

He was under impressed with the CACO organization. The organization is not set up to handle what happened regardless of how competent they are. There was very little senior involvement there. They needed a flag officer or a senior Captain who would sit in on the conference calls with the CNO and other senior decision makers.

The information that was being put out by the Family Assistance Center was very helpful and exactly what the families wanted to know. The Navy CACO organization did not work well with the Family Assistance Center, nor did they put out the kind of information that the families wanted to know. The CACO organization had trouble with continuity between their watch sections. One of the roots of the problem was that there was one CACO coordinator who is fairly junior. They needed someone who was the CACO coordinator who had the horsepower to make things happen.

The Family Assistance Center's attitude was if there is information it should be given to the families. The Navy's attitude was if you want information you can go sit at the Family Assistance Center. The big question the families wanted to know was what was the status of the search. The Navy kept saying it was search and rescue for two weeks following, even though OSD and the Army were saying it was search and recovery. Much of this was caused because there was no senior person keeping the big picture; everyone was focused on the small things. LCDR Fulkerson suggests establishing a system similar to FEMA. If there is a big emergency the regional coordinator doesn't handle it, they bring in someone with more seniority and horsepower to handle major events.

It was difficult to get a lot of answers pertaining to LCDR Elseth's benefits because he was a SELRES. IT was good that LCDR Fulkerson was assigned to LCDR Elseth's case because he knows the SELRES organization as well as the Navy Manpower organization.

Lessons Learned LCDR Fulkerson

Dover didn't have LCDR Elseth's medical record. LCDR Fulkerson called the Reserve Center to see if they knew where it was. The medical record for LCDR Fulkerson and two other reservists from the Pentagon were sitting at the Reserve Center. Someone had called looking for them but never picked them up and they had been left sitting there. LCDR Fulkerson went to pick them up and took them to the CACO organization. They weren't sure what to do with them. He then took them to the Joint Family Assistance Center where the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology was set up. They told him they could courier the medical records to Dover the next day. LCDR Fulkerson didn't like that so he found two chiefs who were LCDR Vauk's CACO's. They drove the medical records to Dover. The next day both LCDR Elseth and LCDR Vauk were identified.

LCDR Fulkerson stopped interacting with the Navy CACO unless he had to and just interacted with the Family Assistance Center because he got information there. The Navy CACO system should have moved over to the Family Assistance Center. The Navy had a person assigned to the Joint Family Assistance Center, CDR BrownWahler.

She viewed herself as a joint person and did nothing to try to involve the Navy CACO organization or get them information.

At one point ADM Weaver said they should move the Navy CACO organization to the JFAC, but it never happened.

In his experiences in this case when things went well it was because of heroic effort. The Navy relies on heroic effort in too many cases. He was very proud of the actions of our senior leadership, but disappointed in the actions of the middle leadership.

The standard answer in the CACO organization was “I don’t know”. It should have been “I’ll find out the right answer”. He feels the Navy wasn’t prepared to do this, but they told people they were. They don’t use the lessons learned effectively or to the extent they should to fix the problems that have occurred in the past. Individual people did as much as they could but from a leadership standpoint at the CACO level and Millington level they did not do a good job. The senior people, CNO, etc., were all at the JFAC. The leadership at the CACO level did not spend much time at the JFAC at all.

Capt Sweeney

Capt Sweeney is looking forward to the Navy going to a web based system. The Marine Corps has a system where a person in the field can pull up the award write-up from the web, fill in the blanks, select submission chain and submit. This would alleviate all the paper shuffling. They are evaluating the funding for that type of project



Lessons Learned: People are paying more attention to recall lists. They have started looking at where they keep their database backups. They are looking at having replicated data in a different building or city.

Capt Kahn

Lessons Learned:

The CACO instructions are helpful but they should be considered guidelines, not in concrete. The Navy decision to send CACOs to everyone, military and civilian was a good one. The Navy made this decision right away.