



AMERICA AGREES: HURRICANE KATRINA DEMANDS AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION

I. The Bush Administration's Derelict Response to Warnings about the Katrina Disaster Demands a Serious Investigation.

President Bush: "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees." [ABC, 9/1/05]

Then-FEMA Director Mike Brown: "I must say, this storm is much, much bigger than anyone expected." [CNN, 8/31/05]

FEMA had previously listed a major hurricane in New Orleans as one of the top three threats to America. In fact, "[b]efore 9/11 the Federal Emergency Management Agency listed the three most likely catastrophic disasters facing America: a terrorist attack on New York, a major earthquake in San Francisco and a hurricane strike on New Orleans." [New York Times, 9/2/05]

The White House was briefed on the "Hurricane Pam" simulation, which included many of the disastrous scenarios that occurred during Hurricane Katrina. In 2004, "more than 40 state, local and volunteer organizations practiced a scenario in which a massive hurricane struck and levees were breached, allowing water to flood New Orleans. Under the simulation, called 'Hurricane Pam,' the officials 'had to deal with an imaginary storm that destroyed more than half a million buildings in New Orleans and forced the evacuation of a million residents.'" The Deputy Director of the LSU Hurricane Center, which did the simulation, says that a White House staffer was briefed on the exercise. [CNN, 9/5/05; NBC, "Meet the Press," 9/11/05]

Dr. Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center, warned FEMA about a possible breach in the levees before Katrina hit. According to Mayfield, "We were briefing them [Homeland Security Director Michael Chertoff and FEMA Director Michael Brown] way before landfall. It's not like this was a surprise. We had in the advisories that the levees could be topped." [Los Angeles Times, 9/5/05]

The National Weather Service had issued an urgent warning. The day before Katrina hit land, the National Weather service "issued a detailed message...saying buildings would be leveled, high-rises crippled and most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks, perhaps longer." [CNN, 9/13/05]

II. Republicans' Out-of-Touch Comments and Poor Oversight Track Record Show They are Incapable of Conducting a Thorough Investigation.

David Broder, Columnist: "Majority Republicans see themselves first and foremost as members of the Bush team – and do not want to make trouble by asking hard questions." [Washington Post, 9/4/05]

President Bush: “Brownie [then-FEMA Director Michael Brown], you’re doing a heck of a job.” The day Hurricane Katrina made landfall, Bush had been on the phone discussing immigration with Secretary Chertoff, shared birthday cake with Sen. John McCain, and held events to promote the Medicare Prescription Drug Benefit. [[AP](#), 9/2/05; [White House](#), 8/29/05]

House Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX): “The point is if you look at the big picture, it’s a phenomenal accomplishment by everybody involved. It’s unbelievable.” [Floor Speech, 9/8/05]

Bush: “[T]he magnitude of responding to a crisis over a disaster area that is larger than the size of Great Britain has created tremendous problems that have strained state and local capabilities. The result is that many of our citizens simply are not getting the help they need.” [[Washington Post](#), 9/4/05]

Bush: “I am satisfied with the response.” [[CQ](#), 9/2/05]

Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff: “Some people chose not to obey that [evacuation] order. That was a mistake on their part.” [[CNN](#), 9/1/05]

Then-FEMA Director Michael Brown: “Considering the dire circumstances that we have in New Orleans...things are going relatively well.” [[CNN](#), 9/2/05]

House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL): “It doesn't make sense to me. And it’s a question that certainly we should ask [regarding the use of federal funds to rebuild New Orleans]... It looks like a lot of that place could be bulldozed.” [[Washington Post](#), 9/3/05]

House Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX): [to young evacuees at the Houston Astrodome] “Now, tell me the truth, boys, is this kind of fun?” [[Washington Post](#), 9/10/05]

Representative Richard Baker (R-LA): “We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn't do it, but God did.” [[Wall Street Journal](#), 9/9/05]

Senator Rick Santorum (R-PA): “You have people who don't heed those warnings and then put people at risk as a result of not heeding those warnings. There may be a need to look at tougher penalties on those who decide to ride it out and understand that there are consequences to not leaving.” [[AP](#), 9/6/05]

III. The American People’s Confidence in President Bush Has Dropped, Making an Independent Investigation Into a Defensive White House All the More Necessary.

Americans Have Lost Confidence In Bush: “The [Administration’s response] to the hurricane has helped drag down Bush's job-approval rating, which now stands at 42 percent -- the lowest of his presidency... Fifty-seven percent disapprove of Bush's performance, a double-digit increase since January. Even some members of Bush’s own party appear to have lost faith in their leader: The president’s overall approval rating among Republicans has declined from 91 percent in January to 78 percent in the latest poll. Overall, half the country now characterizes Bush as a ‘strong leader’ -- down 12 points since May of last year. And the proportion who say he can be ‘trusted in a crisis’ likewise has fallen from 60 percent to 49 percent now.” [[Washington Post](#), 9/13/05]

Americans Want An Independent Commission: “The [Washington Post-ABC] survey found that 76 percent of the public favors an investigation of federal storm response efforts by an independent commission similar to the one that probed the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The proposal drew strong bipartisan support: 64 percent of all Republicans and 83 percent of Democrats favored creating the independent panel.” [[Washington Post](#), 9/13/05]