



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM AND  
UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS  
JIM SAXTON, NEW JERSEY  
CHAIRMAN**

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF JIM SAXTON**

***Hearing on the Department of Defense's Preparedness for the  
Upcoming Hurricane Season***

**Washington, D.C.** – The Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities meets this morning to discuss how the Department of Defense is preparing for the upcoming hurricane season. As Hurricane Katrina demonstrated last year, when there is a catastrophic disaster the military will be called upon to aid in the response. During Katrina, the military – and the National Guard in particular – shouldered this responsibility and completed its mission with valor.

There is always room for improvement, however. This hearing will investigate how the Department of Defense (DOD) has incorporated lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina as it plans and prepares for the upcoming hurricane season. In the weeks and months following Hurricane Katrina, the federal response to the disaster was scrutinized and critiqued. The Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, the Government Accountability Office and the White House have all issued reports reviewing the federal response to Hurricane Katrina and the military response in particular. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on how they are responding to the findings and recommendations in these reports.

It is important to note that the military mission in responding to domestic catastrophes is primarily a support mission – other agencies are in the lead. As a result, the military's ability to

complete its mission rests on the level of coordination between the Department of Defense, the National Guard, NORTHCOM, the Department of Homeland Security and state and local entities. In many ways, mission success will be determined by the level and quality of interagency coordination. I encourage the witnesses on both panels to address this issue during their testimony.

Unfortunately, the planning, training and exercising for hurricane response operations are not a theoretical matter. Just this week, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – or NOAA –predicted for this year “13 to 16 named storms, with eight to 10 becoming hurricanes, of which **four to six** could become 'major' hurricanes of Category 3 strength or higher.” While I hope this hurricane season passes without any Category 3 hurricanes, our military in coordination with federal, state, and local entities must be prepared for the worst.

It is also important to keep in mind that military preparedness to deal with a catastrophic event is important for reasons beyond hurricanes. While Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the great challenges our leaders face when implementing an emergency response plan, we have to remember that in the case of Katrina we had three days warning. In the case of a terrorist attack, we will not have the luxury of a warning.

The military’s mission to provide support to civil authorities applies to man-made disasters, as well as natural disasters. As Chairman of this subcommittee, I am constantly reminded that al Qaeda and its affiliates actively seek to carry out a catastrophic event on our soil. This threat is another reason why the military’s capability to respond to catastrophes is a matter of seminal importance.

Hurricane Katrina demonstrated the criticality of getting right our response to disasters. To me the importance of this matter is simple: the more we perfect our response capability the more lives will be saved.

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