

## FUNDING BIODEFENSE

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**S**UBSTANTIAL U.S. BIODEFENSE PROGRAMS exist in 7 federal agencies, with HHS accounting for two-thirds of the total, followed by DHS (18%) and DoD (11%). The other agencies with sizable biodefense programs include the USDA, EPA, the State Department, and the National Science Foundation. Smaller biodefense programs exist elsewhere in the federal government.

Many, if not most, “biodefense” expenditures serve multiple purposes. Work done to improve the ability of local public health agencies to cope with a bioterror attack also serves to improve response to natural epidemics and to public health emergencies generally. Hospital preparedness programs are designed to increase hospitals’ ability to care for mass casualties, whatever the cause of the illnesses or injuries. Biosurveillance efforts are intended to strengthen the nation’s capacity to detect disease outbreaks before they expand beyond control, and these systems also provide decision makers with better situational awareness during disasters of many kinds.

The task of tracking and assessing the effects of federal biodefense funding is made especially difficult because of the number of federal agencies with responsibility for different aspects of U.S. biodefense, the variety of programs and initiatives that have direct bearing on biodefense preparedness and response, and the reality that much of the federal funding is directed to activities carried out at the state and local levels, making exact accounts of federal expenditures and their effectiveness problematic.

President Obama has highlighted the need to strengthen biosecurity as one of his top homeland security priorities. To accomplish this goal, agency biodefense budgets must be made more transparent and easy to identify, and the organization and coordination of overall federal biodefense expenditures should be reviewed and improved.

### *Recommendations*

► **Increase transparency of biodefense budgets.**

Since 2001, federal agencies have become somewhat more transparent in their budgeting and accounting for biodefense programs, but most agencies do not specifically highlight biodefense in their budgets.

Moreover, the 1-year budget cycles imposed on all federal agencies (except DoD) make it virtually impossible to coherently plan or effectively execute or assess many biodefense programs. If defense against potentially destabilizing epidemics is truly considered a national security priority, federal planning, execution, and assessment of biodefense programs should have the longer planning horizon and budget cycles currently in place for DoD programs. At a minimum, critical biodefense preparation and response programs should have 2-year planning and budget cycles. Programs should be tied to specific national security goals and subjected to regular progress assessments.

Thus far, neither the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) nor the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has assumed responsibility for accounting for biodefense funding across the federal government. As a result, the White House cannot know how much is being spent on this critical national security priority. Without more budget transparency, it will be impossible to establish true priorities, identify gaps, eliminate redundancies, or determine the impact of the money spent on biodefense.

The White House, in coordination with OMB, should prepare annual reports on the combined federal biodefense budget and should require that individual agencies more clearly separate out biodefense programs in their annual budgets-in-brief to make identification and tracking of biodefense funds easier government-wide.

► **Review the organization of civilian biodefense strategy and programs.**

After the anthrax attacks of 2001, the Bush Administration initiated a range of biodefense initiatives and also greatly increased federal and state funding for existing biodefense programs begun during the Clinton Administration. Many of these programs have accomplished a great deal and have been critical to advancing disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation capabilities. There is, however, no overall strategic plan for the U.S. biosecurity effort. Civilian biodefense remains an array of programs and projects, not tightly coordinated, and spread across multiple agencies and congressional committees.

The Obama Administration regards biodefense and biosecurity as a national security priority, but there is little evidence that the agencies responsible for biodefense programs regard biosecurity as a core mission, insofar as agency priorities are reflected in budgets or the time cabinet heads spend on issues. Interagency rivalry on biodefense matters is common; top-level coordination and the resources and leadership required for sustained interagency collaboration are rare. The sprawling array of congressional committees with jurisdiction over bits and pieces of the biodefense budget also detracts from strategic coherence or efficient, government-wide mission execution.

The Executive Office of the President should devise a clear biosecurity strategy: an explicit articulation of our national biodefense goals and priorities; clear assignments of roles, responsibilities, and authorities to specific agencies; and designation of someone in the Executive Office of the President with overall responsibility for strategic oversight and coordination. Absent such strategic direction and coordination, U.S. biodefense will continue to be a collection of programs whose shortcomings and disconnects may be recognized only when they are needed in the midst of potential crisis.

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