVID-19 response and UCG structure by providing tailored, timely, and candid advice and briefings to the NRCS leadership on foreign offers of assistance and the extent to which each offer aligned with IAS CONOPS and operational requirements. In addition, the CAS IAA Cadre proactively briefed NRCS leadership on potential political and foreign policy considerations. These briefings included viable courses of action to inform leadership decisions.

  **Strength and Potential Best Practice**

• **OBSERVATION #2:** During COVID-19 response operations, the CAS IAA Cadre developed and implemented a new standard operating procedure (SOP) for requesting the NRCS Chief or Deputy Chief’s acceptance of a foreign offer of assistance. The SOP formalizes FEMA’s acceptance process and facilitates expedited clearance at the point of entry by CBP.

  **Potential Best Practice**

• **OBSERVATION #3:** Unfortunately, during the response and as a result of the UCG structure, officials outside of the CAS IAA Cadre made decisions and/or acted on offers of foreign assistance without authority. Some of these actions did not align with the IAS CONOPS.

  **Area for Improvement**

• **OBSERVATION #4:** The CAS IAA Cadre members (particularly those in the Desk Officer position) must be well-equipped to brief NRCS leadership from the first day of their deployment. This skill was developed during multiple briefings to senior leadership during each 12-hour shift.

  **Potential Best Practice**
Discussion

The scale of the COVID-19 pandemic and scope of its impact on the United States required an agile response. Those deployed to the NRCC for the COVID-19 response identified solutions to evolving challenges. The CAS IAA Cadre created and successfully implemented a new and adaptive organization.

For all deployments, the CAS IAA Cadre is responsible for adjudicating offers of and requests for foreign assistance to support domestic responses. The CAS IAA Cadre’s role includes briefing NRCS leadership; working with the interagency to complete regulatory, legal and importation reviews; and addressing political and foreign policy considerations for the current response. During the COVID-19 response, the CAS IAA Cadre had to modify its approach to effectively meet requirements. Best practices included modifying the Cadre’s structure by creating three distinct roles, one of which focused on leadership engagement, policy, and strategic issues.

The second role was the management of foreign offers of assistance once accepted, and the third was technical assistance not only to leadership but the full interagency response. The CAS IAA Cadre Section Chief was primarily responsible for addressing and briefing NRCS leadership on sensitive policy and foreign policy considerations for the response.

The CAS IAA Cadre identified early in the response the requirement to develop a formalized procedure for requesting NRCS Chief and Deputy approval for incoming offers of foreign assistance. The CAS IAA Cadre Section Chief provided guidance by outlining a process of crafting a standard email (with the appropriate legal language) and requiring use of the template for each offer of foreign assistance. The guidance included a timeline for submission so that the NRCS Chief or Deputy Chief had sufficient time to carefully review the request.

Additionally, the Section Chief recommended these emails be addressed to the NRCS Deputy Chief whenever possible, so as not to inundate the NRCS Chief. Before CAS IAA’s next deployment, this formal acceptance language will be coordinated with ORR and OCC to ensure the template references current senior delegations and is updated accordingly.

This innovation proved to be an excellent addition to the Desk Officers’ toolbox. The NRCS Deputy Chief provided feedback to the Cadre Director and team members that the emails were very helpful. They also served as documentary evidence that FEMA was executing their foreign gift acceptance authority in accordance with relevant delegations of its authority. The template email has been added to the CAS IAA Desk Reference Guide and is part of the onboard training each Cadre member receives. An example of a formal acceptance email appears below.

**Figure 4: Example of Formal Acceptance Email**

```
In accordance with FEMA’s 2011 Sub-Delegation of Gift Acceptance Authority, the National Response Coordination Staff (NRCS) Deputy Chief is delegated gift acceptance authority by the FEMA Administrator. International Affairs is requesting your approval to accept the below resources as an official government-to-government donation from the [donor name] pursuant to Section 701(b) of the Stafford Act.

This donation was gifted by [donor name] and accepted by [accepting agency]. During the call it was agreed the U.S. will arrange and pay international shipping, FEMA is the responsible party on behalf of the USG. The donation has been reviewed by: FEMA’s Office of Chief Counsel, National Response Coordination Center’s Resource Support Section, Department of State, the Food and Drug Administration, and Customs and Border Protection. The donation is scheduled to depart [origin city] on [departure date] or about May 8 therefore I request your reply no later than May 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

The CAS IAA Cadre position in the NRCC oversees the IAS CONOPS, which delineates FEMA’s foreign gift acceptance authorities and the requirements for reviewing and accepting or declining foreign offers of assistance during Presidentially-declared Stafford Act and/or National Emergencies.

However, the speed and scope of the COVID-19 response resulted in individuals, without authority or knowledge of the IAS CONOPS, taking action on offers of foreign assistance. Throughout the deployment, the CAS IAA Cadre took actions to minimize the risk associated with uninformed or unauthorized action on foreign offers of assistance.
For example, an informal donations management team was established by NRCC leadership to facilitate domestic donations, primarily from U.S. companies. To reduce confusion between the important work of the domestic donation coordination and the facilitation of offers of foreign assistance, the CAS IAA Cadre implemented an End-of-Day Report. The report provided NRCS and RSS leadership an overview of each active foreign offers of assistance.

The final observation in this Key Action involves a competency requirement for the CAS IAA Cadre, namely effective oral and written briefing skills. Cadre members must be confident, knowledgeable and comfortable briefing FEMA and NRCC leadership at all levels.

Cadre members should also continue to work on their briefing skills during deployments and steady-state. It will be the responsibility of the Roster Coordinator to work with new staffers and guide them through on-the-job training and steady state training and education opportunities.
PROVIDING DECISION SUPPORT TO LEADERSHIP

Potential Courses of Action

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** The CAS IAA Cadre maintains an adaptive organization, to include maintaining accountability for the adjudication and acceptance of offers of foreign assistance.

- **COA 1:** The next revision of the IAS CONOPS will address unique requirements for responding within a UCG and how to increase accountability and adjudication for offers of foreign assistance for large-scale, atypical responses such as pandemics. CAS IAA Cadre will ensure all staff go through comprehensive internal instruction regarding acceptance authorities for foreign offers of assistance.

- **COA 2:** In future deployments, the CAS IAA Cadre will work in greater coordination with Regional counterparts regarding acceptance and final disposition of foreign offers of assistance. It is critical to maintain strong communications with the Regions.

- **COA 3:** At the beginning of any deployment, the CAS IAA Cadre will review the NRCC structure and address potential areas of overlap with other NRCC positions and/or task forces. The goal is to streamline and expedite the Agency’s response to potential foreign offers of assistance.

_A U.S. Air Force senior official and Government of Turkey officials following the arrival of an offer of assistance at Joint Base Andrews._
KEY ACTION 4
DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING POLICIES
The unique nature of the COVID-19 response and FEMA’s prominent role as a coordination point brought policy issues to the forefront early in the response process and uncovered areas for policy development that must be addressed.

Observations

- **OBSERVATION #1**: The IAS CONOPS provided immediate management tools for a rapidly evolving situation. Having worked with the federal interagency on previous real-world events as well as exercises, the CAS IAA Cadre was able to implement the IAS CONOPS in its support of mission requirements.

  **Strength**

- **OBSERVATION #2**: The International Resource Coordination Group (IRCG) was limited in decision-making capabilities. While the IRCG’s intended function is to provide interagency review and decision support for foreign offers of assistance, the development of multiple Task Forces, Tiger Teams, etc. under the UCG obviated this function. The IRCG evolved quickly into an interagency forum for information sharing, policy discussion, and planning.

  **Potential Best Practice**

- **OBSERVATION #3**: The high level of activity involving foreign offers of assistance and PPE procurements during the COVID-19 response generated daily interagency conversations on import controls and procedures. The CAS IAA Cadre provided focused guidance to both governmental and private sector entities through fact sheets and direct communications.

  **Potential Best Practice**

- **OBSERVATION #4**: Providing foreign aid to Tribal Nations was particularly challenging, as concise and up-to-date information on the legal considerations applicable to Tribal Nations relative to taxes, customs, and duty fees was minimal.

  **Area for Improvement**

- **OBSERVATION #5**: The problematic issue of accepting foreign first responders under the IAS CONOPS was further complicated with the opportunity to utilize foreign-licensed health professionals residing in the United States in domestic response operations.

  **Area for Improvement**
DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING POLICIES

Strategic Goals

1. Build a Culture of Preparedness
2. Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters
3. Reduce the Complexity of FEMA

Discussion

In the twelve years since its initial development, the IAS CONOPS has matured and demonstrated its ability to add value to FEMA and the U.S. Government’s (USG) response to disasters. As an operational tool, the IAS CONOPS is recognized by FEMA leadership and the interagency as an effective mechanism for managing foreign offers of assistance, as well as an atypical acquisition tool to meet critical needs in the field. The IAS CONOPS has adapted from a mechanism to primarily reject foreign assistance into a flexible tool that provides FEMA and the USG options for balancing field response requirements and USG diplomatic interests.

Another policy area observation from the CAS IAA Cadre’s COVID-19 deployment highlights the limited decision-making capabilities of the IRCG. The IRCG was originally designed to only provide interagency review of foreign offers of assistance and recommendations to accept or decline those offers. The UCG and task force structure of the COVID-19 response largely usurped the traditional role of the IRCG. Although it attracted many interagency attendees, the group evolved from an advisory body to a situational awareness and planning tool. Due to evolving requirements, including an early shift to facilitate overseas procurement of PPE, the interagency participation in the at first daily, then bi-weekly, IRCG calls became quite extensive.

With the issuance of FEMA’s Prioritization and Allocation of Certain Scarce and Critical Health and Medical Resources for Domestic Use Temporary Final Rule (TFR), much activity was focused on helping the private sector understand the scope of the TFR and deconflict misunderstandings on possible exports of PPE. This also became a critical discussion point between the USG and the Government of Mexico, as many manufacturers of critical PPE components are based in Mexico and were confused about the TFR’s impact on their ability to meet contractual obligations.
The CAS IAA Cadre worked closely with stakeholders, addressing the need to de-conflict CBP rules for foreign assistance against cargo purchased by the USG for COVID-19 response efforts and discuss direct receipt of foreign goods by state, local, tribal, and territorial stakeholders. Additionally, the CAS IAA Cadre served on a Tiger Team established to determine the disposition of excess Battelle decontamination units (designed to remove novel coronavirus from N95 respirators), as well as possible use of Battelle decontamination units along U.S. borders.

The CAS IAA Cadre worked through a variety of legal and logistical challenges in supporting the response. For instance, assisting Tribal Nations with receiving foreign offers of assistance proved to be a unique challenge. Working with the U.S. interagency, the CAS IAA Cadre documented options for resolving import barriers, including customs and duty fees on foreign assistance to Tribal Nations. CBP’s current policies waive formal entry requirements for offers of foreign assistance governed by the IAS CONOPS. However, foreign offers of assistance to Tribal Nations are not included in the current IAS CONOPS. According to CBP, if a foreign government intends to offer resources that meet all regulatory requirements, the Tribal Nation is responsible for all duties and normal customs fees, making the offer of assistance cost prohibitive.

The CAS IAA Cadre developed guidance on how to navigate the variety of options available to Tribal Nations to accept foreign offers of assistance. Global media coverage of the plight of certain Tribal Nations severely impacted by COVID-19 generated interest among foreign partners, but the CAS IAA Cadre did not handle any formal foreign offers of assistance for Tribal Nations prior to the COVID-19 response. Extensive consultations were held with the Department of the Interior’s Bureau of Indian Affairs, CBP, FEMA Tribal Affairs, and FEMA Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) to work through the nuances of resolving these obstacles in providing much-needed relief to Tribal Nations.
Understanding that medical licensure is primarily a state-level issue, options for accepting foreign first responders were discussed.

While a solution at the federal level is being addressed through an existing legislative proposal that was initiated prior to COVID-19, states were encouraged to look at their respective options for granting temporary licensure to personnel already present in-state but holding licenses from non-U.S. sources.

The Governor of New Jersey issued guidance to do just this and shared it with others as a potential model.

### Potential Courses of Action

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** The CAS IAA Cadre develops and implements policy guidance within FEMA and with the interagency to maximize the integration of foreign disaster assistance into a domestic crisis following a Stafford Act and/or National Emergency Declaration.

- **COA 1:** The IAS CONOPS should be revised following an honest evaluation of its content considering COVID-19 observations. A formal training course/orientation should be developed to maximize awareness and understanding of the IAS CONOPS and the varied issues arising from offers of foreign assistance and procurement opportunities. Additionally, consider refining purpose and definition of the IRCG when the IAS CONOPS is reviewed and revised.

- **COA 2:** Based on the experience gained in the COVID-19 response, the CAS IAA Cadre should work with CBP and other regulatory agencies to document the issues and challenges faced in both offers of foreign assistance and procurements and, where necessary, develop policy development options to minimize barriers to foreign life-saving and life-sustaining assistance.

- **COA 3:** The CAS IAA Cadre should work with FEMA’s Office of External Affairs, Tribal Affairs, as well as the interagency to address obstacles in facilitating foreign assistance to Tribal Nations, and, where appropriate, develop guidance for future disasters.

- **COA 4:** IAD, ORR and OCC continue working with interagency partners on legislative proposal language that will address legal barriers to integrating foreign first responders into domestic response.
KEY ACTION 5
PROVIDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
The CAS IAA Cadre provides specialized expertise to advise policy decision-makers, adjudicate issues at the nexus of operational requirements and foreign policy considerations, and serve as advisors to disaster response working groups as needed.

Observations

• **OBSERVATION #1:** The CAS IAA Cadre pre-positioned appropriate staff members during the COVID-19 Response. The Cadre supported not only Desk Officer positions, but “reach back” team members deployed to support technical assistance requests based on their steady-state and existing relationships.

  **Strength and Potential Best Practice**

• **OBSERVATION #2:** It was critical to track Requests for Information (RFIs) and lines of effort involving technical assistance. The CAS IAA Cadre documented and tracked all requests for information or technical assistance related to offers of foreign assistance throughout the COVID-19 response.

  **Strength and Potential Best Practice**

• **OBSERVATION #3:** Collaboration among interagency partners enhanced the technical assistance support to our foreign partners. During the COVID-19 response, the CAS IAA Cadre worked well with a large group of federal interagency partners.

  **Potential Best Practice**

• **OBSERVATION #4:** It was also critical to pivot and support new requirements such as the Export Cargo Review Working Group. The CAS IAA Cadre Section Chief was designated to serve as a representative on the Export Cargo Review Working Group that reviews PPE export requests in accordance with FEMA’s *Prioritization and Allocation of Certain Scarce and Critical Health and Medical Resources for Domestic Use* Temporary Final Rule on certain PPE exports.

  **Strength and Potential Best Practice**

**Strategic Goal**

- ✔️ 1. Build a Culture of Preparedness
- ✔️ 2. Ready the Nation for Catastrophic Disasters
- ✗ 3. Reduce the Complexity of FEMA
Discussion

The CAS IAA Cadre provides specialized disaster response expertise to further domestic response priorities and U.S. foreign policy. The COVID-19 response yielded a significantly higher demand for foreign assistance to support the federal response. In 2017, for example, the CAS IAA Cadre accepted foreign assistance from six partners to meet the needs of survivors. Yet, as of September 2020, the CAS IAA Cadre facilitated foreign offers of assistance from more than 21 different partners, including both foreign partners and private sector entities.

FEMA’s COVID-19 response highlighted the importance of the CAS IAA Cadre’s advisory role and the need to be included in all phases of emergency management. To meet the high demand for international affairs expertise, the CAS IAA Cadre pre-positioned personnel from within FEMA’s International Affairs Division (IAD). Our experienced staff members became the “reach back” of expertise needed to work with countries such as Israel and Mexico. This observation is both a strength and best practice for the CAS IAA Cadre. All IAD staff members are now qualified in DTS and thus cross-trained as experts on targeted issues and as CAS IAA Desk Officers.

Engagement with Israel is an excellent example of why this line of effort became a best practice for the CAS IAA Cadre. One of our more experienced CAS IAA Cadre members met consistently with Israel’s National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) to discuss experiences and challenges in the COVID-19 environment. Participants from the Israeli contingent included Emergency Medical Services (EMS) professionals from local EMS units and universities. American EMS representatives also attended these meetings to exchange perspectives on clinical, training, and operational COVID-19 issues. FEMA observed this line of effort as a strength given that all participants (U.S. and Israeli) are eager to exchange information and intend to use their discussions to inform their countries’ responses to future pandemics.
Additionally, the same staff member represented FEMA and the NRCC during planning conference calls with representatives of the U.S. National Guard Bureau (NGB), HHS, Israel’s NEMA and Israel’s Home Front Command (HFC) to organize a series of conferences on the role of national guard units and HFC in COVID-19 response. Conference participants prepared white papers on lessons learned and suggestions for improving both nations’ pandemic response capabilities.

Another observation implemented as a best practice, since it was identified as a strength, is the documentation and tracking of all RFIs and requests for technical assistance. This effort is similar to the tracking of offers of foreign assistance but used more for short-turn requests. The documentation and tracking serve two purposes: 1) evidence for future audits or questions regarding the interactions with specific countries, and 2) daily reporting to NRCS and CAS IAA leadership to provide situational awareness. The CAS IAA Cadre modified the existing “Daily Shift Report” to address urgent and short-term actions. Any RFIs or requests for technical assistance were generally captured in these two categories.

Figure 5 below is an example of the tracking mechanism that has become a best practice and added to the CAS IAA Desk Reference Guide. This snapshot of the Daily Shift Report identifies three urgent RFIs that were open simultaneously as well as two other RFIs that were being worked short-term. Additionally, the CAS IAA Cadre’s “reach back” experts mentioned in Observation #1 were working on a request for technical assistance from Mexico.

Our tracking also captured which Cadre member was working on which line of effort, the target due date, and color-coded status. A section for notes was found to be very helpful in that CAS IAA Cadre leadership could quickly understand not only whether an effort was open, closed, on hold, etc. but what was the latest event reported on that particular line of effort. A snapshot from the Daily Report in mid-May 2020 follows below.

**Figure 5: Sample RFI and Technical Assistance Request Tracker**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>URGENT ACTION ITEMS</th>
<th>ACTION ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>CAS IAA LEADER</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFI 1</td>
<td>NRC/DoD Chief regarding staffing plan for malicious actors</td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: Draft prepared, reviewed by IAD Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI 2</td>
<td>NRC/DoD Chief regarding allocation plan for Ukraine victims</td>
<td>10 May</td>
<td>Completed</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: Desk Officer requested information from IAD; IAD determined allocation plan and will submit soonest; RFI to be transferred to IAD as IDO cannot provide answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI 3</td>
<td>NRC/DoD Chief regarding allocation plan for tourism</td>
<td>11 May</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: Working to prepare guidance and answer inquiry; will become IAD steady state work; Desk Officer will track</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHORT-TERM ACTION ITEMS</th>
<th>ACTION ITEM DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>DUE DATE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>CAS IAA LEADER</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFI 4</td>
<td>Donation offer of 200,000 gloves from company in Germany</td>
<td>24 May</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: No update; 9 May: Assigned to IAD for action; reached out to company to confirm information provided by potential donor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI 5</td>
<td>Draft response to NNEOC RFI in collaboration with U.S. support for private sector</td>
<td>8 May</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: No update; 9 May: Next follow-up to POC to confirm response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI 6</td>
<td>For force donation to USG</td>
<td>13/14 May</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 May: No updates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another outstanding example of interagency collaboration is with the Export Cargo Review Working Group (ECRWG) established in early April 2020. The ECRWG included representatives from many Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) and other interagency partners.

The ECRWG was tasked with reviewing potential U.S. export cargo containing PPE in high demand for the U.S. COVID-19 response.

Consistent with FEMA’s Prioritization and Allocation of Certain Scarce and Critical Health and Medical Resources for Domestic Use Temporary Final Rule (TFR), the ECWRG was responsible for making determinations regarding the impact of allowing the potential export of five types of PPE urgently needed for domestic COVID-19 response.

The CAS IAA Cadre Section Chief was specifically invited to be a voting member on this working group. The CAS IAA Cadre is uniquely suited to understand the urgent COVID-19 operational requirements and the political and diplomatic considerations of each decision.

**Potential Courses of Action**

**DESIRED OUTCOME:** The CAS IAA Cadre adopts the identified best practices in this Key Action and leverages the strengths of experienced Cadre members, collaboration with interagency partners, and accurate tracking and documentation.

**COA 1:** Continue to maintain IAD’s cross-trained expertise thus expanding the roster’s capacity. Each IAD team member is qualified for the position and maintains international emergency management expertise. CAS IAA roster members with minimal foreign policy and/or international emergency management expertise will focus on the daily operational tempo and requirements of the NRCC.

**COA 2:** Add the Daily Shift Report and standard operating procedures concerning the tracking and documentation of all requests for information and requests for technical assistance to the Desk Officer’s Reference Guide.

**COA 3:** Ensure an overview of all interagency partners, their roles/responsibilities, and areas of regulatory authority are provided to all Desk Officers onboarding to the roster. Add this overview to the Desk Officer’s Reference Guide and ensure any Officers that conduct training cover this critical information.
CONCLUSION

FEMA’s Chief and Advisory Section International Affairs Advisor (CAS IAA) Cadre began 2020 with a small roster of seven (7) personnel. Three months later, the CAS IAA Cadre grew to 11 members, executed the IAS CONOPS, established and managed weekly meetings with the International Resource Coordination Group (IRCG), and staffed a 17-hour desk 7 days a week, reporting directly to the National Response Coordination Center’s Chief and Deputy.

FEMA’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic was historic, and the dedication shown by our CAS IAA Cadre members was exemplary. During the 8-month deployment, Cadre members and interagency partners identified several Key Actions. Some of these are areas for improvement, such as ensuring coordination early and often with relevant task forces or teams that are created during a response. Other Key Actions rose to the category of best practice and are now incorporated into the way the Cadre members operate. One example of a best practice developed during the COVID-19 deployment was the use of a newly formalized acceptance process by the NRCS Chief and Deputy Chief.

During our 8-month deployment to the NRCC, the CAS IAA Cadre staff assisted with the successful fulfillment of resource requests coming from states, local governments, and territories through foreign assistance. This group of dedicated individuals facilitated the acceptance of more than 35 million pieces of PPE from foreign entities delivered to 40 states, 4 territories and the District of Columbia. With each piece of PPE that ended up in the hands of our front-line health care workers or first responders, the CAS IAA Cadre staff helped achieve FEMA’s mission.

U.S. Government and military officials pose with Republic of Korea officials and flight crew members.
Republic of Korea cargo plane.
APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Table 6: Observations and Courses of Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Strategic Goal</th>
<th>Courses of Action</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate CAS IAA Cadre Structure.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Adapted cadre structure, deployed all steady-state IAD staff.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA Cadre needed to recruit, onboard, and train at least 4 new cadre members.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Recruited and trained 4 new cadre members and revised Roster Coordinator position’s roles and responsibilities.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA Cadre implemented new tools and procedures to support the increased areas of responsibility and a remote/telework posture.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Updated standard operating procedures.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative support to the cadre identified as a requirement.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Updated Position Task Book, created a roster structure for NRCC Support Staff, and a desk reference guide.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA Cadre members require enhanced intra-agency and interagency coordination skills in managing the review and acceptance foreign offers of assistance to the U.S.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Develop an internal training and education program that will allow CAS IAA Cadre members to build and maintain IAS CONOPS coordination skills. Update training and education materials on an annual basis.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key partners and stakeholders are unaware of IAS processes for accepting foreign offers of assistance.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Develop a training and education system for key partners and stakeholders in the foreign offers of assistance process. Materials should be adapted to internal (i.e. FEMA components) or external partners, as appropriate. Schedule briefings and trainings with key internal and external partners on an annual basis.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CAS IAA Cadre created a standardized offer specification form and checklist to facilitate the interagency foreign offer of assistance review process.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Finalize offer specification form and foreign offer of assistance execution checklist and ensure all cadre staff understand how to use them.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadre leadership defined roles and responsibilities for cadre members, improving execution of foreign offers of assistance.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Institutionalize cadre position roles and responsibilities in cadre guidance documents.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA observed the challenges of the COVID-19 response within a UCG which initially lacked sufficient accountability and processes for validating resource requirements.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The revised IAS CONOPS will address unique requirements for responding within a UCG and how to increase accountability and adjudication for offers of foreign assistance for large-scale, atypical responses such as for pandemics.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA observed the urgent need to continually clarify the roles and responsibilities for standing NRCC positions in relation to newly established taskforces within the UCG.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>At the beginning of any deployment, the CAS IAA Cadre will confirm the NRCC structure and address potential areas of overlap with other NRCC positions and/or taskforces to reduce the Agency’s risk related to potential offers of foreign assistance.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The existence of a well-established mechanism for managing foreign offers of assistance provided immediate management options for a rapidly evolving situation.</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Conduct an honest analysis of IAS CONOPS as part of the revision process. A formal training course/orientation should be developed to maximize awareness and understanding of the IAS CONOPS and the varied issues arising from offers of foreign assistance and procurement.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX A: IMPROVEMENT PLAN

#### Table 6: Observations and Courses of Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Strategic Goal</th>
<th>Courses of Action</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The IRCG was limited in decision-making capabilities.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>Consider refining purpose and definition of the IRCG when the IAS CONOPS is reviewed and revised.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The high level of activity involving offers and procurements of PPE during the COVID-19 response generated daily interagency conversations on import controls and procedures.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The CAS IAA Cadre should work with CBP and other regulatory agencies to document the issues and challenges faced in both offers of foreign assistance and procurements and, where necessary, develop policy development options to minimize barriers to life-saving assistance.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CAS IAA Cadre worked through a variety of legal and logistical challenges in supporting the response.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>The CAS IAA Cadre should work with the interagency to address obstacles in facilitating foreign assistance to Tribal Nations, and, where necessary, develop guidance for future disasters.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA Cadre tackled the problematic issue of bringing in foreign first responders under the IAS.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>IAD, ORR and OCC continue working with interagency partners to refine legislative proposal language that will address most, if not all, of the well-documented legal challenges for employing foreign first responders in domestic responses.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS IAA Cadre pre-positioned appropriate staff members during the COVID-19 Response.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Maintain IAD’s cross-trained expertise thus expanding the roster’s capacity. Each IAD team member is qualified for the position and maintains international emergency management expertise. CAS IAA roster members with minimal foreign policy and/or international emergency management expertise will focus on the daily operational tempo and requirements of the NRCC.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking requests for information (RFIs) related to offers of foreign assistance and lines of effort involving technical assistance was critical.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Add the Daily Shift Report and standard operating procedures to the Desk Officer’s Reference Guide.</td>
<td>Complete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration among interagency partners enhanced the technical assistance support to our foreign partners.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ensure an overview of all interagency partners, their roles/responsibilities, and areas of regulatory authority are provided to all Desk Officers onbonading to the roster. Add this overview to the Desk Officer’s Reference Guide and ensure any Officers that conduct training cover this critical information.</td>
<td>In Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pivoting to support new requirements such as the Export Cargo Review Working Group. IAA’s Director was designated to serve on the newly formed “Export Cargo Review” Working Group that continues to meet daily and review PPE export requests.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY

#### Table 7: List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IAR</td>
<td>Initial Assessment Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFI</td>
<td>Area for Improvement: Outcomes that did not meet expectations set out in plans, or instances where the program did not follow the process or system requirements, but the outcome was inadequate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PBP</td>
<td>Potential Best Practice: A new or innovative solution to a problem that is not supported by current doctrine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAS</td>
<td>Chief and Advisory Section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBP</td>
<td>U.S. Customs and Border Protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIP</td>
<td>Continuous Improvement Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoS</td>
<td>U.S. Department of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTS</td>
<td>Deployment Tracking System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Emergency Medical Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HHS</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFC</td>
<td>Israel Home Front Command</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAS CONOPS</td>
<td>International Assistance System Concept of Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAD</td>
<td>International Affairs Division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IAT</td>
<td>International Activity Tracker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRCG</td>
<td>International Resources Coordination Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRSA</td>
<td>International Resources Staging Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEMA</td>
<td>Israel National Emergency Management Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGB</td>
<td>U.S. National Guard Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRCC</td>
<td>National Response Coordination Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRCS</td>
<td>National Response Coordination Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OCC</td>
<td>Office of Chief Counsel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFI</td>
<td>Request for Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOP</td>
<td>Standard Operating Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STR</td>
<td>Strength: Activities within policy or guidance that yielded better results than usual in a particular disaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TFR</td>
<td>Temporary Final Rule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDVA</td>
<td>U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USG</td>
<td>United States Government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>