

Statement by

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## Introduction

Chairwoman Collins and distinguished members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to address you today regarding the Department of Defense's role in responding to the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

Hurricane Katrina was one of the most challenging natural disasters in U.S. history – in terms of persons displaced, businesses disrupted, commerce affected, and in projected aggregate economic losses. As a result, the Department of Defense's deployment of military resources in support of civil authorities after Hurricane Katrina exceeded, in speed and size, any other domestic disaster relief mission in the history of the United States. The ability of our military forces -- Active Duty, Reserves, and the National Guard -- to respond quickly and effectively to an event of this magnitude is a testament to their readiness, agility, and professionalism. It is also a reflection of the resources provided by Congress that enable them to organize, train, and equip to meet the full range of DoD's missions.

As President Bush described in his September 15 address to the nation:

*The [Katrina] storm involved a massive flood, a major supply and security operation, and an evacuation order affecting more than a million people. It was not a normal hurricane -- and the normal disaster relief system was not equal to it. Many of the men and women of the Coast Guard, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the United States military, the National Guard, and state and local governments performed skillfully under the worst conditions. Yet the system, at every level of government, was not well-coordinated, and was overwhelmed in the first few days.*

There is no doubt that improvements can and should be made at all levels of government. We continue to assess operational data from Hurricane Katrina in order to develop lessons learned and improve DoD's ability to respond the next time we are called, whether for a natural disaster or a catastrophic terrorist attack.

### **DoD Planning Prior to Hurricane Katrina**

The Department of Defense has a long history of assisting civil authorities in response to emergencies and disasters. For example, in 2003, DoD received 72 requests for assistance from more than 20 civil agencies, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice, and the National Interagency Fire Center. In 2004, DoD fielded 99 requests for assistance from domestic civilian agencies. Prior to Hurricane Katrina, DoD had already addressed 25 requests for assistance in 2005, and acted on over 140 for the entire year. For Hurricane Katrina operations alone, we received more than 93 requests for assistance.

Well before Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, the Department of Defense had undertaken preparations for the 2005 hurricane season. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, the Secretary of Defense approved a standing order to prepare and organize for severe weather disaster response operations. This order authorized the pre-positioning of senior military representatives, known as Defense Coordinating Officers, to act as liaisons with other governmental organizations in the projected disaster area prior to an event. The order also allowed the use of DoD installations as logistical staging areas for FEMA.

On Tuesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> (six days before landfall in Louisiana), as Tropical Storm Katrina approached, DoD conducted an inventory of available capabilities (e.g., meals ready-to-eat, staging bases, deployable hospitals, and health care providers), in anticipation of potential requests for assistance from other Federal, State, and local agencies. On Thursday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, DoD augmented its Liaison Officer at FEMA with three Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officers. From Friday, August 26<sup>th</sup> to Sunday,

August 28<sup>th</sup>, Defense Coordinating Officers and their support elements deployed to the State Emergency Operations Centers of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi to begin preliminary coordination with Federal, State, and local emergency management officials. From Wednesday, August 24<sup>th</sup>, to Sunday, August 28<sup>th</sup>, the Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi National Guard each established Joint Operations Centers in their respective States and thousands of National Guard soldiers and airmen were called to State Active Duty by their respective Governors. On August 28<sup>th</sup>, a Hurricane Katrina 24 hours-a-day/7 days-a-week crisis management cell was activated in my office. In addition, the Commander of U.S. Transportation Command put aircraft, crews, and contingency response wings on alert.

Although DoD's responsibility under the National Response Plan (NRP) is to provide assistance when requested by FEMA or directed by the President, the Department of Defense gave advance notice to designated military units and actually began deploying forces days in advance of formal FEMA requests. Through past experience in supporting civilian authorities, the Department was able to anticipate the types of assistance that might be requested by FEMA and we had appropriate units ready to move.

### **DoD Contribution to Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts**

The Department of Defense's response to the catastrophic effects of Hurricane Katrina was the largest and most rapid military deployment within the United States since the Civil War. Over 72,000 Federal military and National Guard personnel were deployed in response to Hurricane Katrina, more than twice the number deployed in response to Hurricane Andrew in 1992 (over 29,000). These forces were directly employed in saving lives through extensive search and rescue, evacuation, and medical assistance.

U.S. Northern Command, established after September 11, 2001, to unify DoD's homeland defense and civil support operations, provided command and control of Federal military forces during its most significant operational response. While overseeing the operational response to Hurricane Katrina, U.S. Northern Command also continued to focus on its mission to deter, prevent, and defeat threats and aggression aimed at the United States, its territories, and interests.

By any measure, the flow of military forces and relief supplies into the Katrina-affected areas was a massive operation. At the height of the DoD response, some 72,000 men and women in uniform assisted Federal, State, and local authorities in recovery efforts. Other military capabilities employed during the response included 23 ships, 68 fixed-wing aircraft, 293 helicopters, amphibious landing craft, space-based imagery, night vision capabilities, port and waterway surveillance, mortuary teams, and large-scale construction support provided through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Navy Seabees. Additionally, nine DoD installations served as logistical staging areas for the delivery of supplies and as sites for Federal Medical Shelters. Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas, was designated as the central collection point for foreign relief donations.

Federal military and National Guard forces were instrumental in saving lives, restoring order, and beginning the long, challenging process of recovery. Approximately 15,000 residents of the Gulf Coast were rescued and 80,000 others evacuated. DoD delivered critical emergency supplies – more than 30 million meals and some 10,000 truckloads of ice and water. Military forces also provided significant medical assistance, including 10,000 medical evacuations by ground and air, medical treatment of more than 5,000 patients, as well as support for disease prevention and control. Further, DoD made available more than 3,000 beds in field hospitals, installations, and aboard U.S. Navy ships. At the request of FEMA, DoD also supplied 13 mortuary teams to support local authorities in the systematic search, recovery, and disposition of the deceased.

Additionally, to assist in disease prevention, DoD aircraft flew mosquito abatement aerial spraying missions covering more than two million acres.

The Department of Defense planned for and employed a balance of Active, Reserve, and National Guard capabilities in responding to Hurricane Katrina. In contrast to Hurricane Andrew (1992), in which National Guard forces constituted 24% of the military response, National Guard forces represented more than 70% of the military force for Hurricane Katrina. Even while 75,000 National Guard members were deployed overseas, under the leadership of Lieutenant General Blum and the various state Adjutants General, the National Guard amassed over 30,000 troops in 96 hours in response to Hurricane Katrina. At the height of Katrina relief efforts, the National Guard deployed a total of 50,000 military personnel. National Guardsmen from every State, territory, and the District of Columbia were involved in Hurricane Katrina response operations. Further, National Guard Weapons of Mass Destruction – Civil Support Teams (WMD-CSTs) from 14 states deployed to provide state-of-the-art communications capabilities to local authorities and assistance and advice on identifying and handling hazardous materials from damaged infrastructure.

Most National Guardsmen participating in Hurricane Katrina response operations served under authority of Title 32 , U.S. Code (U.S.C.). With these forces in Title 32 status, the States maintained command and control of their forces and the Department of Defense provided funding. National Guardsmen in Title 32 status were also able to undertake law enforcement activities as directed by the Governor. One such example can be seen in the deployment of National Guard military police into New Orleans. Immediately preceding Hurricane Katrina, there were approximately 1,600 police officers in the New Orleans Police Department. When it became clear that civil order was breaking down, over a three-day period of time, the National Guard deployed 4,200 National Guard military police and security personnel into New Orleans, dramatically increasing the security presence. These National Guard forces were able to not only

backfill, but substantially expand, the total number of security personnel available in New Orleans and the surrounding parishes.

### **DoD Coordination with Interagency Partners**

The Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security work in close coordination to ensure the safety and security of the U.S. homeland. Coordination and cooperation take place continuously at all levels of both organizations. As the Secretary of Defense's principal liaison with DHS, my office has worked diligently to foster excellent working relationships and provide relevant expertise. In that regard, the two departments signed a memorandum of agreement in 2003 that authorized the assignment of 64 DoD personnel to DHS on a detail basis to fill critical specialties, principally in the areas of communications and intelligence. Further, we established a Homeland Defense Coordination Office at DHS headquarters to provide for continuous liaison and advisory support and we maintain a 24 hours-a-day/7 days-a-week presence in the DHS Homeland Security Operations Center. As needed, DoD also provides senior personnel for the DHS-led Interagency Incident Management Group – a group of senior Federal department and agency officials focused on incident response. Beyond these formalized arrangements, daily contacts between DoD and DHS are the norm in the course of interagency working group meetings and our collaboration on a range of projects and initiatives.

DoD is an important partner in the overall national response effort for a complete spectrum of incident management activities, including the prevention of, preparedness for, response to, and recovery from, acts of terrorism, major natural disasters, or other major emergencies. DoD resources are employed as part of a coordinated incident management approach among Federal, State, and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations. Title 10, U.S.C., and the National Response Plan (NRP), published in December 2004, define the authorities and responsibilities of the

Department. DoD is the only Federal department with supporting responsibilities for each of the NRP's fifteen Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). Additionally, DoD's U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is designated as the primary agency for Emergency Support Function #3, Public Works and Engineering, operating under separate statutory and funding authority.

In responding to requests from FEMA for Hurricane Katrina operations, DoD acted quickly within the NRP framework. In all, DoD acted on more than 93 Hurricane Katrina-related requests for assistance (RFAs) from civil authorities for a broad range of military capabilities. Many of these requests were approved verbally by Secretary Rumsfeld or Acting Deputy Secretary England. The Department felt a sense of urgency and acted upon it.

An example of this sense of urgency can be seen during an extraordinary 5-day period at the beginning of the response effort. On Thursday, September 1, 2005, FEMA made a request for DoD to accept the responsibility to provide "full logistics support" throughout the entire area affected by Hurricane Katrina, at an estimated cost of \$1 billion dollars. This was a substantial request, with enormous planning and resource requirements, reflecting the staggering amount of damage and immediate needs of those affected. On September 1-2, DoD reviewed this request, assessed the requirements, identified available military capabilities, and notified DHS, in writing, that the request had been approved by the Secretary of Defense. Within approximately 24 hours, DoD had processed and approved what may well have been the single most complex civil support mission in the history of the U.S. military.

After the approval of the "full logistics support" request, on Saturday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, I met with DHS Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson and, during that time, we drafted a list of current or emerging FEMA requirements that were likely to generate additional



DoD requests for assistance: search and rescue; security assessment; command and control infrastructure; geo-spatial surveillance; firefighting; health and medical support; disease prevention; quarantine planning; debris removal; and restoration of basic utilities and key transportation routes. On Sunday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, these draft requests for assistance were reviewed and further refined by senior DHS and DoD officials, who were working with a shared sense of urgency. On Monday, September 5<sup>th</sup>, these requests, many of them already in active execution, were approved by the Secretary of Defense.

The joint DoD-DHS effort produced seven comprehensive RFAs on Monday, at an estimated cost of \$805 million dollars, in addition to the “full logistics support” RFA approved the previous Friday. The total estimated cost of these RFAs, including the “full logistics support” RFA, was more than \$1.8 billion dollars. Considering the magnitude of physical resources and the complexity of planning necessary to execute these requests for assistance, as well as the sheer number of DoD personnel involved, our Department acted with urgency to provide a rapid and positive response.

### **Observations on the Federal Response**

As with all Department of Defense operations, we have made it a priority to capture lessons learned from our response to Hurricane Katrina. We have been doing so ever since the hurricane made landfall. The Department has organized to support the White House Hurricane Katrina lessons-learned process directed by the President and to oversee implementation of lessons learned within DoD. Although review and analysis are still ongoing, let me highlight some preliminary areas for corrective action to improve both the overall Federal government and specific DoD response.

We must –

- improve our ability to obtain timely and accurate assessments of damaged areas immediately after an event;
- achieve unity of effort when multiple Federal agencies converge on an affected area;

- assure our ability to effectively communicate with first responders and emergency management personnel;
- integrate both Active Duty and Reserve Components capabilities into pre-event and on-scene operational planning for catastrophic events; and
- re-examine the foreseeable roles and necessary resources of DoD in responding to a catastrophic event.

These preliminary observations, and others under review, form the framework for an in-depth analysis of our response to Hurricane Katrina and will enable DoD to better plan for the next catastrophic event.

## **Conclusion**

In terms of its magnitude, Hurricane Katrina constituted one of the most destructive natural disasters in U.S. history, and proved to be the deadliest storm to strike since 1928. U.S. military forces executed the largest, fastest, most comprehensive, and most responsive civil support mission ever. In a domestic disaster relief operation unprecedented in scale, over 72,000 Federal military and National Guard forces flowed into the Gulf Coast region over a twelve-day period to assist fellow Americans in distress.

The ability of our military forces - Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard – to respond quickly and effectively to an event on the scale of Hurricane Katrina and to simultaneously sustain the ongoing Global War on Terrorism is a testament to their readiness, agility, and professionalism. It is also a reflection of the resources provided by Congress that enable them to organize, train, and equip to meet the full range of DoD's missions.

Madam Chairwoman, I commend you and the members of this Committee for your leadership, interest in, and support of, the Department's homeland defense and civil

support missions, with a particular focus today on the DoD response to Hurricane Katrina. I look forward to any questions you may have.