

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A PUBLICLY AVAILABLE LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS TOOL FOR BIODEFENSE POLICY

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OUTBREAKS OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES, coupled with an increasing biological threat from non-state actors, highlight the continued need to prioritize biodefense. The Blue Ribbon Panel on Biodefense has noted that the United States remains “underprepared” for a catastrophic biological attack or pandemic, and it has emphasized that increased coordination is essential. Consistent with this recommendation, the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act tasked the secretaries of Defense, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, and Agriculture to “jointly develop a national biodefense strategy and associated implementation plan, which shall include a review and assessment of biodefense policies, practices, programs and initiatives.”

This assignment is not insignificant. Since 2001, multiple policy directives and public laws have been enacted, assigning enduring biodefense responsibilities to at least 16 different entities in the federal government. As a result, it is difficult to comprehend the full continuum. In 2017, Pacific Northwest National Laboratory chartered an internal effort to capture relevant federal biodefense policy directives and laws in a format conducive to visualization and to better understanding the current state of the US biodefense enterprise.

The Biodefense Policy Landscape Analysis Tool (B-PLAT) is publicly available at: <https://bplat.pnnl.gov> and captures more than 200 enduring biodefense responsibilities assigned by the following directives and laws:

- Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 9: Defense of United States Agriculture & Food
- HSPD-10: Biodefense for the 21st Century
- HSPD-18: Medical Countermeasures Against Weapons of Mass Destruction
- Public Law (PL) 101-298: Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989
- PL 102-182: Chemical & Biological Weapons Control & Warfare Elimination Act of 1991
- PL 107-56: Uniting & Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT) Act of 2001
- PL 107-188: Public Health Security & Bioterrorism Preparedness & Response Act of 2002
- PL 107-296: Homeland Security Act of 2002
- PL 108-276: Project BioShield Act of 2004
- PL 109-417: Pandemic & All-Hazards Preparedness Act
- PL 110-53: Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007

- PL 113-5: Pandemic & All-Hazards Preparedness Re-authorization Act of 2013
- PL 115-43: Securing Our Agriculture and Food Act of 2017
- Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 21: Critical Infrastructure Security & Resilience

All responsibilities were assigned a pillar as defined by HSPD-10, a primary agency or agencies, secondary agency or agencies (if specified), and source. Where responsibilities are incorporated into the US Code (USC), the USC reference is also included. Responsibilities related to specific sectors (food, agriculture, water), 4 specific activities (surveillance, countermeasures, decontamination, attribution), international activities, lead organization in HHS, and FEMA lead in DHS were tagged upon request. These tags are intended to help users parse the data but were not assigned to all responsibilities. Transient responsibilities, such as reports, were not captured, nor were measures of implementation, such as programmatic budgets.

The primary documents used to develop the B-PLAT are available in a Document Library on the website. Given the number of laws and directives relating to biodefense, and the complexity of the USC, the B-PLAT is not intended to

be a comprehensive reference of all biodefense and public health-related responsibilities. Rather, the B-PLAT is intended to reflect the current state of the biodefense enterprise. It has been made available as an informational tool to further national dialogue on biodefense. We encourage you to visit the website and email the primary contacts with your constructive comments, questions, or suggestions.

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