

Inside Energy

July 6, 1987

DOE Official Says New Crisis Plan Needed

By Sheryl Morris

DOE lacks a master plan for dealing with energy emergencies and lines of authority among various governmental agencies are unclear, E.V. Badolato, the department's deputy assistant secretary for energy emergencies, has said.

Badolato's criticisms of DOE's current system were delivered in a paper presented to a recent Washington conference on global energy security. A DOE spokesman confirmed last week that the department's energy emergencies office is studying the issue of developing an overall strategic framework for emergency preparedness.

While DOE now has a structure for dealing with energy emergencies, Badolato, a former Marine colonel, pulled few punches in his paper in an apparent effort to make the case for overhauling the current system. Indications are that Badolato's intent is to devise some sort of proposal for DOE officials to consider.

Charles Rivers Associates, a petroleum consulting firm in Boston, is putting together an analysis of oil industry vulnerabilities for Badolato's office to use in designing a responsive government mechanism for petroleum supply interruptions. Badolato said in his paper the study will aid in developing management tools.

Badolato noted there is a "pressing requirement for a simple and clear articulation of an overall strategy for the way this nation goes about managing energy emergencies." While DOE is capable of responding to an emergency, the potential energy disruptions are ever-changing, and DOE's efforts to meet future emergencies need to be "better focused," Badolato said.

He noted that "strategic thinking" should begin at the secretarial level, providing structure for staff activities.

"What has apparently been happening in the past hierarchy of DOE strategic and policy thinking is that it has begun at the lower end of departmental thinking and extended only downward to the staff level. It's like a man watering his garden by pointing his hose at the ground full force and getting a lot of runoff, instead of pointing his hose skyward and letting the drops fall for maximum effect." There is need for "innovative efforts" to overcome the status quo, Badolato said.

A specific strategic framework is needed to delineate DOE's functional relationship with other governmental agencies, to ensure some unity in DOE's emergency programs and to provide continuity between emergency-preparedness efforts and DOE's program agenda, Badolato said.

“It is apparent that DOE’s strategic thinking has not kept pace with the recent momentum of programs dedicated to developing concepts on preparing for and responding to energy emergencies,” he said. He referred to a recent DOE inspector general’s report that “substantiates this need to improve planning.” And he said strategic studies on energy security appeared to be the “victim of priorities” at DOE, with internal studies being done in a “non-integrated manner.” Studies being performed outside the department, such as under the National Defense University, are done with little DOE input, which, if provided, could offer “some measure of order and consistency of thinking,” he said.

Badolato said creation of an energy emergency strategic framework would complement other policy efforts such as the National Energy Policy Plan and the recent DOE energy-security study. The framework is important because of the need to “close the gap between energy security policy, planning, and the procedural structure for dealing with energy emergencies.”

He suggested that the policy branch of the energy emergencies office be enlarged with “proven innovative energy preparedness strategic thinkers.” This could be done by rotating talented staff, Badolato said, from DOE labs as well as outside the department. And long range plans could be made for “adequate resources” to the office to support the effort. He said that in terms of moving forward a more cohesive program for energy emergency preparedness, DOE already has the “basic talent” for that. “What is now needed is to heighten overall consciousness, participation, and support for emergency planning,” Badolato concluded.

Badolato has been at DOE since 1985, serving as a special assistant advising Secretary John Herrington on security at weapons facilities until his appointment last fall to the deputy secretary slot.