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**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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## Setting the Record Straight: The August 28th Hurricane Katrina Videoconference

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"The President's participation in the August 28 videoconference was open to the press, and the full transcript of this videoconference was released to Congress and the public in the fall of 2005. President Bush participated in briefings, phone calls and conversations throughout this process, and his Administration was focused on making sure that the Federal assets were in place to help the people of New Orleans. The President has made clear - as recently as this Tuesday - that he was not satisfied with the Federal response. That is why he ordered a comprehensive 'lessons learned' report and plans to work aggressively to implement improvements to our disaster response plans by the start of hurricane season."

--Trent Duffy, White House Deputy Press Secretary, 3/2/06

### Setting The Record Straight On August 28th Hurricane Katrina Videoconference.

**Democrats Use August 28th Videoconference To Falsely Attack The White House's Hurricane Katrina Response.** "Democrats said the tape shows Bush being warned in urgent terms of the potential magnitude of the storm, making it less defensible that the administration did not act with more dispatch to be ready." (Spencer S. Hsu and Linton Weeks, "Video Shows Bush Being Warned On Katrina," The Washington Post, 3/2/06)

### But The White House Understood The Hurricane Katrina Crisis And Response Magnitude.

- **In August 28th Remarks, President Bush Discussed Hurricane Katrina Preparations.** THE PRESIDENT: "This morning I spoke with FEMA Undersecretary Mike Brown and emergency management teams not only at the federal level but at the state level about the - Hurricane Katrina. I've also spoken to Governor Blanco of Louisiana, Governor Barbour of Mississippi, Governor Bush of Florida, and Governor Riley of Alabama. I want to thank all the folks at the federal level and the state level and the local level who have taken this storm seriously. I appreciate the efforts of the governors to prepare their citizenry for this upcoming storm. Yesterday, I signed a disaster declaration for the state of Louisiana, and this morning I signed a disaster declaration for the state of Mississippi. These declarations will allow federal agencies to coordinate all disaster relief efforts with state and local officials. We will do everything in our power to help the people in the communities affected by this storm. Hurricane Katrina is now designated a category five hurricane. We cannot stress enough the danger this hurricane poses to Gulf Coast communities. I urge all citizens to put their own safety and the safety of their families first by moving to safe ground. Please listen carefully to instructions provided by state and local officials." (President Bush, Statement By The President On Hurricane Katrina And The Iraq Constitution, Crawford, TX , 8/28/05)
- **In August 29th Videoconference, Former FEMA Director Michael Brown Said The President Was "Asking A Lot Of Really Good Questions I Would Expect Him To Ask."** BROWN: "The President

remains very, very interested in this situation. ... He's obviously watching the television a lot, and he had some questions about the Dome, he's asking questions about reports of breaches. He's asking about hospitals. He's very engaged, and he's asking a lot of really good questions I would expect him to ask." (Bill Walsh, "The Day Storm Hit, Bush Was Worried About Levees," The New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/1/06)

- **August 29th Videoconference Shows White House Concern About The Levees.** "Later in the call, White House aide Joe Hagin asks specifically about the condition of the levees." (Bill Walsh, "The Day Storm Hit, Bush Was Worried About Levees," The New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/1/06)

### **In August 29th Videoconference, The White House Was Told The Levees Were Not Breached But Knew Of Flooding And Focused On Saving Lives.**

- **In August 29th Videoconference, Gov. Kathleen Blanco Told The White House "We Have Not Breached The Levee At This Point In Time."** GOV. BLANCO: "We keep getting reports in some places that maybe water is coming over the levees. ... I think we have not breached the levee. We have not breached the levee at this point in time. That could change, but in some places we have floodwaters coming in New Orleans East and the line at St. Bernard Parish where we have waters that are 8- to 10-feet deep, and we have people swimming in there, that's got a considerable amount of water." (Bill Walsh, "The Day Storm Hit, Bush Was Worried About Levees," The New Orleans Times-Picayune, 3/1/06)
- **Despite Conflicting Reports, The Administration "Knew Of The Flooding."** MCCLELLAN: "There were conflicting reports coming in, in the initial aftermath of the storm in regards to the levee system. Some were saying it was overtopped, some were saying it was breached. And, again, we knew of the flooding that was going on, that's why our top priority was focused on saving lives. The cause of the flooding was secondary to that top priority, and that's the way it should be." (The White House, Press Gaggle, 2/10/06)
- **On August 29th, The Coast Guard Was Conducting Search And Rescue Operations.** FOX NEWS' ANITA VOGEL: "Now, earlier the Coast Guard had to step in or fly in using helicopters. They're searching for residents who are stranded, people literally stranded in their attics and they're fetching people from rooftops using baskets, making very dramatic and heroic rescues and bringing them safely, dropping them onto I-10." (Fox News' "On The Record With Greta Van Susteren," 8/29/05)
- **More Than 40,000 U.S. National Guardsmen And Women Performed Lifesaving Search And Rescue Operations, Distributed Aid, And Helped Evacuate Over 175,000 Citizens.** THE PRESIDENT: "When Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast last year, more than 40,000 Guardsmen and women rushed to the impact zone - it was the largest stateside deployment in National Guard history. They conducted search and rescue operations, distributed food and water, provided emergency medical care, protected communities from criminality, and worked around the clock to repair homes and restore power. Guard units from all 50 states, three U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia provided assistance - and together, they saved lives and helped evacuate over 175,000 people stranded by the storm." (President Bush, Remarks On The Global War On Terror, Washington, DC, 2/9/06)

### **The President Was Engaged In The Katrina Response And Mobilized Federal Resources.**

- **In The August 28th Videoconference, President Bush Assured State And Local Leaders The Federal Government Would Offer Continued Assistance.** "I want to assure the folks at the state level that we are fully prepared to not only help you during the storm, but we will move in whatever resources and assets we have at our disposal after the storm," Bush said, gesturing with both hands for emphasis on the digital recording." (Spencer S. Hsu and Linton Weeks, "Video Shows Bush Being Warned On Katrina," The Washington Post, 3/2/06)
- **Before The Hurricane Hit, President Bush Called Gov. Blanco To Urge A Mandatory Evacuation.** GOV. BLANCO: "Thank you, Mayor. I want to reiterate what the mayor has said. This is a very dangerous time. Just before we walked into this room, President Bush called and told me to share with all of you that he is very concerned about the citizens. He is concerned about the impact that this hurricane would have on our people. And he asked me to please ensure that there would be a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans." (CNN's "Breaking News," 8/28/05)
- **The President's Disaster Declarations Enabled The Pre-Positioning Of Supplies And Teams.** MCCLELLAN: "Well, the ones yesterday enabled federal authorities really to pre-position supplies and teams so that they were in close - in full coordination with state and local partners. Today really allows

FEMA now to start drawing down or using federal funds to get resources to those areas to help with the response and recovery from this disaster." (The White House, Press Gaggle, 8/29/05)

- **The Federal Government Deployed Medical And Rescue Teams In Preparation.** MCCLELLAN: "The President, this morning, spoke with our FEMA head, Mike Brown. Mike gave the President an update. Katrina remains a dangerous storm. We are coordinating closely with state and local authorities. We continue to urge citizens in those areas to listen to local authorities. Medical assistance teams and rescue teams have been deployed, and we're continuing to coordinate all activities very closely to make sure that the focus is on saving lives. That's where the top priority is right now, and that's where it will remain." (The White House, Press Gaggle, 8/29/05)

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