

UNCLASSIFIED

STATEMENT BY

**MAJOR GENERAL BENNETT C. LANDRENEAU
THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
STATE OF LOUISIANA**

BEFORE THE

**SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE**

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ON

**Hurricane Katrina
The Defense Department's Role in the Response**

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Good Morning

Madam Chairman, Senator Lieberman, and distinguished members of the committee, I am honored to be with you this afternoon to discuss the military response for Hurricane Katrina.

Before I begin, I would like to express my deepest appreciation to all who provided support to Louisiana in our hour of need. It is true; Hurricane Katrina was the most devastating natural disaster in our nation's history, a catastrophic event of biblical proportions. However, in the face of our nations greatest natural disaster, the heart and soul of this country launched the greatest response and outpouring of support ever witnessed on American soil. Personnel, supplies and equipment from every state and territory came to the aid of Louisiana and her citizens and we are forever grateful.

I greatly appreciate the hard work and creativity of the professional emergency managers who work with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. Their dedication and service is noteworthy and commendable.

I am also thankful and proud to work alongside the finest National Guard Soldiers and Airmen in the United States. Their courage and selfless service in the face of tremendous turmoil was inspiring. The efforts of these Soldiers and Airmen reflect great credit on the citizens of Louisiana and we will never forget their sacrifices.

In Louisiana the Adjutant General of the National Guard also serves as the Director of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. As Commander of the Guard and Director of LOHSEP, I am responsible for the actions of these organizations,

and I am responsible for ensuring these organizations implement lessons learned from this disaster.

As Katrina made her way into the Gulf of Mexico and her projected path was Florida, Louisiana began to make preparations beginning on Thursday, 25 Aug. and we continued to monitor Katrina throughout the night and into Friday, 26 Aug. Preparations continued throughout the day and at 4pm it became clear Katrina had shifted far enough West and was a definite threat to Louisiana and Greater New Orleans.

When Governor Blanco declared a state of Emergency, I recommended the activation of 2000 National Guardsmen. This activation began the chain of events that initiated our emergency response plan and began the coordination with staff and units to implement preplanned support requirements for response operations. Although 2000 Guardsmen were activated, thousands more were alerted to possible activation.

On 27 Aug at 7am, all three Louisiana National Guard Joint Operation Centers were staffed at maximum levels and all units were staffed for 24 hour operations. Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) coordination began for early aviation support. Throughout the day, Louisiana National Guard forces continued to execute their missions in accordance with our existing support plans to include providing 160 soldiers to support Louisiana State Police Contra flow evacuation.

I moved to the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness in Baton Rouge to continue coordination efforts. As we gathered more information on the strengthening storm, I recommended to Governor Blanco we activate an additional 2000 National Guardsmen. Never before in Louisiana's history had so many National Guardsmen been called up before a hurricane.

On Sunday, 28 Aug, we continued to reposition specific resources in accordance with our plan. As part of this response plan I would like to point out that we have standing agreements with parishes in the greater New Orleans area to provide personnel

and equipment. High water vehicles and soldiers are assigned to each NOPD district, Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office, St. Bernard and Plaquemine Parish. Also, each of the 13 parishes in Southeast Louisiana was assigned a National Guard Liaison team to coordinate the Guard response with each parish emergency manager. Mobile communication teams were linked up with Engineer Assessment Teams and staged along the outer path of the projected strike zone. These teams moved in as soon as Katrina passed and were able to provide early assessments of damage in areas surrounding New Orleans. Personnel and equipment are assigned to specific Louisiana State Police Troops, and our agreement with the city of New Orleans is to provide medical and security personnel for the Louisiana Superdome, Which is identified as a special needs shelter in the state emergency response plan. When the Superdome was later designated as a shelter of last resort, the Louisiana National Guard was prepared. Our guardsmen, in support of NOPD organized and implemented an entrance plan that searched every person entering the Superdome. Over 10,000 personnel were searched for contraband. Seeing an immediate need for food and water, the guard delivered Meals ready to eat and water on Sunday, 28 Aug.

By landfall on Monday, 29 Aug the Louisiana National Guard had personnel and equipment in place with additional personnel being alerted. As the day progressed, and Katrina moved inland, we knew we had a significant problem in Southeast Louisiana. When we learned of the multi failures in the Federal levees, we then recognized we were coping with a catastrophic incident. Louisiana's 5 levels of redundancy within its Communication systems were either down or had reached capacity, so our ability to receive timely and accurate information was degraded.

As soon as it was possible, National Guard soldiers and airmen launched search and rescue boats that had been pre positioned at Jackson Barracks and our aviation resources along with the US Coast Guard soon followed as gale force winds subsided. This search and rescue continued throughout the night and into Tuesday.

By Tuesday, the Louisiana National Guard had every resource committed as well as EMAC aviation forces that arrived before the storm. All engaged in Governor Blanco's number one priority, search and rescue and saving lives.

On Tuesday morning I received a call from LTG Honoree where he informed me he was named Task Force Commander for Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana . During our conversation I conveyed the Governor's desire for Federal Troops, in particular an Army Division Headquarters to plan, coordinate, and execute the evacuation of New Orleans. After my conversation with LTG Honoree, I placed a call to LTG Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and requested the National Guard Bureau take the lead in a national call for additional assistance from National Guard units throughout the country. Today, we know one of the most successful outcomes of Katrina was the execution of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. This process opened the door and without hesitation, every state and territory began to flow resources into Louisiana.

On Wednesday, 31 Aug, LTG Honoree arrived in Baton Rouge, I introduced him to Governor Blanco at which time she asked LTG Honoree to coordinate the evacuation efforts in New Orleans, so that I could concentrate on search and rescue and law and order issues. At this point the governor expressed increasing concern with the lack of federal resources entering the state. Governor Blanco assumed LTG Honoree's arrival was the beginning of the federal military response. When she learned that he in fact did not have a sizable military force with him, she again expressed concern. On Wednesday, BG Graham arrived in Baton Rouge with 25 personnel and was directed by LTG Honoree to assist in coordinating the evacuation of New Orleans.

On Thursday, 1 September we begin to see the arrival of National Guard forces in significant numbers. When we recognized the pace and quantity of arriving forces, I directed members of my staff to establish a receiving location for incoming forces. Within hours of my instructions, the Joint Reserve Base located in Belle Chasse Louisiana was established as the Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration [RSOI] base. The purpose of this base was to receive personnel, assign an area of

operation, brief on the mission to be preformed, supplement any supplies and transport them to their AOR.

Realizing communication with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness and local governments was severely degraded; we decided to use our separate task forces to expedite the assistance to local governments. Upon arriving within their AOR, the commander of each task force established communication with the parish officials and became the one stop shop for military support within each parish. In some instances, this process happened in less than 2 hours.

It is important to note Hurricane Katrina not only impacted the city of New Orleans, but 12 other Southeast Louisiana Parishes. In responding to each parish we created a separate task force to conduct operations in each of the 13 effected parishes. Each parish had a commander working with local officials to meet immediate needs. If resources could not be provided locally, commanders would channel the request up to the Task Force Pelican Commander who could resource the request.

The RSOI mission went on for several weeks and we eventually processed and missioned over 30,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen and equipment to 13 parishes.

Also, on Thursday the National Guard began to receive large numbers of busses at the Louisiana Superdome. National Guard members coordinated around the clock evacuation beginning at 10 am and completing Saturday. Eventually 822 busses would be used by National Guard forces to evacuate the Superdome.

In addition to securing and evacuating the Louisiana Superdome, The Louisiana National Guard received a request from the city of New Orleans to assist in securing the Morial Convention Center. On Friday at 12 noon, nearly 1000 National Guardsmen supported the securing of the Convention Center. By 1230 the area was secure and by 3pm, food distribution and medical triage facilities were established. Distribution of food, water and medical care continue throughout the night. The Evacuation began at 10 am Saturday and was completed by 6pm the same day, again by National Guard forces.

Madam Chairman, and distinguished members, your committee and others have discussed the issue of Federalization. I tell you today, as I recommended to Governor Blanco, there was never a need to federalize the National Guard. Federalizing the National Guard would have significantly limited our capacity to conduct law enforcement missions and would add no advantage to our ability to conduct operations. Thousands of National Guard forces were pouring into the state, soldiers and airmen in a Title 32 status, most of whom were combat tested, and uniquely qualified to carry out the Governors priorities.

There has also been discussion about a proposal received by Governor Blanco on Friday evening outlining a dual "hated" commander." One commander to control both Title 10 and 32 Forces. I again submit to you this procedure would have served no operational purpose. By the time this document was received, there were over 8500 National Guardsmen on the ground performing operations. Lines of communication, chains of command and tasking priorities had already been established. Changing this process would have only stalled current operations and delayed vital missions and not have provided any additional "boots on the ground."

LTG Honoree and I were in constant communication. When federal land forces began to arrive on Saturday 3 September, LTG Honoree consulted me and we discussed their deployment. Seeing as the major evacuation of New Orleans was complete, we discussed where the most effective utilization would be, and at LTG Honoree's request, when MG Caldwell of the 82nd Airborne arrived, I briefed him on his sector and mission. We embedded National Guard personnel in every Active Duty formation that arrived. These National Guard soldiers and airmen served as effective liaisons and also added a law enforcement capability in case the need arose.

We did in fact reach unity of effort, each component working towards a common goal, while maintaining unique chains of command. We had developed a multi-

component command operating under the legal authorities of Title 10, 14, and 32 of the United States Code all in support of the governor of Louisiana.

There has never been a time in our nation's history when the National Guard has been in greater demand. We need your assistance to make sure our National Guard is properly resourced to defend our nation overseas and defend our people at home. The National Guard is forward deployed in every state and territory in America. They will be the first military responders, and in most cases will be able to fulfill the needs and requirements for a disaster, just as we have done in Louisiana for decades. However, as in Katrina, when a catastrophic event occurs, DOD assets will be needed to add capabilities and resources to the relief effort.

When the National Guard performs its military support to civil authorities mission, a key component is the delivery of the capacity to communicate. If civilian first responders cannot communicate, they cannot coordinate. Katrina's wind and flood waters destroyed the preexisting communication infrastructure. In the future, the Guard needs to have the capacity to deliver a communication infrastructure that is able to meet the new surging demand. The Louisiana National Guard also needs 2 mobile command suites to serve as forward command posts.

We must develop better electronic solutions to request, locate and track resources. We must standardize our procedures to receive and stage personnel and equipment as they arrive in state. Then integrate those resources into the deployed formations.

I am pleased to see the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security has initiated action to create DHS Emergency Reconnaissance Teams. This should enhance the Secretary's capacity to determine when conditions warrant the declaration of an incident of National Significance or a Catastrophic Incident which authorizes a proactive Federal response.

LOHSEP, LANG and the federal government, with your help are learning those lessons and factoring them into our future plans. The Southeast Louisiana Catastrophic

Planning Project commonly know as Hurricane Pam demonstrated the quality work that we can produce with a joint federal, state and local team. I ask you to help us reinforce that teamwork. I can assure you that lessons learned will help us be better prepared for the 2006 Hurricane season.

I am honored to be on this panel with LTG Honoree, who represents the finest in America.

I look forward to answering your questions.