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the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina
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Good morning Chairman Davis and distinguished members of the Committee. My name is William Carwile. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on the response and initial recovery operations for the Hurricane Katrina disaster. I served in Mississippi from August 29, 2005 until October 15, 2005; first as the Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO) for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and later as the Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer. I recently retired from federal service am currently affiliated with the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. I am testifying today as a private citizen.

Hurricane Katrina was the worst disaster to strike the United States in recent history from a response standpoint. While the 9/11 World Trade Center terrorism attack was a terrible disaster, it did not truly test the national response system because of the limited area of damage and the small number of survivors requiring medical attention and mass sheltering. Hurricane Katrina devastated large areas in three states and resulted in massive displacement of the population. The extent of damage from Katrina presented many challenges that had not been encountered in previous disasters and there are many lessons to be learned. I applaud your efforts to gather this information. I hope my testimony today will make a contribution. I will offer my perspective from the field, working in disaster areas with state and territorial counterparts, where I have spent almost all of my nine years with FEMA.

I joined FEMA in October 1996 as Director of the Pacific Area Office in Honolulu, Hawaii and first served as a Federal Coordinating Officer in 1997. I was one of the first members of the Federal Coordinating Officer cadre that was created in 1999 to provide pool of trained professional emergency managers for the federal side of disaster response and recovery. In addition, I was appointed one of the first pre-designated Principal Federal Officials (PFO) by former Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge. My recent disaster experience includes: Operations Section Chief for the 9/11 World Trade Center Response; FCO for the 2003 California Wildfires and FCO for each of the four 2004 hurricanes that struck Florida. Prior to my service with FEMA, I served almost three decades as a Special Forces and Infantry officer in the Regular Army including two combat tours in Vietnam. I was a training support brigade commander and the Defense Coordinating Officer for Defense Support to Civil Authorities operations in the Pacific prior to my retirement from the active duty as a colonel. I have provided a list of my military and emergency management experiences.

Background. Prior to the Hurricane Andrew disaster in Florida, FEMA had almost no response capabilities. It was viewed as a recovery agency that basically wrote checks to cover eligible

expenses. Even after Hurricane Andrew only a very small portion of the Agency was dedicated to response operations. Those few who were committed to response were sometimes referred to as “cowboys” by some in the agency which was largely staffed for mitigation, recovery, and flood insurance. Since 9 /11 there has been more emphasis on the federal role in disaster response, particularly a response to a terrorism event. In 2005 the National Response Plan was adopted; Homeland Security Presidential Directive - 5: Management of Domestic Incidents, February 28, 2003 strongly advocated the use if the Incident Command System (ICS) for the management of disasters.

Pre-landfall Actions. On August 26, 2005 I was deployed to Mississippi as Hurricane Katrina approached the coast to serve as the Emergency Response Team - Advanced leader and, upon declaration, the Federal Coordinating Officer. Later on August 26th I discussed the situation with the designated Operations Section Chief, Bob Fenton, and we decided he would stop at the FEMA Region IV Headquarters in Atlanta on the way to Jackson to submit Action Request Forms for the response resources that might be required if the storm were to strike Mississippi. Our initial requests were based on the storm track projected by the National Hurricane Center and our years of experiences managing large tropical storm events. In addition, he requested that Meridian Naval Air Station, Mississippi be made available as a staging area for Federal resources.

I arrived in at the State of Mississippi Emergency Operations Center (EOC) on August 27th where I linked up with the Federal Emergency Response Team – Advanced and the State Emergency Response Team, under the leadership of Robert Latham, the Director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). The priority at that time was to monitor the progress of evacuations along the coast.

Three Disasters. When a state experiences a large disaster the Governor may request a Presidential Disaster Declaration. One important point to remember about Katrina - there were three separate disasters declared by the President as Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast - Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. Each disaster was different in the amount and type of destruction, the number of people affected, and each State's Constitutional relationships with its local jurisdictions (counties and municipalities). Each disaster had a different person in charge - the Governor of the declared state. As the FCO, I was appointed by the President as his representative to provide support to the Governor. To effectively perform this duty, it is essential to form a close working relationship with the Governor and his or her representatives. In Mississippi this relationship, under the leadership of Governor Barbour, was a strong one, based on a “unified command” approach that worked. The FCO has no authority to direct the state response, but does provide technical assistance, expertise and is authorized by the Stafford Act to commit federal resources in support of the state's response and recovery. If the state has not already entered into contracts with suppliers for commodities, the federal government can contract for those commodities and the state agrees to pay the non-Federal share, if there is one.

Many things went well in the response in Mississippi however there were also problems. The state / federal Unified Command worked well in Mississippi, but this success was obscured by the fact that, initially, requested resources did not arrive into the State quickly enough for distribution to victims. Also, in Mississippi, temporary housing efforts far exceeded any

previous effort but this success was obscured by the overwhelming need and the unacceptably long time people remained in shelters. Below I detail some of my thoughts on what went well and what needs rethinking / improvement.

What went well

1. Organizational structure.

In any large operation, coherent command and control is essential. We, the state and federal partners, established a unified command, organized to reduce span of control by using both geographic and functional branches within our joint operations section, and implemented the joint action planning process.

National Response Plan, NIMS, and ICS in Mississippi In my view, the Katrina response in Mississippi was the first time appropriate portions of the National Incident Management System, the National Response Plan, and the Incident Command System were used in a major disaster response. During the summer of 2005, following the distribution of the NRP, many federal and state emergency managers underwent training on the Plan, and in ICS. Fortunately, I and key members of our Emergency Response Team in Mississippi, which was mostly comprised of personnel with whom I have worked for years, had participated in extensive ICS training. Similarly, Mississippi Emergency Management Agency Director Robert Latham and his staff, and most county emergency managers, had recently undergone NIMS and ICS training. One of the key members of our team, Operations Section Chief, Bob Fenton, has long been involved in doctrinal and training development and is truly an expert at how to adapt ICS for large scale operations. Using this training and our experience, Robert Latham and I, and our teams, established a Unified Command beyond that envisioned by the NRP, and began the joint incident action planning process. This established our priorities for each operational period, following ICS concepts. Governor Barbour attended and participated in many of our meetings.

Unified Command – Based on my experience in Florida last year with Governor Bush and his outstanding Director of the Department of Florida Emergency Management, Craig Fugate, I knew the importance of a solid State – Federal relationship through a unified command structure. From the moment I arrived in Jackson, there was a solid State – Federal effort in which Governor Barbour established the strategic goals and direction, and Robert Latham and I and the joint team developed objectives and set priorities for the limited resources. While not completely consistent with the new National Response Plan, which calls for a “multi-entity coordination group”, Robert and I believed some entity, in this case a “unified command” should be responsible for setting priorities and making decisions. This approach was further realized through the efforts of our joint Operations Section Chiefs, who fit the resource, State or Federal, to best meet the requirement. Overall, this partnership worked because of the cooperation and complete focus on the mission of assisting victims.

Incident Command System (ICS) Modifications - During the response, we found that some aspects of the NRP did not fit our organizational needs for this joint state/federal response; it was necessary to modify some important aspects of the Plan. It is my belief that “pure” ICS works well for fires and smaller disasters, but some substantial modifications are required for large scale events. Mostly, these revolve around the need for unified command up and down the

organization in order to address political and operational realities, and the fact that there may be no local "incident commander" with the capabilities to field a coherent response. ICS, as practiced by the fire service, is based on a "bottoms up" approach in which the Incident Commander and his/her Incident Management Team develop an incident action plan and request required resources. In a catastrophic event this is very difficult if the people at the "bottom" are overwhelmed and unable to fully form coherent response organizations. One modification we made to the basic ICS was to have joint section chiefs in each of the ICS sections - one chief from the state and an equal chief from FEMA; sort of a unified command at the section level. These two individuals worked together to accomplish the goals assigned to their section and reported jointly to the FCO / SCO Unified Command.

We extended this joint command concept to the geographic branch directors and the division supervisors in the local areas. Initially we did not have enough qualified personnel available to provide a federal division supervisor for every county impacted. Pre-landfall we established three divisions along the coast in counties expected to be the most impacted; each division had a state and federal supervisor. Unfortunately, there were insufficient numbers of qualified personnel to place joint division supervisors in each county before landfall. New divisions were added as personnel became available and were trained. The goal was to have coequal federal and state division supervisors in each of the most effected counties.

This was the first time joint division supervisors were co-located with county emergency managers in accordance with ICS doctrine. In Florida last year we did place "County liaisons" in some critical jurisdictions. This was primarily to provide advice to the local officials. County liaisons were just "liaisons" and did not have the authority to direct State or Federal resources. It is my belief that fielding geographic Branch Directors and Division Supervisors worked extremely well. I would recommend that an effort be made to capture the experiences of the individual branch directors and division chiefs involved through interviews, similar to the Army's oral history program, to find out what worked and if changes to the National Response Plan should be made to accommodate the realities of a joint state/federal ICS response.

Emergency Response Team Organization. While there are significant portions of the Incident Command System that do not fit the political and operational realities of a catastrophic disaster, there are ICS concepts that make sense. Among these are: the organizational structure for the team: Command, Plans, Operations, and Logistics. The fifth element, Finance and Administration deal with personnel and funding issues and should not be rolled into a "joint" State – Federal operation.

Span of Control. In ICS doctrine the ratio for span of control is one supervisor to five to seven subordinates. We achieved this through the use of geographic and functional branches. Initially, it was difficult to achieve this ratio because of the lack of available personnel.

2. Temporary Roofing Program. This program involves teams of contract personnel professionally installing high quality plastic sheeting over damaged roofs. This was first used extensively following Hurricane Andrew and again in Hurricane Georges in Puerto Rico, and last year in Florida. While this seems to be an expensive way to get a blue plastic roof on a home,

it enables families to reoccupy their houses until more permanent repairs can be made. The US Army Corps of Engineers was mission assigned to perform this task and achieved results far exceeding any we saw in Florida last year. The Corps, using contractors, was able to install close to the goal of 1,000 temporary roofs a day.

3. Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). EMAC is a compact between states to provide emergency support across state lines in the event of an overwhelming disaster. The number of personnel that was brought to the State by MEMA under EMAC was almost 25,000. These responders performed close to 900 missions. Many of the personnel who came were first responders, i.e. law enforcement, fire, and medical that were critically needed because of the devastation to the infrastructure of the most affected communities. Note: While EMAC has proven invaluable in recent hurricane events, I must caution against over reliance in a pandemic event or a scenario in which the nation is threatened with multiple terrorist attacks.

4. National Guard The National Guard of Mississippi and the Guardsmen and women from the several other states performed superbly throughout the response. They moved into the most impacted areas quickly and cleared key roads into the area. Their efforts a search and rescue were responsible for saving many lives. The entire distribution of commodities mission was theirs. When resources were available, they got them into the hands of victims as quickly as they could. In the area of public safety, they worked well with law enforcement and because of their joint efforts, early public safety issues were promptly dealt with and isolated looting ceased after about two days. Major General H. Cross, the State Adjutant General became an invaluable member of the unified command and through it coordinated most of the operations of the Guard.

5. Public Safety/Law Enforcement. Under the leadership of the Commissioner of Public Safety, George Phillips, the members of the public safety community aggressively moved into areas immediately after the storm passed and saved many lives and brought order. This was a very difficult mission as much of the public safety infrastructure, police and sheriffs' stations, patrol cars, and communications had been destroyed in the coastal counties. The men and women of law enforcement, as well as fire fighters and emergency medical personnel did an extraordinary job under incredibly difficult conditions. Commissioner Phillips, because of his many key resources, became an important part of the unified command leadership.

6. The National Hurricane Center's Proactive Approach. Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center, should be commended, not only for the accuracy of the Center's forecasts and his media availability to inform the public of the danger of Katrina, but also for his aggressive and uncompromising approach to personally contacting state and national leaders in an effort to begin early evacuations and preparations for what he knew could be a catastrophic event. His actions undoubtedly saved many lives.

7. Others Many individuals and groups contributed to the success of the response and should be integrated into any disaster plan. Volunteer agencies, faith based groups, Navy Seabees, Coast Guard search and rescue and EMAC teams, animal rescue organizations to name a few of the important entities that participated in the response.

What needs improvement

1. Insufficient Disaster Resources. Generally, in discussing resources, there are “teams” and “commodities”.

Teams. These include medical (Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, Disaster Mortuary Teams, Veterinary Medical Assistance Teams), Engineer Teams, i.e. Prime Power, and Urban Search and Rescue Teams. These teams were staged on August 29th in Mississippi and were adequate, with the exception of the mortuary teams which were unfortunately unable to provide sufficient support on as timely a basis as required in Hancock County, where there was a shortage of refrigerated facilities and body bags.

Commodities. In Mississippi we were in the unfortunate situation of managing shortages of commodities for the first nine to 10 days. The most critical commodities early on are always: water, food, and ice. We were woefully short of these items during the first critical days of the response. Fortunately, the State of Mississippi had purchased some items for Hurricane Dennis that had not been used. Also, very importantly, the State of Florida had pre-positioned considerable resources to be used in the Panhandle, in anticipation of a hit by Katrina. These commodities were provided by Governor Bush to Governor Barbour under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact and they were able to provide some relief to the victims in the coastal counties. This was very fortunate because, despite requests that were submitted pre-landfall, only about 25% of requested water and ice arrived in Mississippi during the period of September 1st to the 9th. Food, in the form of Meals Ready to Eat (MRE), was also in short supply. I speculate the shortages were the result of an overly centralized logistics system that was overwhelmed by requirements of three large disasters; however, I really don't know what the problem was. I requested that we, in Mississippi, be permitted through our own federal procurement capabilities, purchase commodities throughout the nation to supplement those being provided by the centralized system. I was authorized by FEMA Director Michael Brown to do so.

The factors contributing to the slow delivery of commodities should be examined and addressed for future disasters. Possible solutions reside much better planning efforts between State and Federal emergency management logisticians and operations personnel, the assistance and advice of DOD strategic logistics planners, and much more robust private sector partnerships, e.g. the US Army LOGCAP or USAF AFCAP programs. It is also possible for states to enter into their own contractual agreements with the private sector for procurement and delivery of response commodities. The federal share is reimbursable by FEMA. Florida routinely enters into such agreements.

2. Inadequate Numbers of Qualified Staff.

The inability to field experienced personnel in Mississippi had a major impact on our operations there. FEMA needs many more trained people who can deploy to disasters. Both career professionals and temporary disaster assistance employees (DAE's) performed their jobs well in Mississippi, especially in the first chaotic days after landfall. However, there were not enough trained people to adequately staff all of the positions. Of all the shortfalls that I had to manage as FCO this was the most difficult. This paucity of qualified personnel hurt us in both the response

and recovery phases of operations. In the response, it became apparent that while the deployment to the coastal counties of division supervisors enabled us to maintain linkage with these important jurisdictions, we needed experienced personnel in the cities, e.g. Gulfport, Biloxi, and Pascagoula. There were simply no personnel available in the FEMA system for these duties, to establish Disaster Recovery Centers, or perform traditional outreach activities by Community Relations. We quickly decided to utilize individuals from other Federal agencies, i.e. the US Forest Service and city firefighters from throughout the country, who have trained, operationally oriented personnel. Interestingly, when we used other agency personnel, we often heard that there were no "FEMA" people in a specific community. Despite our use of other agencies, we never had sufficient personnel to meet requirements. Not only were we competing with requirements in Louisiana, there simply are insufficient personnel, trained as members of coherent teams, to meet the requirements of a catastrophic event.

The lack of personnel also meant that many FEMA employees worked long days and weeks without relief because there was no backup. This leads to exhaustion and impacts on morale. In my experience the vast majority of FEMA employees are dedicated to helping victims and communities; they will sacrifice their personal lives to help; however, this will eventually take a toll and many leave the agency for personal reasons. Any organization needs to appreciate and nurture its most important asset - its people. I know that in Florida I had people working longer hours and deployed for many months longer than I would have liked because there was no one to fill their positions. Many of those same people are now in the one of the Gulf States.

The reconstitution of a viable, well-trained Federal disaster workforce, organized into coherent teams, must be a major focus going forward.

3. Communications.

Despite the deployment of the FEMA Mobile Emergency Support System (MERS) to provide robust satellite communications systems down to the coast to support our forward command post, and hand held satellite phones in county emergency operations centers, our communications capabilities were far short of what was required for effective operations. There should be a concerted effort to provide redundant communications capabilities down to all key responders. Reliance on cell phone and land line technologies proved unworkable. While satellite communications offer quick solutions, there should be a renewed interest in radio systems to provide both long and short range capabilities. Whatever systems are selected, they must be compatible, hardened against man made and natural hazards, and fielded down to local emergency managers in sufficient numbers.

4. Recovery Programs

The Public Assistance program provided under Section 406 of the Stafford Act is far too cumbersome and time consuming in terms of getting funds through the States down to the impacted communities. The program could be totally revamped, borrowing heavily from private insurance company practices. Debris removal – Category A of the Public Assistance Program is, in my experience, one of the most difficult and contentious aspects of disaster recovery. Initially, clearing of roads, waterways, airports, and other areas that are important to the welfare of the community is a priority. Later, the issue of debris on private property arises. In most

cases, debris removal on private property, including private enterprises (golf courses, gated communities) has not traditionally been reimbursed under the Stafford Act. In the past we have allowed individuals to move their debris from private to public areas where FEMA reimbursed the federal share for removal. The amount debris in Katrina along the Mississippi coast was so overwhelming - entire neighborhoods pushed into heaps and strewn with potential hazards that we were asked to cover the removal of debris on private property. To accommodate this situation, FEMA Headquarters issued policies to facilitate reimbursement for debris on private property while addressing rights of entry and "hold harmless" legal issues. While we could authorize paying the federal portion for the debris removal under the section of the Stafford act that allows removal of debris on private property for health and safety concerns, reimbursing applicants for the bulldozing of property without an owner's permission was not allowed. The entire issue of Federal reimbursement for debris removal should be addressed in a comprehensive manner. In my view, it will be difficult to get around the "rights of entry" and "hold harmless" portions of the policies but perhaps all debris should be eligible for some specific number of days following a major disaster. In any event, this is an issue requiring clarification.

Individual Assistance programs. These programs should be retooled to become much more "customer" friendly. Simple measures like reviewing all the form letters send to applicants in order to make them understandable and less foreboding. One example is the form letter that informs an applicant that he/she is "ineligible" for FEMA assistance if they have insurance. It is not clear that the applicant may be eligible if they suffer uninsured losses. Another relatively quick fix would be to remove the "caps" on categories of individual assistance put in place by the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The maximum grant amount of \$26,200 should remain in place but the entire amount should be able to be applied to repair or replacement costs making the applicant's home habitable. As it is now, only a portion of this amount may be applied to repair costs. This may force a family into seeking temporary housing from FEMA in the form of a travel trailer or mobile home.

5. Temporary Housing. Temporary housing was a major challenge, unlike other programs, this is the primary responsibility of the Federal Government. In Mississippi, we were able to get many more individuals into adequate living conditions more quickly than in any other disaster, now over 24,000 travel trailers and mobile homes, with over 60, 000 individual occupants. However, many people remained in shelters for unacceptably long periods of time. We tried many approaches to the problem of housing displaced victims, including cruise ships, hotel vouchers, rental assistance and travel trailers. Despite the close cooperation of local officials and hard work by many individuals, people were understandably frustrated by the delays in acquiring adequate housing. Temporary housing is a very complex problem that requires a great deal of planning and resourcing if it is going to be better next time. There will always be delays in a disaster as widespread as Katrina where tens of thousands of people are displaced. I believe that we need to rethink this issue and come up with a suite of options that can be adjusted for the disaster and local conditions. I would suggest that some kind of permanent housing be included as part of the mix in severely devastated areas, but this is not currently authorized under the Stafford Act.

6. Need for well understood operational methodologies. There has been no operational doctrine developed by FEMA in over four years. In my view, there is no clear understanding of the responsibilities of each level (Washington, the Regions, deployed Emergency Response Teams) and how they are to interact. This lack of operational doctrine results in unacceptable levels of overlap, double and triple ordering of resources, and interminably long video teleconferences and conference calls. While some of these are necessary, they can disrupt field operations. In my opinion, well understood and defined operational methodologies based on doctrine would minimize the need for lengthy video teleconferences and would achieve other efficiencies.

There was criticism of the "bureaucratic red tape" in the Katrina response. One thing I learned from the Army - in any operation, particularly a chaotic environment, there needs to be a balance between "going outside the system" and following a plan and a procedure. It is my belief that in any disaster response there needs to be a well disciplined, systematic approach based on a solid plan that is sufficiently flexible for a variety of situations. Experienced personnel know where the pitfalls are and can make decisions where flexibility is required. Doctrine, policies, training, and exercises should be developed that meet the needs of a trained and ready workforce.

7. The role of the Federal Coordinating Officer.

Under the Stafford act, the state is assigned a FCO. The FCO is an integral member of the Unified Command and must be present in the state to co-conduct Unified Command meetings and participate in decision making as problems arise. On September 21st I was notified by David Paulison, acting Director of FEMA that my appointment as Federal Coordinating Officer for Mississippi had been terminated; this action was officially recorded in the Federal Register on that date. Vice Admiral Thad Allen was appointed the FCO for each of the three declared Gulf States - Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama. I remained in Mississippi as the Deputy Federal Coordinating Officer to Vice Admiral Allen. This may not appear to be a major issue; however, the FCO as the President's representative has specific authorities under the Stafford Act. Without those authorities I was uncomfortable performing the duties of FCO. Vice Admiral Allen was understandably focused on Louisiana and New Orleans leaving Mississippi without the attention of a fulltime, onsite FCO during a critical period in the response. I would recommend that the role of FCO be clarified and that, while the Stafford Act indicates that the President may appoint any individual as FCO for a declared disaster, there should be a pool of pre-designated trained individuals to fill that role. Within the context of ICS these could be "typed" much like US Forest Service Incident Commanders and have standing emergency response teams. Some can be trained and credentialed for smaller disasters and others for catastrophic disasters; some for natural disasters and some for terrorism events.

8. Multi-state jurisdictions - Katrina exposed a weakness in the National Response Plan - there is no specific discussion of multi-state disaster management options. The PFO is the Homeland Security Secretary's representative. The NRP training manual describe the duties of the PFO as to 1) ensure that incident management efforts are maximized through effective and efficient coordination, 2) provide a primary point of contact and situational awareness locally for the Secretary of Homeland Security and 3) provide a channel for media and public communications and an interface with appropriate jurisdictional officials. More specifically, the PFO does not become the Incident Commander or direct or replace the incident command structure. He also

does not have directive authority over the Senior Federal Law Enforcement Officer (SFLEO), Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), or other Federal and State officials.

I have and served as both FCO on disasters and as PFO and Deputy PFO on large exercises and National Special Security Events. In my understanding, the PFO is not an operational position and the PFO has no authority over the implementation of the Stafford Act.

In my opinion, what is really needed in a multi-state operation is not a single entity to direct operations in two or more states; each state should be assigned an independent FCO to work directly with the Governor and his/her representatives. In a multi-state disaster scenario, what is required on the Federal side is an adjudicator of resource conflicts and a source of situational awareness for the National leadership. I believe ICS doctrine may provide a model for this organizational requirement. The Area Command in ICS is an ad hoc organization that requires no operations section, as it does not direct actions, but does have logistics, plans, and finance and administration sections. Its primary role is to provide situational awareness and adjudicate resource shortfalls between and among competing incident commanders. This may be a useful model to be examined to fill this void in the NRP.

The lack of clear doctrine for multi-state events needs to be addressed and a multi-state management plan for the federal response needs to be developed and exercised. This will require the cooperation of emergency management at the state level. In my experience, while state leaders are very supportive of one another during disasters, they would not like to be part of a "Regional approach" that would in any way inhibit direct dialog with the National leadership in Washington. Additionally, most State leaders believe that theirs may be unique circumstances and that the conditions in their state's warrant individual attention and solutions.

Conclusion I hope these thoughts will help the committee with its mission. I had limited time to prepare my remarks and will be glad to provide any additional information or clarification the committee requests. My colleagues and I at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security at the Naval Postgraduate School would be pleased to offer assistance to the committee. The center has both faculty and mid-career professionals doing graduate work who are dedicated to the study of issues I have discussed today. In addition, I am in the process of completing a white paper on the Katrina Response in Mississippi, similar to the white paper I prepared after the 2004 Hurricanes in Florida. These papers deal primarily with technical details internal to FEMA. Both can be made available to the committee.

In closing I would like to comment on questions raised about the competence of FEMA personnel in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. In my career in FEMA I worked with many dedicated and highly competent individuals who were committed to serving both their country and the victims of its disasters. Many routinely give up holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, and normal family lives to help others. I am proud of my service with FEMA and especially proud of the many individuals whose heroic efforts helped the people of Mississippi and other states in which I have served. This is especially true of the "Division Supervisors" (Eric Gentry, Mike Beeman, and Jeff Lusk) we sent down with their State counterparts to coastal counties before landfall, the Urban Search and Rescue teams, the medical teams, and others who joined us down

on the coast immediately after the storm passed. Just as with the men and women who serve in our military, these dedicated individuals deserve thanks for what they do.

A disaster can bring out the best in people. There are thousands of stories of individual acts of heroism and kindnesses during Katrina, just as there were when I was in New York City. Mississippians helped their neighbors, hundreds of local officials reported for duty, having just lost everything, and all around the country, volunteers left their lives behind and headed for the Gulf Coast to help. We should realize that the government and those wonderful volunteer agencies can never provide all the aid that is needed in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic disaster. We all need to better prepare ourselves and our families and be ready to help our neighbors.

I am heartened by the fact that you are taking measures to capture the lessons learned, both good and bad, from Katrina in Mississippi in order to make real changes so that the next time, and there will be a next time, elected and appointed officials will be able to better support the needs of victims.

I thank the committee for undertaking this important work for the nation. I will be glad to try to answer any questions you may have.