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THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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Press Gaggle by Dana Perino

Aboard Air Force One
En Route Mississippi

12:00 P.M. EDT

MS. PERINO: All right. We are on our way to Mississippi for the Katrina anniversary event.

The President's schedule, I'll run through that quickly. This morning he had his normal briefings. He had a meeting with the Secretary of Homeland Security where he had an update on Hurricane Ernesto. Attending were the Chief of Staff, Fran Townsend, Secretary Chertoff, and Director Paulison. Director Paulison led the briefing.

Basically, the briefing talked about the track of the storm, how right now it looks like it will be a Florida event. Florida is preparing and as of now, there has been no request for federal assistance or support. The President will be getting regular updates.

Q -- do you know when --(inaudible) --

MS. PERINO: Not yet, no.

The President and Mrs. Bush participated in an interview with April Ryan of American Urban Radio Network. The President, upon arriving, will have lunch with community leaders -- pool at the bottom. We will release a list of the participants. Then he will have a walking tour of a Mississippi neighborhood -- pool coverage, as well -- and his remarks on Gulf Coast recovery -- expanded pool.

Those three events are in Biloxi. And then he will go to Gulfport, where he will visit the United States Marine, Incorporated business. And then he will chopper to New Orleans where he will have dinner with Louisiana state and local officials. Again, we will release the names of those participants.

Q -- (inaudible) --

MS. PERINO: Yes, ma'am.

I just want to point out one thing. We don't always mention the Freedom Corps volunteer in these gaggles, but just to point out to you today, I think part of the message this week is to remember and be thankful for all the volunteers, armies of compassion that geared up after Hurricane Katrina and continued.

The Freedom Corps greeter is Ken Wetzell. He was born and raised in Biloxi, Mississippi. He's 46 years old. Right after Hurricane Katrina, he delivered food and supplies to his neighbors. He helped clear the debris. And then in September of 2005, he began volunteering with the Hope Crisis Response Network, and that organization deploys volunteers and resources to impacted areas to assist with immediate disaster relief needs, as well as long-term

recovery efforts. And he is a site coordinator, so he supervises and works alongside teams of volunteers who travel to the Gulf Coast to help rebuild homes.

And with that, I'll take any of your questions.

Q On Iran, I realize that the deadline hasn't been reached yet, but there appears to be a movement for the United States to go ahead with sanctions without going through the U.N. -- is that correct? And also, how soon after August 31st could there be sanctions imposed?

MS. PERINO: The question was about Iran and whether or not reports about the United States making decisions about going alone are accurate, and how soon after August 31st there would be action -- correct?

Q Sanctions.

MS. PERINO: Sanctions. I saw that report; I don't know its veracity. I saw it was unnamed officials.

Q It was Bolton.

MS. PERINO: Was it Bolton? Over the weekend. I'm sorry, I didn't see that report. I saw the one this morning in The Washington Times. What I know is that the P5 plus one is meeting on August 31st. That will be three days from now. They are in communication with one another right now. And there's just nothing to report yet in terms of next steps or action. If that changes between now and Thursday, I will certainly let you know immediately. But for now, I don't have anything to add to what John Bolton said over the weekend.

Q Is the President going to go to the Lower Ninth Ward or the Ninth Ward in New Orleans tomorrow?

MS. PERINO: The question was whether or not the President will go to the Lower Ninth Ward. As you know, on these Gulf Coast trips, if you've been traveling with us before, we don't announce specific locations because of security and logistics. So we'll keep you updated on that.

Q On Ernesto, has the President talked to his brother about it? Have they been in contact on the phone about it, and what have they said?

MS. PERINO: I'm not sure if the President has spoken to his brother, but I know that Secretary Chertoff has. I can check on that for you.

Q Apparently, Dana, there was an interview in which the President suggested it might be a good ten years before New Orleans comes back.* Is that a new time frame that he's thinking about or talking about today?

MS. PERINO: I'm not aware of the interview you're referring to and I don't know the specific number, if he would have said that. What he has always said from the beginning, and this has been repeated by state and local officials, is that the devastation from Hurricane Katrina was so great that 365 days later we are not at the finish line. We are starting to see the rebuilding efforts take root. The debris has been largely removed, almost all in Mississippi and gone a long way in Louisiana. The schools are starting to come back. Businesses are starting to come back. The local and state officials have their housing plans now in order. Those have been approved by the federal government, and that money is available for them to draw on.

So I think even Ray Nagin yesterday on Meet The Press said it is going to take at least five years in terms of the building cycle. So it is going to be a long road back to rebuilding fully, but I think it's important to remember that the expectations that were set last August and September was that a year from now was not going to be -- you weren't going to be able to see the city completely rebuilt. So it is going to take a long period of time.

In terms of like, 10 years, I don't know about exact time frame, but it's certainly going to take several years. And the President has reaffirmed, and you will hear him again today reaffirm his commitment to the entire region, especially in terms of moving forward on the parallel tracks of schools, jobs and housing. And all three of those

things need to be moving forward together at the same time so that they can all complement one another, because you can't bring people back unless you have schools or jobs or homes.

Q What expectations do you have on Annan's visit to the region? And secondly, what is Marine, Inc.?

MS. PERINO: As far as Annan's visit, I think I told you last Wednesday that the President spoke to Secretary General Annan and said he was very interested in his trip and asked the Secretary to give him a ring when he returns.

As far as expectations, I wouldn't set any. I think that we'll see how the trip goes, and then hear from him how it goes. We obviously noted over the weekend that the UNIFIL force is being filled out and deployed, so that's an important step in the region.

And your second question was about what is -- one moment please and I'll get that for you. The question was what is the United States Marine, Incorporated. It was founded in 1971. In 1988, the company started to design and build military, patrol and special warfare boats ranging in length from 21 to 90 feet. You'll probably find more on their website.

After Hurricane Katrina, the company moved to Gulfport from New Orleans. And prior to the storm, it employed 118 employees in New Orleans. Today they have 154 employees in Gulfport, 44 percent of those employees worked for them prior to Katrina. And their New Orleans facility is scheduled to reopen next fall, so both locations will remain open for business. They design and build military, patrol and special warfare boats.

Q How many employed before Katrina?

MS. PERINO: They had 118; today they have 154.

Q This is the President's 13th visit, is that right?

MS. PERINO: Thirteenth visit to the region, yes. Just to make sure that everyone is clear in terms of the numbers, remember right after Hurricane Katrina, not far on its heels was Hurricane Rita. And the President did make two trips to the Gulf Coast region on that -- I think two of those visits included Texas. So, by our account, this is the 13th visit to the region. I think in our fact sheet you saw last week that 82 visits had been made by the President's Cabinet.

Kelly, did you have a question?

Q I was just going to ask if he was happy with the pace of the recovery as it stands right now? I know it's going to take a long time, but is he satisfied that everything is up to speed and that the region is ready for another hurricane?

MS. PERINO: Well, I think those as two separate questions. One is about the rebuilding, the second is about the preparation for hurricane season. Yes, I think that he has confidence in the state and local officials who will be the first responders, and also in Director Paulison and Secretary Chertoff, who have worked tirelessly not just with the Gulf Coast region, but they reviewed 75 hurricane preparation plans across the country -- I'm sorry, across the United States. Actually, I think it was -- I'm sorry -- it was all 50 states and an additional 75 cities.** I can get you the exact number on those. So for hurricane preparation, yes, we are better prepared.

And Director Paulison spoke about that a lot yesterday in terms of what they had done to improve communications between the federal, state and local governments. And as far as the rebuilding, the President, as you've noted, this is his 13th trip; his Cabinet has been down here 82 times. It is going to be a long road back, but they're starting to see some real progress, especially in the areas of getting the schools back. The housing money and in the form of the CDBG grants is in the hands of the state officials, and so people will start seeing those checks so then they can decide how to rebuild, or relocate if they need to in different parts of the area.

And the President encourages people to come back to the Gulf Coast region. He has spoken about the vibrancy of the culture. He loves the food. He's looking forward to getting back down here and reaffirming his commitment to

the region.

END 12:12 P.M. EDT

* The President never said that it would take 10 years to rebuild. He was talking about how we'll all reflect 10 years from now about Katrina and remember the devastation the storm wrought and how the region was rebuilt to be better and stronger. The President has said repeatedly that it will take several years of perseverance and patience to rebuild.

** 50 states, and 75 cities