



IT Program Assessment OHA – BioWatch Gen-3 – (2010)

Review

The DHS CIO conducted a comprehensive program review of the OHA-BioWatch Gen-3 program on April 2, 2010. The BioWatch program provides bio-aerosol threat monitoring and consequence management guidance to federal, state and local agencies in selected metropolitan areas. BioWatch enables early detection and increased situational awareness to reduce the intensity and duration of a biological event by monitoring information sources in near real-time to detect emerging threats, connecting experts immediately as potential threats are detected, and alerting local government officials and the public early of potential threats. The purpose of the Gen-3 program is to enhance existing technologies and processes that support detection and analysis of bioterrorist attacks by implementing devices with reduced testing and notification times. The Gen-3 program will also increase capability by expanding the number of sites where detectors are located throughout the country allowing for a broader reach in bio-threat detection.

The BioWatch Program manager requested support for system operational test and evaluation (T&E) in November when field testing will be conducted. The IT portions of this program are fairly standard and include verifying that the chemical collector device can communicate to the Systems Integrator Operations and Logistics service via three types of connections as well as verifying if the collection device is operational.

Upon mutual agreement it was concluded that the program work with the DHS Enterprise Data Management Office (EDMO) to develop a standard for data exchange with state and local governments.

Assessment

OHA operates a successful program with well-established relationships between the Department and the user communities at the state and local levels. The program management office appears well prepared to manage inherent risks in the evolution of the hardware, software and process model. Currently, the program is evaluating alternative Gen-3 solutions. Moving forward, OHA and OCIO have agreed to work closer together to preserve a mutual understanding of Department requirements and program progress. Specifically, OCIO will support operational testing while OHA participates in Department-level planning.

Score: 4