

Prepared Statement of Brigadier General Mark A. Graham

Deputy Commanding General, Fifth U.S. Army

February 1, 2005

Madam Chairman and Members of the Committee: I am honored to appear before you today to discuss my participation in the evacuation efforts of the City of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

I am Brigadier General Mark A. Graham, Deputy Commanding General of Fifth United States Army/Army North, stationed at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. I was serving in this position on Wednesday, 31 August 2005, when we deployed an Operational Command Post (OCP) consisting of 24 Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians from Fort Sam Houston, Texas, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. On Tuesday, 30 August, Lieutenant General (LTG) Robert T. Clark, the Commanding General of Fifth United States Army, spoke with LTG Russel J. Honore, Commander of Joint Task Force (JTF)-Katrina, and proposed to send an Operational Command Post to Louisiana. LTG Honore agreed to our deployment. The OCP was sent as part of JTF-Katrina to augment Colonel Anthony F. Daskevich, the Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO) for Louisiana and his Defense Coordinating Element (DCE) in Baton Rouge, to provide planning support to FEMA and to enhance the communications and coordination capability for JTF-Katrina.

I arrived at the State Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge at approximately 5:00 PM, Wednesday, 31 August. I immediately reported to LTG Honore. With the concurrence of Louisiana Governor Kathleen B. Blanco and Major General Bennett C. Landreneau, The Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana, LTG Honore changed our mission and directed me to evacuate the City of New Orleans and the greater New Orleans area in order to save lives and relieve human suffering.

We immediately began our planning and worked through the night with federal, state, and local agencies to develop an evacuation plan with the Superdome being the main effort. Our plan considered the use of multiple modes of transportation – ground, air, rail, and water. However, execution of our plan was based on available resources.

We coordinated with FEMA, who had already begun efforts to obtain commercial and school buses. We used these buses as they became available. Commercial buses were used to transport displaced persons out-of-state to shelters identified and coordinated by FEMA. School buses were used only to transport people to the airport for evacuation by air. We synchronized our efforts and began evacuation of the Superdome upon the arrival of buses mid-morning on Thursday, 1 September. This evacuation was coordinated with the National Guard personnel at the Superdome. The National Guard Soldiers escorted the evacuees from the Superdome, across a pedestrian bridge, through the Hyatt Regency hotel lobby where our liaison personnel then efficiently had them load buses located on the connecting city street where they were then transported to shelters.

We initially used the Texas Highway Patrol and later the Louisiana State Police to escort buses for security purposes and route orientation. We established command and control liaison (LNO) team (C2) nodes at the Superdome and Mile Marker 209 (MM 209) an easily identifiable road intersection which included a truck stop on Interstate Highway 10, which was approximately twenty miles from the Superdome. MM 209 was the best point where we could assemble such a large number of buses and quickly dispatch them to the Superdome and other areas of the city.

We also deployed liaison (LNO) team C2 nodes to the New Orleans Airport and the I-10 Causeway. All of our C2 nodes were used to coordinate and synchronize our 24-hour evacuation operations. We provided our own communications using iridium satellite phones and intermittent Blackberry coverage. During the evening of Thursday, 1 September, the OCP was augmented with an additional 28 Soldiers and Department of the Army civilians from Fifth US Army. This allowed us to better maintain 24-hour operations. Utilizing this network by the end of the day on 1 September, we had evacuated approximately 15,000 displaced persons out of the City of New Orleans.

Air evacuation operations began at the New Orleans Airport on Friday, 2 September.

However, the majority of persons that the Department evacuated left by bus.

Additionally, we used one AMTRAK train to move under 100 persons from the Superdome to Baton Rouge and a river ferry to move people to Algiers Point where they boarded buses. Also on 2 September, LTG Honore coordinated with the Louisiana National Guard to secure the Convention Center and to provide basic sustainment items.

Approximately 1000 individuals were evacuated from the Convention Center on 2 September. Overall on 2 September, we evacuated approximately 32,000 additional displaced persons for a total of 47,000 from the Superdome, the I-10 Causeway, Algiers Point, and the Convention Center.

By Saturday, 3 September, we completed the evacuation efforts at the Superdome. We had shifted the main effort to the Convention Center. Within seven hours, the Convention Center evacuation was complete. By the end of the day, Saturday, 3 September, we had evacuated approximately 18,000 additional displaced persons for a total of over 65,000 persons.

On Sunday, 4 September, we closed our command and control nodes at the Superdome and Convention Center. With fewer than 1500 additional displaced persons evacuated on this day, we considered the main evacuation of the City of New Orleans and the greater New Orleans area complete. At this point, we had successfully coordinated the efforts and provided command and control for the evacuation of New Orleans.

Although Hurricane Katrina was a tragedy, I am extremely proud of the professionalism and selfless service of each military and civilian member of our Fifth Army/ARNORTH team. Their superb efforts to coordinate with local, state, and federal agencies were instrumental in our ability to evacuate over 65,000 displaced persons in a 72-hour period. Their dedication and devotion was critical to what I consider an enormous undertaking to

alleviate the difficult circumstances and suffering of fellow Americans. We were simply “Americans helping Americans”.

Thank you, again, for allowing me to testify before this committee. I am now prepared to answer your questions.