

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall near the Louisiana-Mississippi border on the morning of August 29, 2005, it set in motion a series of events that exposed vast numbers of Americans to extraordinary suffering. Not only would Katrina become the most expensive natural disaster in U.S. history, it would also prove to be one of the deadliest.

From the marshes of Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish to the urban center of New Orleans to the coastal communities of Mississippi and Alabama, Katrina cut an enormous swath of physical destruction, environmental devastation, and human suffering.

With the overtopping and breaching of the New Orleans levees, the vast majority of the city became submerged, requiring the emergency evacuation of tens of thousands of residents who had not left prior to the storm. Lifted off roofs by helicopters or carried to safety in boats, they were taken to the Superdome, the Convention Center, a piece of high ground known as the Cloverleaf, or any other dry spot in the city.

At these locations, they were subjected to unbearable conditions: limited light, air, and sewage facilities in the Superdome, the blistering heat of the sun, and in many cases limited food and water. They feared for their safety

and survival — and the survival of their city.

"You had people living where people aren't supposed to live," said Dr. Juliette Saussy, Director of New Orleans Emergency Medical Services, referring to the dire situations in the Superdome and Convention Center. "In general, people were just trying to survive. Some people acted badly. But most just wanted something to eat and drink, and wanted to feel safe."²

At least 1,100 Louisianans died as a result of Katrina.

Mississippians have understandably felt slighted that the devastation to their state has received less national public attention than New Orleans. Mississippi experienced a different storm than Louisiana — in essence, a massive, blender-like storm surge versus the New Orleans flooding caused by breached and overtopped levees.

By the end of the day on August 29, due largely to a storm surge that reached 34 feet in the western parts of the state — and extended inland as far as 10 miles — more than half of Mississippi was without power and had suffered serious wind and water damage. In addition to the surge, high winds and tornadoes left thousands of homes damaged and destroyed, and as many as 66,000 Mississippians were displaced from their homes.



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"It was the in and out of the surge that killed us. The out, in particular. It carried everything away."

Katrina completely flattened entire neighborhoods in communities such as Waveland, Bay St. Louis, and Pass Christian, but its damage was not limited to those who lived closest to the Gulf of Mexico. Even well inland, there is no debate over whether homes may be habitable or not. They just aren't there anymore. In these towns, brick walkways and front porches lead up to . . . nothing. Just a concrete slab where a house used to stand.

The storm careened upwards through the entire state with hurricane force winds and tornados, reaching Jackson, the state capital, and its northern most counties, and transforming 28,000 square miles — or 60 percent of the state — into a catastrophic disaster area. By the time the storm had passed, at least 230 people were dead and nearly 200,000 people were displaced from their homes. Agricultural, forestry, gaming, and poultry industries were severely damaged. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reports estimate Veterinary Medical Assistant Teams disposed of over three million chickens that were destroyed by the storm.



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While winds upon landfall were not as powerful as those of Hurricane Camille in 1969, Katrina was in many ways the "perfect storm" for coastal Mississippi. The combination of high winds, extraordinarily low barometric pressure, and

arrival during a high tide resulted in a storm surge nearly twice that of Camille's. Wind-whipped water flooded towns not only from the south, but from the north — not just from the Gulf, but from the bayous.

This was not a tsunami-like, single wave of destruction. This was a sustained, ever-growing high tide, one that kept coming for hours. And when the water did roar back toward the Gulf, it took everything with it — furniture, pool tables, refrigerators, 30-foot boats, countless household items. Everything that was once inside was suddenly outside.

"Even the very accurate forecasts didn't capture the magnitude and devastation," said Eddie Favre, Mayor of Bay St. Louis. "It was the in and out of the surge that killed us. The out, in particular. It carried everything away."³

"Our infrastructure was devastated," Gulfport Mayor Brent Warr said. "The water came in, blew off manhole covers, then receded and caused a vacuum, sucking gators and DVD players and lots and lots of sand into water and sewer pipes. You couldn't have backed a truck up to a manhole cover and dumped it in more effectively."⁴

Out on his converted shrimp boat on the evening following Katrina's landfall, Rep. Gene Taylor, whose home was destroyed, recalls seeing complete and utter devastation on the ground and a telling sight in the air. "Birds were so tired all they could do was hold their wings out and soar on the wind," he said. "Our seagulls, if I had to guess, ended up in Arkansas."⁵

Very little wildlife remains evident in the storm-ravaged areas. National Guardsman stationed in Louisiana said they rarely see any pelicans or alligators any more. There are few shrimp boats working the Gulf, and elected officials in Mississippi guess it will take two years for the state's oyster industry to begin to recover.

Areas presumed to be flood-proof, like the Diamondhead community — built after Hurricane Camille, miles north Bay of St. Louis — suffered flood damage.

Wind shifts "caused a lot of areas considered safe to be flooded, like the town of DeLisle, where my district director's brother lives," Taylor said on a tour bus with Select Committee Members in January. "His house was pancaked. When he came home and tried to crawl in to see what he could salvage, he ended up face to face with an alligator. He ended up shooting the thing. People got mad because they were hungry and he let the alligator rot in his front yard."⁶

While only two hurricane-related deaths were reported in Alabama, Katrina caused significant damage along its coast with a wave surge of 13.5 feet, exceeding the 100-year flood level of 12 feet, despite the fact that the state did not suffer a direct hit from the hurricane. Bayou La Batre and Dauphin Island received the brunt of the storm in Alabama, losing 800 and 200 homes, respectively. The storm caused wind damage as far north as Tuscaloosa County. Mobile Bay spilled into downtown and flooded large sections of the city, destroying hundreds of homes. The sheer power of the storm dislodged a nearby oil drilling platform, which became caught under the U.S. Highway 98 bridge.

The overall toll from the devastation is still being tallied. At the time this report was issued, more than 3,000 people from storm-affected states remained unaccounted for.

During the most recent fact-finding trip to the Gulf coast in late January 2006, Members and staff of the Select Committee were shocked by the level of devastation and slow pace of cleanup. So many towns, cities, and parishes remain almost entirely empty.

A throbbing metropolis of 470,000 before the storm, New Orleans had become at the time of our writing a struggling city that is home to barely 100,000 people—although officials say that figure almost doubles for now during the daytime, when contractors and employees come into the city to work.

Significant portions of the city and region remain uninhabitable. In St. Bernard Parish, a few miles east of downtown New Orleans, only four houses did not suffer catastrophic damage from wind, rain, or the sudden flood that resulted from the breaking of the levees of the Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet Canal (MR-GO). The parish, once home to nearly 70,000 people, has seen its population dip to about 7,000, with nearly all of those people living in temporary housing.

In all of the affected communities, the local economies remain on the brink of disaster, fearful of another punch that would surely be the knockout blow. In Mississippi, Hancock County lost 64 percent of its real property value. In Bay St. Louis and Waveland, the figure is estimated to be closer to 90 percent.

Investigative context: an overview

It's been said that experience is the best teacher. The unfortunate thing is that the learning process is sometimes such a painful one.

This report is the result of a five-month journey by the Select Committee to gather information from all those who learned painful lessons during Katrina. It examines how well local, state, and federal officials worked with each other and with private entities to alleviate the suffering of so many of our fellow citizens.

In crafting an investigative plan, the Select Committee faced and overcame several challenges. We had to appoint Members quickly and rely on other committees to detail staff to the Select Committee. We had to move quickly, while memories and evidence were fresh. We had to gather as much information as we could while leaving time to write and design a consensus report before our February 15, 2006 deadline. We had to remain focused on our prescribed “right-before-and-right-after-the-storm” timeframe, despite significant interest in longer-term issues and challenges. Like juggling with knives, we had to keep multiple investigative elements in play simultaneously — preparing for and holding high-profile public hearings; requesting, receiving, and reviewing documents; and conducting interviews and briefings.

And all this had to be done in a less-than-ideal political atmosphere.



The Select Committee remains grateful to those Democrats who chose to participate in our investigation in defiance of their leadership's decision not to appoint Members officially to the panel. The refusal by the Minority Leader was self-defeating, given that the Select Committee's composition and minority subpoena authority would have given the Democrats more clout than they enjoy on any standing committee of the House.

Despite this strategy, the Select Committee's review and the creation of this report have been bipartisan endeavors in spirit and in fact.

On September 15, before the Select Committee was established by a bipartisan House vote, the Government Reform Committee held a hearing on the early lessons learned from Katrina. At that hearing, the Committee's Ranking Member, Rep. Henry Waxman, said there were "two steps we should take right away."⁷

First, he said, we should request basic documents from the agencies. And second, he said, "We need to hear from Michael Brown and Michael Chertoff. These are the two government officials most responsible for the inadequate response, and the Committee should call them to testify without delay."⁸

The Select Committee did not delay. We met and exceeded those goals. While many who so urgently called on Congress to swiftly investigate refused to participate and instead prejudged our efforts, we investigated aggressively what went wrong and what went right.

The Select Committee continuously invited any and all interested Democrats to join our hearings, giving them full and equal opportunity to make statements and question witnesses and help guide the direction of our inquiry, including identifying and inviting witnesses. Five Democratic members did just that: Representative Charlie Melancon, Representative Gene Taylor, Representative Bill Jefferson, Representative Cynthia McKinney, and Representative Sheila Jackson Lee. Document requests submitted to federal, state, and local agencies were signed by both Chairman Davis and Rep. Melancon.



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In addition to direct member participation, Democratic Members and staff were assigned to travel with Republican Members and staff to the affected locales, and Rep. Waxman's top Government Reform Committee investigative staff assisted Democratic participants. Finally,

Democratic members were repeatedly invited to offer narrative text and findings for inclusion in this report.

The Select Committee, beyond extending these courtesies, remained focused on the job of Congress. In our system of checks and balances, the Congress has both the duty and the obligation to ask tough questions. We did not believe it was appropriate to outsource our congressional oversight responsibility. The American people did not want us to punt. They wanted answers, and they wanted them quickly. If there is a consensus down the road to establish an outside commission, which some purportedly wanted, so be it. The two were not and are not mutually exclusive. However, a commission will take months to set up, and an eternity to finish its work. We needed to begin immediately, while evidence and memories were fresh.

News reports and other statements suggested many Democrats felt the same. For example, Bloomberg News reported in November that "Some House Democrats Want [a] Larger Role in Katrina Investigation."⁹ In that report,



AP PHOTO/DENNIS COOK

Rep. Gene Taylor said, “It’s really important that we’re there. I certainly wish more of my colleagues who are interested in this would participate . . . Mr. Davis, to his credit, has been extremely fair.”

Rep. Maxine Waters, who had told Chairman Davis she wanted to participate but later said she could not, told Bloomberg, “I feel a certain void and a great absence from these discussions. I was hoping that our leaders could find a way . . . so we could participate.”¹⁰

Rep. Neil Abercrombie said he unsuccessfully expressed interest in serving on the committee. “The position of Ms. Pelosi and the leadership is pretty clear,” he said. “I have a different view.”¹¹

Democrats who did buck their leadership have acknowledged both the value of their participation and the eagerness of the Select Committee to have them participate. Rep. Cynthia McKinney expressed her regret about the Democrats’ failure to officially appoint Members to the Committee while thanking Chairman Davis for convening a hearing on December 6th featuring testimony from African-American residents and evacuees:

I would like to thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing us to have this day. Because were it left up to — I will get in trouble now. But were it left up to the Democratic leadership, we would not have had this day, because we wouldn’t be here. The Democratic leadership has instructed us to boycott this panel.... So I would like to thank my Chairman for giving us the opportunity to invite people who don’t have the opportunity to come and testify before Congress.... We are here to serve all of the people of this country, and too rarely do we hear from all of the people.¹²

Regardless of who did or did not participate in our investigation, the Select Committee had a job to do, and we were determined to do it right.



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Hearing chronology: an overview

The Select Committee held nine hearings over the course of approximately three months. Select Committee Members and staff simultaneously conducted scores of interviews and received dozens of briefings from local, state, and federal officials; non-governmental organizations; private companies and individuals who provided or offered external support after Katrina; and hurricane victims. Select Committee Members and staff traveled numerous times to the Gulf Coast. The Select Committee also requested and received more than 500,000 pages of documents from a wide array of sources.

The information gleaned from our investigation is provided in detailed, narrative form in subsequent chapters. What follows here is a brief synopsis of the topics, questions, and themes raised at each of our hearings:

“Predicting Hurricanes:

What We Knew About Katrina and When”

September 22, 2005 Select Committee hearing

The Select Committee began at a logical place: a hearing to establish a record of who was told what, and when, about the nature of the hurricane in the days immediately before the storm. We explored the timeline of Katrina progressing from a tropical depression to a major hurricane, and asked when warnings were issued to the public and to federal, state, and local officials. We reaffirmed what we already suspected — at least two federal agencies passed Katrina’s test with flying colors: the National Weather Service (NWS) and the National Hurricane Center.

Many who escaped the storm’s wrath owe their lives to these agencies’ accuracy. This hearing provided a backdrop for the remainder of our inquiry. We repeatedly tried to determine how government could respond so ineffectively to a disaster that was so accurately forecast.

How accurately?

- Storm-track projections released to the public **56 hours** before Katrina came ashore were off by **only 15 miles**. The average 48-hour error is 160 miles, and the average 24-hour error is 85 miles.
- The Hurricane Center’s predicted strength for Katrina at landfall, **two days before** the storm hit, was off the mark by only 10 miles per hour.

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- NWS Director Max Mayfield personally spoke by telephone with the governors of Mississippi and Louisiana and the mayor of New Orleans two days prior to landfall to warn them of what was coming. He also gave daily pre-storm video briefings to federal officials in Washington, including top Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and DHS brass.
- The day before Katrina hit, the NWS office in Slidell, Louisiana issued a warning saying, “MOST OF THE AREA WILL BE UNINHABITABLE FOR WEEKS...PERHAPS LONGER...HUMAN SUFFERING INCREDIBLE BY MODERN STANDARDS.”
The Select Committee determined — despite more recently revised reports that Katrina was actually a strong Category 3 storm at landfall, not a Category 4 — that Katrina’s strength and the potential disaster it could bring were made clear well in advance through briefings and formal advisories. Inadequate response could not be blamed on lack of advance warning.

“Hurricane Katrina: The Role of the Federal Emergency Management Agency”

September 27, 2005 Select Committee hearing

This hearing featuring former FEMA Director Michael Brown attempted to construct a timeline of what FEMA did and did not do before, during, and after Katrina made landfall.

Fair or not, by the time of this hearing, FEMA in general and Brown in particular had become the symbol of all that went wrong with the government’s response to Katrina.

By the September 27 hearing date, with the emergence of Hurricane Rita, the Select Committee had the ability to compare and contrast disaster response actions after the two storms. While Rita was predicted to be a very different



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storm from Katrina — a mere size Large compared to a size XXXL, and a storm that struck a far less densely populated area — it was immediately clear that governments at all levels did things differently this time around.

More supplies were stockpiled on the ground *prior* to Rita’s arrival. The federal government declared Rita an “incident of national significance” *two days before* landfall, triggering our most thorough response, and named a federal officer in charge. These steps occurred *two days after* Katrina. Ten thousand National Guardsmen were called to Texas in advance of Rita; Louisiana summoned 1,500



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before Katrina. Search and Rescue operations were far better coordinated.

Even if a little rough around the edges, the massive pre-storm evacuation of Houston and surrounding locales showed improved

foresight from state and local officials — and how lives can be saved when people pay attention to a coordinated message from their government.

We also attempted to clarify FEMA's role in disaster response. We were faced with the problematic reality that many Americans — and perhaps even some state and local officials — falsely viewed FEMA as some sort of national fire and rescue team. An important task for the Select Committee moving forward was defining what FEMA is — what it can and cannot do based on what it is actually charged with doing by statute.

We noted that FEMA is **not** a first responder agency with the resources to assume principal responsibility for overwhelmed state and local governments during a disaster. This is the real world, not the reel world. There is no Tommy Lee Jones character that comes in and takes charge of...well...*everything*.

But we also attempted to contextualize that discussion. In other words, before getting to what FEMA cannot do, we wanted to understand what they simply did not do. Just because they are not "first responders" does not mean they should be a second thought.

We explored the possible causes of FEMA's inadequate response, which are covered exhaustively in subsequent chapters. Among those discussed at the hearing: Inadequacies in the Stafford Act. Organizational or budgetary or grant-making shortcomings. State and local governments that didn't know how to ask for help, or simply didn't. A bureaucratic mindset that now emphasizes terrorism to the exclusion of natural disaster planning. We looked at these possibilities, and more.

We also examined why FEMA seemed unable to implement lessons that should have been learned well in advance of Katrina. There were the lessons of previous hurricanes. Further, FEMA officials participated in the

now-widely-known exercise called Hurricane Pam in July 2004, an exercise that predicted with eerie similarity Katrina's impact on New Orleans, including an evacuation of a million people, overflowing levees, and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of buildings.

"Hurricane Katrina: The Role of the Department of Homeland Security"

October 19, 2005 Select Committee hearing

Although by this date FEMA and Michael Brown had received the most attention from Members of Congress, state and local officials, and the news media in Katrina's wake, the Select Committee sought to recognize that DHS and Secretary Michael Chertoff have primary responsibility for managing the national response to a catastrophic disaster, according to the National Response Plan (NRP).

Therefore, three weeks after hearing from Michael Brown, we turned to his boss, the man who ultimately fired him.

We needed to find out if Michael Brown had it right when he testified that FEMA had been under-funded and under-staffed, that it had become "emaciated," and that Congress had undermined FEMA's effectiveness when the agency was folded into DHS.

Michael Brown testified that he asked the Department for funding to implement the lessons learned from the Hurricane Pam exercise and that those funds were denied. He also testified about brain drain, diminished financial resources, and "assessments" of \$70 to \$80 million by DHS for department-wide programs. He said he had written memos to Secretary Ridge and Secretary Chertoff regarding the inadequacy of FEMA's resources. We asked Secretary Chertoff about those assertions.

We also sought to establish the Department's role and responsibilities in a disaster. What resources can the Secretary bring to bear? What triggers the decision to



deploy those resources? During Katrina, how personally involved was Secretary Chertoff in seeking, authorizing, or deploying specific resources?

Under the National Response Plan, the DHS Secretary is the federal official charged with declaring an Incident of National Significance. Part of that declaration entails naming a Principal Federal Official (PFO), to manage the response.

The government's pre-landfall decision to declare an Incident of National Significance with Rita suggested awareness that the call came too late with Katrina. And, based on some of Brown's emails, we knew that he *resented* being named the PFO by the Secretary. We needed to ask Secretary Chertoff what he thought about that, and what those comments said about the underlying NRP.

Finally, we asked Secretary Chertoff what we asked all officials during our investigation: Where were you in the days and hours right before, during, and after the hurricane? What were you doing? Who were you talking to?

New York University Professor Paul Light wrote shortly after Katrina that, "Mr. Chertoff is just about the only official in Washington who can say 'I told you so' about FEMA," based on some of the reforms he outlined in July 2005 in his Second Stage Review. We asked Secretary Chertoff if he believed FEMA's response to Katrina would have been better if the reforms had been in place on August 29.

"Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the Department of Defense, the Coast Guard, and the National Guard of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama"

October 27, 2005 Select Committee hearing



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At this hearing we examined Department of Defense responsibilities, procedures, and coordination with the Department of Homeland Security in the event of a catastrophic disaster.

We looked at the roles of the National Guard and U.S. Northern Command in disaster response as the operational arms of DOD and the states, and we reviewed the role of

the Coast Guard, a unique national asset with both military capabilities and domestic law enforcement authorities.

We sought to establish a timeline of the military's actions — what they were asked to do, when they were asked, and whether the jobs actually got done.

We acknowledged the heroic efforts that DOD, National Guard, and Coast Guard personnel made, efforts that saved many, many lives. The mobilization was massive and, at least once the call went out, swift and effective.

But we also discussed problems with the military response. The Select Committee believed even some of the successes occurred despite less-than-optimal planning, and too often officers were planning in a crisis environment.

There were problems: With situational awareness and damage assessments. With coordinating search and rescue operations. With the effective use of Defense Coordinating Officers by FEMA. With an early and persistent disconnect between DOD and state and local authorities. With inadequate telecommunications that prevented effective coordination. And, once again, with failing to learn as much as possible from previous disasters.

While we continued to emphasize that local first responders are best suited for handling local emergencies, the recurring question was: What happens when first responders are overwhelmed, as they clearly were in Katrina?

As a result, we asked whether DOD anticipated these circumstances, what preparations were made, and what actions were taken with regard to the National Response Plan's "Catastrophic Incident Annex" — the annex that authorizes federal agencies to act when state and local capacity even to know what they need is compromised by the sheer size of the calamity.

Our hearing came amid growing debate over an expanded military role in future disasters. President Bush prompted the discussion in a nationally televised address from New Orleans on September 15, saying, "It is now clear that a challenge on this scale requires greater federal authority and a broader role for the armed forces — the institution of our government most capable of massive logistical operations on a moment's notice."

Two witnesses — Paul McHale, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense, and Admiral Timothy J. Keating, Commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command — had indicated prior to the hearing that DOD was considering

training and equipping an active duty force specifically for disaster response.

Those remarks led to some confusion over specifics, and even to some outright opposition.

On October 13, the National Governors Association issued a statement reasserting their authority. "Governors are responsible for the safety and welfare of their citizens and are in the best position to coordinate all resources to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters," the association wrote.

An October 21 statement by Assistant to the President for Homeland Security Advisor Frances Townsend, who is leading President Bush's examination of the federal response to Katrina, also spawned negative reactions from state officials. Townsend reportedly said she was considering whether there is "a narrow band of cases" in which the President should seize control when a disaster strikes.¹³ A spokesperson for Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco responded by saying she could not think of an instance in which the President should be able to unilaterally take control. "We don't believe Katrina was the time, and I don't know what another time would be," Denise Bottcher told the Times-Picayune.¹⁴

The Select Committee, therefore, began addressing this basic tension. On the one hand, we heard understandable caution from our Members and witnesses against over-reacting to Katrina with sweeping changes to laws or processes, caution against deviating too wildly from the locals-as-first-responders paradigm. None of us believed the best lesson to be learned from Katrina was that all answers can be found in Washington.

On the other hand, the call for increasing the military's role in domestic affairs is easy to grasp. Who else can respond the way the military can? Who else can stand up when others have fallen?

This tension was reflected in the National Response Plan *before* Katrina. The Catastrophic Incident Annex assumes that local response capabilities may be "insufficient," as they will be "quickly overwhelmed." But the NRP plan states federal resources will only be integrated into the response effort *upon a request by state and local authorities* and assumes state and local officials will be able to do the integrating themselves.

The Select Committee was left wondering if the plan as written tried to have its cake and eat it too. How can we rely on the overwhelmed to acknowledge they are



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overwhelmed, and then expect them to direct and manage the process of coming to their rescue?

We agreed we needed a closer evaluation of existing procedures for DOD under the National Response Plan, paying particular attention to DOD's role when first responders are wiped out or otherwise incapable of providing the initial response.

We agreed that Incidents of National Significance require a response on a national scale. But we also agreed the devil is in the details. We cannot expect the Marines to swoop in with MREs every time a storm hits. We train soldiers to fight wars. You can't kill a storm.

So what is the threshold? When can or should the Stafford Act's assumption that states will be able to "pull" needed federal resources to meet their needs give way to the operational imperative that federal agencies "push" assets to those who need them? What would spur the kind of enhanced or heightened military role that some have been promoting in the aftermath of Katrina? When would we pull that trigger? And finally, would it have made a difference in the response to Katrina?

The fact is, military resources are not infinite. It seems the kind of standing humanitarian force that would be needed to provide this sort of immediate assistance at a moment's notice would either threaten readiness or require an expansion of the active force and a significant boost in how well they are equipped.

Legal questions also arose. Were we talking about statutory changes? Should we revisit Posse Comitatus, the 127-year-old law that bars federal troops from

Do we need a larger DOD role — or just a smarter one?

assuming domestic law enforcement duties? Did Katrina demonstrate a need for a new exception to Posse Comitatus, one to be utilized after major disasters?

The Select Committee ultimately refocused the discussion by simplifying the question: Do we need a larger DOD role — **or just a smarter one?**

The Select Committee tried hard to acknowledge at this hearing what an incredible job the Coast Guard did, and recognize the National Guard's clear sense of urgency. We noted for the record that Northern Command had prepared for this storm, deploying Defense Coordinating Officers to the three states before landfall and placing units on alert.

But we also had to recognize that it was unclear how much "real" support was in place before the storm arrived, and that Secretary McHale himself had acknowledged prior to our hearing the DOD response was too slow.¹⁵

"Hurricane Katrina: The Federal Government's Use of Contractors to Prepare and Respond"

November 2, 2005 Select Committee hearing

Local, state, and federal governments rely heavily on contractor support to prepare for and response to disasters. This hearing examined the contracts in place prior to Katrina's landfall, and procurement planning efforts that took place in anticipation of a large-scale catastrophic event. We also reviewed the rationale and process for awarding disaster relief and recovery contracts in the immediate aftermath of Katrina.

The Select Committee asked about the internal controls in place to ensure that federal acquisition laws were followed; the terms and performance of Katrina relief contracts; and the ways in which the management and oversight of disaster-related contracting can be strengthened.

A great deal of taxpayer money went out the door to private firms to help prepare for and respond to Katrina. Part of our job was to ask whether it's been money well spent. And part of that inquiry was asking what contracts should have been in place **before** the storm arrived, based on what everyone knew — or should have known — would be needed.



STAFF PHOTO

Was the contracting system up to the task? Were we able to get what we needed, when and where we needed it? By any measure, this was an enormous storm, described as one of "Biblical" proportions. In the face of the massive destruction caused by Katrina, acquisition personnel acted to meet pressing humanitarian needs,

contacting firms in an effort to provide immediate relief to survivors and to protect life and property. And thankfully, many firms responded.



FEMA

It is true that several companies were called into action on a sole-source basis under acquisition provisions that allow the government to acquire urgently needed goods and services in emergency situations. It's also true that, contrary to many media reports, some of the immediate response efforts were provided through *existing* contracts that had been previously awarded through full and open competition.

Nevertheless, concerns were raised with respect to how FEMA awarded contracts in Katrina's immediate aftermath and regarding what contract vehicles were in place before landfall. These were legitimate concerns that affect not only our findings relative to the preparation for and response to Katrina, but also how well prepared we'll be the next time — and how willing contractors will be to step up to the plate the next time they're called.

The indirect result of inefficient contracting and misdirected, even baseless charges against contractors could be a government left with more than it can manage in-house.

In the weeks following Katrina, more than 80 percent of the \$1.5 billion in initial contracts awarded by FEMA were awarded on a sole-source basis or pursuant to limited competition. Many of the contracts awarded were incomplete and included open-ended or vague terms. In addition, numerous news reports questioned the terms of disaster relief agreements made in haste.

Under the Stafford Act, prime contractors are to give preference to local subcontractors, but reports indicated that not enough local businesses were being hired. Questions were also raised about the Corps of Engineers' use of a limited competition to award contracts for debris removal and clean up.

Undoubtedly, FEMA before Katrina suffered from something Congress has grappled with government-wide for many years: a lack of sufficiently trained procurement professionals.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, the DHS Office of Inspector General (IG) had repeatedly cited the lack of consistent

contract management for large, complex, high-cost procurement programs. DHS procurement continues to be decentralized and lacking a uniform approach. DHS has seven legacy procurement offices that continue to serve DHS components, including FEMA. Notably, FEMA was not reporting or tracking procurements undertaken by disaster field offices, and the procurement office remains to this day understaffed given the volume and dollar value of its work.

The Chief Procurement Officer (CPO) had established an eighth office called the Office of Procurement Operations to meet the procurement needs of the rest of DHS. After Katrina, however, the CPO reassigned its staff to assist FEMA's procurement office.

At this hearing, we learned errors were made in the contracting process before and after Katrina. The contract oversight process is not always pretty, and decisions made under life-and-death pressure are not always as lucid as those made under less complicated conditions. But there are lessons to be learned about efficient and effective contracting, even from this, hopefully, once in a lifetime event.

That there were and will be disagreements with contractors over pricing and payment schedules should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the administration of complex contracts in difficult circumstances.

The good news is, DHS has begun establishing a rigorous oversight process for each and every federal contract related to Katrina. Now the process needs to be fully implemented.

Shortly after the emergency needs arose, DHS's Chief Procurement Officer asked the DHS Inspector General's Office to begin overseeing the acquisition process. The DHS IG assigned 60 auditors, investigators, and inspectors and planned to hire thirty additional oversight personnel. The staff is reviewing the award and administration of all major contracts, including those awarded in the initial efforts, and will monitor all contracting activities as the government develops its requirements and as the selection and award process continues to unfold.

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To further ensure that any payments made to contractors are proper and reasonable, FEMA engaged the Defense Contract Audit Agency to help monitor and oversee any payments made — and pledged not to pay on **any** vouchers until each one is audited and cleared.

The Select Committee has no patience with waste, fraud, or abuse. We expect that any such instances that are proven will result in harsh punishment for the perpetrators. We also expect that, as the conditions on the ground have improved, the next generation of contracts have been and will be awarded and administered in accordance with standard acquisition procedures.

Emergency procedures are for emergencies only.

FEMA said it continues to revisit non-competitive arrangements made immediately after the storm.

“Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the State of Alabama”

November 9, 2005 Select Committee hearing

“Hurricane Katrina: Preparedness and Response by the State of Mississippi”

December 7, 2005 Select Committee hearing

“Hurricane Katrina: Preparation and Response by the State of Louisiana”

December 14, 2005 Select Committee hearing

The three state-focused hearings we held were arguably the most important in terms of fact-gathering. After all, we understood that in the event of an emergency, state and local government officials bear primary responsibilities under both the National Response Plan and their own laws and directives. Throughout federal, state and local planning documents the general principle is for all incidents to be handled at the lowest possible organizational and

jurisdictional level. Police, fire, public health and medical, emergency management, and other personnel are responsible for incident management at the local level. For federally declared emergencies or major disasters, DHS provides operational and/or resource coordination for federal support to on-scene incident command structures.

Our goal was to better understand the responsibilities and actions of state and local officials before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina made landfall. We explored state laws, policies, procedures, and how state and local officials interfaced with DHS and FEMA when they confronted Katrina — and how DHS interfaced with them.

The National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System were crafted to provide the framework and template, respectively, for the federal government to work with state and local authorities to prepare for and respond to crises. In turn, states, localities, tribal governments, and nongovernmental organizations are asked to align their plans and procedures with federal guidelines and procedures.

Did this coordinated alignment occur? By the time of these hearings, we knew in large part it had not. We sought to understand, from a state and local perspective, why.

“Hurricane Katrina: Voices from Inside the Storm”

December 6, 2005 Select Committee hearing

In mid-November, Rep. Cynthia McKinney asked Select Committee Chairman Tom Davis to focus a hearing on the “African-American voice” related to Hurricane Katrina.

With that request in mind, and having already planned a hearing featuring testimony from storm victims, the Select Committee sought to better understand the experiences of Gulf coast residents, including those forced



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this very carefully," aide Johnny Anderson wrote in an e-mail. "We are getting enough bad national press on race relations."¹⁶ E-mails from aides to former FEMA Director Michael Brown reflected similar concerns about public relations

to evacuate, during the catastrophe. Only by hearing from those most directly affected by Katrina could we determine where, how, and why the government response at all levels was so terribly inadequate.

There was little question that Katrina had sparked renewed debate about race, class, and institutional approaches toward vulnerable population groups in the United States. In the aftermath of the storm, a wide array of media reports, public statements, and polls underscored this reality.

In his September 15 speech to the nation, President Bush touched on the issue. "As all of us saw on television, there is also some deep, persistent poverty in this region as well. And that poverty has roots in a history of racial discrimination, which cut off generations from the opportunity of America," the President said.

Since then the debate had become increasingly heated. In media interviews, Jesse Jackson compared New Orleans' shelters to the hold of a slave ship, and Louis Farrakhan suggested New Orleans' levees were intentionally blown up to destroy primarily African-American neighborhoods.

While not all the commentary has necessarily been constructive, substantiated, or fair, the Select Committee believed the issue warranted further discussion, especially within the context of understanding the experiences of those caught inside the storm, and in hopes of making sure the governmental response is more effective the next time.

We knew from government e-mails and other documents that officials were almost immediately sensitive to public perceptions of race as a factor in the inadequate response. An aide to Louisiana Governor Blanco cautioned colleagues about how to respond to a request from Rep. Maxine Waters, an African-American, for security escorts in New Orleans shortly after the storm. "Please handle

and racial politics. And Alabama officials discussed similar sensitivities about a proposal to conduct background checks on out-of-state evacuees being housed in state parks.

A CNN-Gallup poll from September 8 to 11 reported 60 percent of African-Americans, but only 12 percent of whites, believed race was a factor in the slow response to Katrina. Another poll by the Pew Research Center found that 7 in 10 blacks believed the disaster showed that racial inequality remains a major problem in America. A majority of whites disagreed.

A November survey of 46 Katrina evacuees published by the Natural Hazards Center at the University of Colorado-Boulder concluded that "issues of race and class were central to evacuation experiences."¹⁷ For many, the evacuation process was complicated by age, mental or physical disability, the need to care for dependents, or material possessions they were trying to take with them.

The *Washington Post*, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University also conducted face-to-face interviews with 680 randomly selected adult evacuees residing in Houston.¹⁸ When asked, "Has your experience made you feel like the government cares about people like you, or has it made you feel like the government doesn't care?" 61 percent reported they felt the government doesn't care. Additionally, the evacuees suggested an intersection between race and class: 68 percent of respondents thought the federal government would have responded more quickly if more people trapped in the floodwaters were "wealthier and white rather than poorer and black."

At an early November forum at Emerson College, Louis Elisa — a former regional director for the Federal Emergency Management Agency under President Clinton — reportedly suggested that race *had to be* a factor in the



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inadequate response. "I am telling you, as a professional, that you could not have had a mistake of this nature...if something else was not afoot," the Boston Globe quoted Elisa.¹⁹

Whether or not one believed racist charges were well-founded (and clearly a majority of our members did not), the Select Committee agreed it should recognize and discuss the socioeconomic and racial backdrop against which Katrina unfolded.

As the Brookings Institution reported in October, New Orleans, which once had economically and demographically diverse neighborhoods, had grown extremely segregated by both race and income by the time of the storm. "As a result," Brookings concluded, "blacks and whites were living in quite literally different worlds before the storm hit."²⁰

At the very least, the Select Committee determined it should further explore at this hearing how socioeconomic factors contributed to the experiences of those directly affected by the storm. The UC-Boulder survey found that "almost all interviewees described the evacuation process as disorderly and disorganized, with minimal communication about where evacuees were heading and when the next transportation would arrive. This created a state of uncertainty and insecurity.... [P]redominantly working-class African-Americans did not evacuate because they did not have the financial resources to do so."²¹

The Select Committee sought to learn more about whether government messages to Gulf coast residents regarding the dangers of the coming hurricane could have been presented in a more effective manner, a question which also carried racial and socioeconomic implications.

"If you don't hear the message from someone you trust, you tend to be skeptical," Margaret Sims, vice president of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, told Public Relations Strategist magazine. "If you get conflicting information from people you're not sure

"If you get conflicting information from people you're not sure of, then inaction may be, from your perspective, the most prudent form of action."

of, then inaction may be, from your perspective, the most prudent form of action."²²

The same magazine article noted that disaster response may have been hampered by not taking the "circumstances" of area residents fully into account. "The people creating the verbal or image measures don't take into account access or physical barriers to opportunities in certain communities," said Linda Aldoory, director of the Center for Risk Communication Research at the University of Maryland. "With Katrina, people knew the importance of storm warnings and the need to evacuate, but didn't have the physical access to do so."²³

In other words, the Select Committee agreed it should examine to what extent response inadequacies stemmed from the messengers — and the message. We wanted to further explore the possibility that different people may hear different things when their elected officials are telling them to evacuate.

Document request, production, and review: an overview

Within a week of its September 15, 2005 creation, the Select Committee held its first hearing. By the end of the month, Chairman Davis and Rep. Charlie Melancon, on behalf of the Select Committee and in cooperation with the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, had submitted 19 official and comprehensive requests for documents to relevant federal agencies and state governments.

By the beginning of January 2006, 67 formal requests for documents had been issued by the Select Committee and the Senate Committee to 29 federal agencies as well as the governments of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana and their subdivisions.

In response to those formal requests and numerous other staff requests, the Select Committee received hundreds of thousands of documents.

The responses by the federal agencies and state governments inundated the Select Committee. A constant stream of boxes containing responsive documents arrived daily at the Select Committee's door. Select Committee staff worked around the clock to organize and review this stream of documents. Aggressive follow-up by the Select Committee, detailed below, ensured the document production was responsive to the Select Committee's requests.

To fulfill its mission, the Select Committee needed to do more than hold hearings. We requested and received more than half a million pages of documents from governmental organizations at all levels: federal, state, and local. The information gleaned from these documents played a critical role in helping the Select Committee paint a picture of what happened and why.



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Below is a brief overview of what was requested and what was received. Most of the governmental organizations complied with our requests in a timely and complete fashion. Efforts by others to comply unfortunately were neither timely nor complete. This is discussed below as well.

In September 2005, the Senate Committee, chaired by Senator Susan Collins, began its Katrina investigation. In many cases, the two committees desired the same or similar information. To facilitate both investigations, and to eliminate waste and unnecessary duplication of efforts, the Select Committee simply asked to receive all documents requested by the Senate.

Federal

The Select Committee sent request letters to all 15 cabinet-level departments as well as many independent federal departments including: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States Postal Service (USPS), the Agency for International Development (AID), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). We also requested information from the White House and the Office of the Vice President.

In particular, the Select Committee requested extensive information from the Department of Homeland Security, particularly from two of its constituent agencies, FEMA and the U.S. Coast Guard. We requested documents and communications from before August 23 related to the threat posed by a hurricane striking New Orleans or the Gulf Coast, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. We also sought documents and communications from between August 23 and August 29 related to the threat posed by Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. And we requested documents and communications from between August 29 and September 15 related to the impact of Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses.

In addition, we requested information about the different elements of DHS and individuals holding key positions. We wanted to know the different roles and responsibilities of those components, as well as the actions they took before, during, and after Katrina. We asked for information regarding the activation of the National Response Plan and National Incident Management System, and any discussions about the use of the armed forces. We also requested relevant communications, specifically any requests for assistance, communications with local and state authorities, and communications that revealed any plans to prepare for the hurricane, or communications that demonstrated possible vulnerabilities to a hurricane. We also wanted any documents containing authorities, regulations, plans, and

procedures of the agency, weather reports, information about medical response assets, and information about DHS and FEMA funding and budgeting.

We requested an employee directory and organization chart for FEMA, as well as the individuals in key position during the hurricane in the affected regions. We asked for documents referring to risks posed by hurricanes or flooding of New Orleans, and documents indicating whether officials knew of those risks. We also requested documents and communications regarding the levee system in New Orleans, including plans, risk assessments, and knowledge of the levees' failure, particularly documents and communications with the Army Corps of Engineers.

We sought documents and names of key individuals related to the Hurricane Pam exercise, and information about FEMA's chain of command during the storm and FEMA's authorities, plans, and policies relevant to Hurricane Katrina. In addition, we requested after-action reports for past hurricanes; information about the activation of the National Response Plan; qualifications of key FEMA personnel; and contributions of contractors and subcontractors.

Finally, we requested a description of the Coast Guard's role with respect to the National Response Plan and other domestic emergencies, specifically Hurricane Katrina. We wanted to know what components will act, who they will cooperate with, and in what capacity. We also requested information about search and rescue, such as command structures, regulations, and assets available. We also requested details about when the Coast Guard learned of certain key information before, during, and after Katrina.

DHS responded to most of these requests from the Select Committee, including requests addressed to Secretary Chertoff, Acting Undersecretary Paulison, and Assistant Secretary Robert Stephan. The Department produced in total well over 200,000 pages of documents including: (1) Briefing books, reports and communication from the Secretary's office; (2) Communications from the Deputy Secretary's office; (3) E-mails from Undersecretary Brown's office; (4) E-mails from FEMA personnel involved in planning and response efforts; (5) the National Response Plan, Hurricane plans, New Orleans and Mobile area plans, Incident Action Plans, Operation Manuals and planning worksheets, and Katrina specific plans; (6) Mission assignments, task requests and logs, action requests, tracking reports, and situation reports; (7) tasking logs and

requests; (8) briefings; (9) grant program documents; (10) planned shipments; resource tracking reports, commodity maps, and staging areas; (11) audits; (12) Katrina maps and graphics; and (13) organizational charts.

The Select Committee sent specific requests to the Department of Defense as well. We sent request letters to the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the National Guard Bureau, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, North American Air Defense Command (NORAD), and Northern Command (NORTHCOM).

Specifically, we requested documents and communications from before August 23 by officials of the Department of Defense or any constituent agencies related to the threat posed by a hurricane striking New Orleans or the Gulf coast, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. We requested documents and communications from between August 23 and August 29, by officials of the Department of Defense or any constituent elements related to the threat posed by Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. And, we requested documents and communications, including internal communications from between August 29 and September 15 by officials of the Department of Defense or any DOD elements related to the impact of Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses.

We also requested information about DOD's role and legal authority with respect to domestic emergencies and Hurricane Katrina. We wanted organizational charts, after-action reports, and plans with respect to national catastrophes. We requested information about DOD and the events of Hurricane Katrina, such as any guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense before landfall, the preparations made, specific actions taken, and personnel involved. We asked for information about Joint Task Force Katrina and on actions taken during Hurricane Katrina, specifically those of active duty troops and National Guard units; requests for assistance; and information on DOD's chain of command during the incident.

The Select Committee initially received responses from the Department of Defense on behalf of Secretary Rumsfeld that only partially complied with the various requests. On November 18, the Select Committee received a production from the Department containing: execution orders; requests for forces; correspondence regarding National Guard authorization; daily update briefings; and



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daily executive summaries. On December 14, the Select Committee received further production containing the Joint Staff Director of Operations' (J-3) Redacted Timeline, outlining the Department's response actions to Hurricane Katrina and the Joint Task Force Katrina Commander's Assessment Briefings.

In further response to the letter requests, on December 22 the Select Committee received: the Assistant Secretary for Defense for Homeland Defense's Smart Book; responses to Senate interrogatories of September 28; National Guard and Northcom timelines; Execute and Deployment orders; NORTHCOM teleconference minutes; Captain Rick Snyder's, XO USS Bataan, Lessons Learned Package; Vice Admiral Fitzgerald's e-mails, timelines, and notes; 2nd Fleet Lessons Learned; Records of Annual Hurricane exercises; memo to Admiral Starling regarding Naval assets in the region; information regarding helicopter assets; Rear Admiral Kilkenny's Lessons Learned brief to the Chief of Naval Operations; Northcom requests for forces; Northcom deployment orders; Northcom timeline; and twice-daily Joint Operations Center emails.

In addition the Department produced: Joint Forces Command (JFCOM) timeline and logs of verbal orders; JFCOM Standard Operating Procedures; Unified Command Plan; TOPOFF exercise paperwork;

Commander Fleet Forces command general requirement for Humanitarian Response/Disaster Relief; National Guard Bureau Readiness Documents; National Guard Bureau Senior Leadership Questions; and Katrina effects on National Guard Bureau readiness.

Despite these significant productions, Chairman Davis was concerned that the communications of senior Defense Department officials — a priority in the first request to the Department — had not been produced. Consequently, after discussions with Rep. Melancon, he issued a subpoena to the Department of Defense on December 14. The subpoena required the production of the correspondence of senior DOD officials related to Hurricane Katrina.

On December 22, the Select Committee received documents responsive to the subpoena, including official correspondence from Assistant Secretary Paul McHale, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Peter Verga, Admiral Keating, Lieutenant General Honoré, Lieutenant General Blum, and Colonel John Jordan. On December 30, the Select Committee received more documents responsive to the subpoena, including DOD official correspondence from Secretary Rumsfeld, Acting Deputy Secretary England, Colonel Daskevich, Brigadier General Scherling, Colonel Roberson, Colonel Chavez, Colonel Young,

Admiral Keating, and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Verga. On January 13, the Select Committee received further submissions of correspondence from Department officials including, Brigadier General Graham, Major General Young. And on January 17, the Select Committee received the emails of Major General Grass and Lieutenant General Vaughn.

The Select Committee also requested information from the White House. Specifically, the Select Committee requested documents and communications from before August 23 related to the threat posed by a hurricane striking New Orleans or the Gulf coast, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. We requested documents and communications from between August 23 and August 29 related to the threat posed by Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. And we requested documents and communications from between August 29 and September 15 related to the impact of Hurricane Katrina, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. Initially, the White House produced more than 4,000 documents in response to these requests; however, the Select Committee was not satisfied with this initial production of documents.

In a December 6 letter, William Kelly, White House Deputy Counsel, said the September 30 and December 1 requests were too broad and asked the Select Committee to narrow the request. In response, the Select Committee insisted on briefings by senior administration officials and the production of certain items, including e-mails and documents from the White House Situation Room. As a result of our demands, a briefing was provided and more than 12,000 pages of documents from the Executive Office of the President on the response to Hurricane Katrina were delivered on December 16. The Select Committee made similar requests to the Vice President's office, which responded with almost 6,000 pages of documents.

While the Select Committee was disappointed and frustrated by the slow pace and general resistance to producing the requested documents by the White House and the Department of Defense, at the end of the day, the Select Committee believes it received enough information through documents, briefings, and interviews to understand the actions and decisions of those entities, and reach sound findings on them, without implicating executive privilege.

That's what this was about: obtaining sufficient information. Getting the documents and testimony we needed to make sure Americans are better prepared the next time. Ultimately, our public criticism of the Administration's slow pace did the job. At our insistence, the White House provided Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security Ken Rapuano for a briefing with staff and Members. With the President in Texas, Homeland Security Advisor Frances Townsend out of the country, and Chief of Staff Andrew Card in Maine at the time of the storm, Rapuano offered the best view of White House knowledge and actions right before and right after Katrina. In fact, his briefing included more acknowledgements of institutional failure than any we had received previously.

The agreement with the White House gave us an opportunity to understand the White House role in Katrina while keeping the Select Committee on a parallel track with the Senate, which had not pursued White House subpoenas, and had not even subpoenaed DOD. A subpoena for White House documents would have simply derailed and delayed our inquiry, with the likelihood of a lengthy and unproductive court battle over executive privilege to follow.

State

The Select Committee sent request letters to governmental components in the three states hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina: Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. In each state, we requested information from both the office of the governor and the state's respective agency in charge of homeland security or emergency management.

Specifically, the Select Committee asked each state's governor's office for documents or communications, including internal communications, received, prepared, or sent up to the date of September 15 by state officials related to the threat posed by a hurricane, mitigation measures or projects, emergency preparations, or emergency responses. Also, for each state's office in charge of homeland security or emergency management, the Select Committee requested: information about that organization, including organization charts; the agency's responsibilities with respect to emergencies; regulations and procedures; after action reports for past hurricanes; past requests for federal grants; budgets for the agencies;

contractors and subcontractors that assisted with Katrina; a detailed chronology of events and actions taken during, before, and after the hurricane; key state personnel involved with Katrina; and all communications to and from the agencies relevant to the disaster.

The Select Committee also requested any state, county, and local emergency plans, and the identity of state and local agencies involved in those plans. Finally, the Select Committee asked for documents from the past five years that evaluate the threats posed by hurricanes and any information about exercises to prepare for hurricanes.

The Select Committee sent request letters to the Alabama Department of Homeland Security (ADHS), as well as the office of Governor Bob Riley. The State of Alabama answered all questions and replied to all requests. The state provided the Alabama Emergency Management Plan, 26 different situation reports, the Governor's proclamations, a timeline, and four Incident Action Plans. The state also provided communications such as a MOU with Mississippi, Alabama county emergency management standards, and state emergency procedures. In answering the Select Committee's questions, the state provided organization charts, key personnel, the roles and responsibilities of ADHS and the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), state and county emergency plans and the state and local agencies involved in the response to Katrina. The state also provided risk assessments and after action reports and information on exercises to prepare for disasters. Alabama also provided information on budgets for the past five years. The state also provided timelines, a list of actions taken by state agencies in response to Katrina and a complete set of AEMA internal communications and action tracking system (EM 2000) messages.

The Select Committee sent requests to both the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP) and to the office of Governor Kathleen Blanco. After asking for a 90 day extension on October 26 due to the need to address immediate hurricane relief, the Governor fully responded on December 1 with tens of thousands of documents on their response and preparation for Hurricane Katrina including: an overview of the Governor's actions, Executive Orders and declarations, emergency preparedness plans, the LA Citizen Awareness and Disaster Evacuation Guide, official correspondence, organization charts, notes and internal

communications. Included was the response of the Acting Deputy Director of LOHSEP based on "the best available information" in that agency's possession at that time, including specific responses to the committee's questions in the original Senate Committee letter.

The Louisiana Attorney General's Office responded with additional information on January 11 and also informed us there would be a slight delay in sending two CDs containing e-mails of the Louisiana National Guard due to technical problems. Those CDs arrived February 2.

The Select Committee sent request letters to both the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Office of Governor Haley Barber. MEMA provided organization charts, and a listing of key personnel. MEMA produced state plans including the MS Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP Vol. II), Contra-Flow Plan of August 2005, as well as many inter-agency state plans such as plans from Louisiana, transportation evacuation plans, and parish/city plans. MEMA provided risk assessments for hurricanes, floods, surges, and economic impacts. MEMA also included all Emergency Operations Center (EOC) maps of the state and local jurisdictions. MEMA provided information on plans and training exercises such as Hurricane Pam and Lifesaver 2004. Other items provided: timeline of events and communications such as director briefs, news releases, media advisories, MEMA situation reports, Incident Action Plans, EM 2000 messages, and mission assignments.

The documents produced by all three states and the federal government allowed the Select Committee to gain important insights into the workings of government entities stressed to the breaking point by a terrible disaster. They helped reveal the true nature of the relationship of state emergency management operations to the system of federal emergency management support. These documents allowed the Select Committee to reach conclusions about what worked well and what did not. Those conclusions will help improve preparation and response for the next disaster, protect the public, save lives, and reduce suffering. We don't pretend to have the entire universe of information related to the preparation for and response to Katrina. But we had more than enough to do our job. ■

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- ¹ *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Voices from inside the Storm Before Select Comm.*, (Dec. 6, 2005) at 28 (statement of Patricia Thompson) [hereinafter *Dec. 6, 2005 Select Comm. Hearing*].
- ² Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Juliette Saussy, Director, New Orleans Emergency Medical Services, in New Orleans, LA (Jan. 19, 2006).
- ³ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Eddie Favre, Mayor of Bay St. Louis, in Waveland, MS (Jan. 20, 2006).
- ⁴ Interview by Select Comm. Staff with Brent Warr, Mayor of Gulfport, in Waveland, MS (Jan. 20, 2006).
- ⁵ Rep. Gene Taylor, comments to Select Comm. Members and Staff during bus tour of coastal MS (Jan. 20, 2006).
- ⁶ Rep. Gene Taylor, comments to Select Comm. Members and Staff during bus tour of coastal MS (Jan. 20, 2006).
- ⁷ *Hearing on Back to the Drawing Board: A First Look at Lessons Learned from Katrina Before House Gov't Reform Committee*, 109th Cong. (Sept. 15, 2005) at 11 (statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman) [hereinafter *Sept. 15, 2005 Gov't Reform Hearing*].
- ⁸ *Sept. 15, 2005 Gov't Reform Hearing* at 12 (statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman).
- ⁹ Nicholas Johnston, *Some House Democrats Want Larger Role in Katrina Investigation*, BLOOMBERG, Nov. 2, 2005.
- ¹⁰ *Id.*
- ¹¹ *Id.*
- ¹² *Hearing on Hurricane Katrina: Voice from Inside the Storm Before the Select Comm.*, 109th Cong. (Dec. 6, 2005).
- ¹³ Bill Walsh, *Plan would let president take control in disasters; Proposal may be seen as slap at Blanco*, TIMES-PICAYUNE (New Orleans), Oct. 22, 2005 [hereinafter *Plan Article*].
- ¹⁴ *Plan Article*.
- ¹⁵ See, e.g., George C. Wilson, *Suiting Up for the Next Katrina*, CONGRESS DAILY, Oct. 17, 2005 at 5.
- ¹⁶ E-mail correspondence from Johnny Anderson, aide to Gov. of LA, to other aides (Sept. 2, 2005) (11:56 p.m.).
- ¹⁷ John Barnshaw, *Continuing Significance of Race and Class among Houston Hurricane Katrina Evacuees*, NATURAL HAZARDS OBSERVER (Natural Hazards Center), Nov. 2005 at 2.
- ¹⁸ Wash. Post Kaiser Family Foundation, and Harvard University, *Survey of Hurricane Katrina evacuees* (2005).
- ¹⁹ Christine MacDonald, *Months After Katrina, a Local Storm Surge on Race and Class*, BOSTON GLOBE, Nov. 6, 2005 at 4.
- ²⁰ Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program, *New Orleans after the Storm: Lessons Learned from the Past, a Plan for the Future*, (Oct. 2005) at 6.
- ²¹ John Barnshaw, *Continuing Significance of Race and Class among Houston Hurricane Katrina Evacuees*, NATURAL HAZARDS OBSERVER (Natural Hazards Center), Nov. 2005 at 3.
- ²² Alison Stateman, *Time for a Change? What Hurricane Katrina Revealed About Race and Class in America*, PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGIST, Oct. 1, 2005 at 8 (hereinafter *Strategist Article*).
- ²³ *Strategist Article*.



FEMA

"The devastation along the Gulf Coast from Hurricane Katrina is like nothing I have witnessed before. It is catastrophic. Words cannot convey the physical destruction and personal suffering in that part of the nation."

Dr. Max Mayfield

Director, National Hurricane Center

Select Committee hearing, September 22, 2005