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**Testimony on
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Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) activities related to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill response. As the Acting Director of Operations Coordination and Planning (OPS), I am responsible for integrating departmental and strategic level interagency planning and enabling the coordination of DHS operations to effectively conduct joint homeland security operations across Components and mission areas. This morning, I will provide a general overview of the purpose and structure of OPS and discuss our functions and our role in the administration-wide oil spill response.

OPS Overview

As articulated in Section 101 of the Homeland Security Act and various Presidential Directives, the Secretary of Homeland Security is “the focal point regarding natural and manmade crises and emergency planning.”

To support the Secretary in this role, OPS ensures that the Department has collaborative operations coordination and planning capabilities at the strategic level. OPS provides support to departmental leadership by facilitating internal DHS operational decision-making and the Department's involvement in interagency operations.

Operations Coordination across DHS

The National Operations Center (NOC)—which is the primary national-level hub for situational awareness and operations coordination across the federal government for domestic incident management—is central to our ability to maintain situational awareness for the Secretary and Department leadership. The NOC collects and synthesizes all-source information across all threats and all hazards, covering the full spectrum of homeland security missions and partners, sharing event-related and operational information with federal, state, local, territorial, tribal, and nongovernmental partners. Additionally, the NOC serves as the primary coordinating center for other federal operations centers focused on homeland security operations. In performing these functions, the NOC ensures that critical information related to terrorism, disasters, and other threats reaches government decision-makers in a timely manner.

The NOC operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to support the Secretary and the Department's mission.

Department Planning across DHS

OPS coordinates with DHS Components and interagency partners to develop strategic-level plans to support the effective execution of the Secretary's incident coordination responsibilities, as defined in the Homeland Security Act and Presidential Directives. OPS works with representatives from DHS Components and other federal, state, and local partners to develop strategic plans and guidance. OPS also supports the Secretary by providing operational planning expertise during crises.

OPS, along with other interagency partners, is currently conducting numerous planning efforts. OPS remains focused on developing DHS plans for primary Departmental missions and for

DHS support to other departments. For instance, OPS provided its substantial planning expertise in interagency coordination and support planning for H1N1 planning and the Haitian earthquake response planning.

Continuity Coordination

As DHS Continuity Coordinator, I am responsible for ensuring the effectiveness and survivability of all DHS Primary Mission Essential Functions (PMEFs). OPS works with Component leadership to ensure that PMEFs will be sustained even during emergencies that could significantly hamper personnel, facilities, or operations for homeland security missions.

Operations Coordination During the BP Deepwater Horizon Response

Prior to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the Department was preparing for a Spill of National Significance (SONS). From 22-25 March 2010, OPS, along with many other federal, state, and private organizations, participated in the U.S. Coast Guard-sponsored SONS Exercise 2010. OPS leadership and the NOC participated in a simulated response to an oil spill affecting the Northeastern United States to refine our plans and procedures related to a SONS response. The proximity of this exercise did help inform our efforts in support of the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill.

The Deepwater Horizon oil rig exploded on 20 April 2010. In the hours and days following the explosion, OPS, the NOC, DHS Components, and our partners supported the Secretary, the Department, and the interagency community in responding to what began as a search and rescue event. Concurrently, we began to establish an integrated interagency framework to address the potential environmental impact of the event and to coordinate with all state and local governments, anticipating and planning for a worst-case scenario.

On 21 April 2010, OPS initiated the crisis action process, which allows us to dedicate staff that can provide detailed information and decision support for a specific incident, while minimizing the impact to our ongoing missions. On 29 April 2010, a SONS was declared and OPS activated the full Crisis Action Team (CAT) to support the Secretary and the National Incident Commander, who would be later named, in directing response efforts. The CAT stood down on 6 August 2010, after 99 days of continuous operation.

OPS actions during the BP Deepwater Horizon response, with support from our partners, included the following:

- Coordinating responses to Requests for Information (RFIs) on a nearly daily basis;
- Creating hundreds of Senior Leadership Briefs (SLBs);
- Developing decision support products for the Secretary and other DHS leadership; and
- Contributing to a robust interagency response effort through regular coordination calls, teleconferences, and other briefings.

In response to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, OPS provided strategic level support, in accordance with a predefined set of plans and standard operating procedures, for the National Incident Commander, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the President of the United

States. The response to this environmental catastrophe was the largest oil spill response in U.S. history, and at its peak encompassed more than 7,000 vessels, nearly 50,000 personnel, and dozens of federal, state and local government and private sector agencies and entities. Like other incidents, after action and lessons learned reviews are ongoing.

OPS remains committed to providing professional expertise in the areas of operations coordination and operational planning in order to prepare for, prevent, protect, respond to, and recover from natural and manmade disasters affecting the people of the United States.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.