

**STATEMENT OF
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Good morning, Chairman Collins, Senator Lieberman, and other distinguished members of this Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and for your ongoing support to the Department of Homeland Security and its important mission. I am pleased to come before you to discuss the activities of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) relating to the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina.

Currently, I am the Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection at the Department of Homeland Security. By way of background, I am retired from the United States Air Force at the rank of colonel with extensive experience in contingency planning and operations from the joint special operations perspective. In my 24-year military career, I organized, trained, and equipped Air Force special operations forces for contingency operations in Iraq, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Croatia, Liberia, Colombia, and Kosovo. My duties also included extensive responsibilities for the planning and execution of complex combat search and rescue, air traffic management, terminal attack control, medical evacuation and noncombatant evacuation operations.

Following my Air Force career, I joined the Department at its inception in March, 2003, and served as a Special Assistant to the Secretary of Homeland Security and Director of the Headquarters Integration Staff. In these roles, I was responsible for a wide range of issues, including mission integration, contingency planning, and incident

management at the strategic and operational levels. In August 2004, then Secretary Ridge asked me to lead the Department effort to coordinate the development of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the National Response Plan (NRP), as required under Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD) 5. In this capacity, I bore responsibility for leading an interagency writing team comprised of more than a dozen principal representatives across the Department and other key Federal agencies and for coordinating the development of the NRP document with a wide array of Federal, State and local government and private sector partners. I also had lead responsibility for developing an initial program of education, training and awareness regarding the NIMS and the NRP, in partnership with FEMA's Emergency Management Institute. Following issuance of the NIMS in March 2004 and the NRP in December of 2004, at Secretary Ridge's direction, I transitioned responsibility for the ongoing management and maintenance of both the NIMS and the NRP to FEMA headquarters.

The National Response Plan is the core operational plan for national incident management. It adopts an all-hazards approach that provides the structure and mechanisms for national-level policy and operational coordination for domestic incident management. The NRP was issued in December 2004, and became fully effective on April 14, 2005, following a 120-day implementation period starting in mid-December 2004. It is signed by the heads of 32 federal departments and agencies and national-level private volunteer organizations. Prior to final implementation, the NRP was tested during the Top Officials Exercise 3, conducted during the period of April 4-8, 2005 and involving complex mass casualty scenarios in two State venues.

The NRP is a plan; as such, it does not provide legal authority; rather it provides a comprehensive set of processes and protocols to bring together departments and agencies at all levels of government and across disciplines in a common approach to incident management. The NRP is implemented in a cascading fashion according to the situation at hand. It is not turned on and off in a binary fashion like a light switch; in fact, certain core coordinating structures of the NRP, such as the Homeland Security Operations Center, are active 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Other elements of the NRP can be fully or partially implemented in the context of a threat, anticipation of a significant event, or in response to an incident. Selective implementation of core elements of the system allows significant flexibility in meeting the operational and information-sharing requirements of the situation at hand, as well as enabling effective interaction among Federal, State, local, and private-sector partners.

In August 2005, around the time of Hurricane Katrina, I held several senior positions at the Department. I was the Acting Under Secretary for Information Analysis and Infrastructure Protection (IAIP), the Manager of the National Communications System (NCS), the leader of the transition team for the new Under Secretary for Preparedness, and the Director of the Headquarters Integration Staff.

My core responsibilities as Assistant Secretary for Infrastructure Protection focused me on policy coordination, planning, and risk-management strategies for the 17 critical infrastructure and key resource sectors, defined in HSPD-7. With the onset of Hurricane Katrina, I focused my attention on contingency responsibilities as the Director of the Interagency Incident Management Group (IIMG) as specified in the NRP.

By way of background, the Interagency Incident Management Group is a multi-agency Federal coordination entity which reports directly to the Secretary of Homeland Security to facilitate the strategic response to a domestic incident. It is comprised of senior representatives from nearly 40 different agencies, to include DHS components, other Federal departments and agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Its membership is flexible and can be tailored to provide appropriate subject-matter expertise depending upon the nature of the threat or incident at hand. The IIMG works in concert with other NRP coordinating structures such as the HSOC and the FEMA National Response Coordination Center (NRCC). In terms of division of labor, the IIMG is intended to focus on strategic-level issues and medium-term courses of action for Secretary-level consideration, while the HSOC and NRCC work in partnership to maintain situational awareness and solve operational and tactical level issues.

According to the NRP, the Secretary of Homeland Security may activate the IIMG based upon a recommendation from the HSOC Director, General Matthew Broderick, a colleague and fellow witness on this panel today. The Secretary's decision is generally based upon the nature, severity, magnitude, and complexity of the threat or incident situation. Once activated, the IIMG serves as a focal point for Federal strategic incident management planning and coordination. In addition, the IIMG develops strategies for implementing policy guidance.

As IIMG Director, I directed my staff in the early evening of Thursday, August 25, to alert all IIMG members regarding the approach of Hurricane Katrina and to request them to maintain readiness for possible IIMG activation within a 90-minute window as directed by the Secretary in accordance with standard IIMG recall protocols. At that

time, I also directed my staff to send regular HSOC situation and spot reports regarding Katrina to all IIMG members to help promote situational awareness and prepare them to assume their duties if recalled. As a result, this information was widely disseminated throughout the Executive Branch at a Senior Executive Service level, prior to landfall.

During the weekend period (August 27-28, 2005), I stayed in close contact with Director Broderick, receiving regular verbal and electronic updates on the Hurricane Katrina situation. Based upon the available information regarding the storm, it was decided not to activate the IIMG during that time, and that the fully activated HSOC and NRCC coordinating structures were robust enough to handle emergent incident management coordination and resource requirements. The IIMG membership remained on a 90-minute recall posture throughout the weekend to afford the Secretary an additive incident management capability if required. This approach is consistent with that followed in response to the onset of previous hurricanes.

As Hurricane Katrina approached the land borders of the United States, FEMA tactically pre-positioned significant assets, to include essential equipment, supplies, and specialty teams, in critical locations throughout the projected hurricane “footprint” and established initial NRP-related coordinating structures at the regional and state levels. Through these actions, the Department was “leaning forward” in preparation for a significant hurricane, informed by lessons learned from the previous hurricane season, the Hurricane Pam planning project, and emergent analysis from the National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center, as well as by specific requests from emergency management officials representing the states of Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Additional Federal assets were deployed into the region

following the issuance of the Presidential Emergency Declaration on August 27 (for Louisiana) and August 28 (for Mississippi and Alabama). The type and quantity of pre-positioned Federal assets were based upon previous hurricane experience as well as specific State and local-level requirements and requests. It should be noted that the NRP Catastrophic Incident Annex was not formally implemented, even though it was used as guidance, because it was designed and constructed for a “no-notice” incident scenario that would not allow time for a more tailored approach. Through the mechanism of the Presidential Emergency Declaration, the Federal government had sufficient authority and time to take action to determine and deploy a full measure of appropriate assets prior to landfall pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act.

On Monday morning, August 29, 2005, the Deputy Secretary directed me to convene a meeting of IIMG members for the purposes of conducting a situational awareness update and pulsing the IIMG members regarding individual agency capabilities and operational activities in the hurricane impact area. At this point in the unfolding scenario, much of the information being reported from the field was understandably preliminary, incomplete, and unconfirmed. As the day progressed, I stayed in close contact with Director Broderick, but situational awareness remained incomplete with widely varying information. A comprehensive operational picture had not yet begun to emerge. Throughout this day, there were many inconsistent and uncertain reports regarding the extent of hurricane-related damage in New Orleans and the status of the levee system. This is fully consistent with the “Day 1” pattern established during previous hurricane situations.

On the following day, Tuesday, August 30, 2005, at approximately 11:30 a.m., I was first advised by my staff of confirmed reports of irreparable breaches to the levees in New Orleans, and that there was considerable flooding confirmed to be occurring in various parts of the city. As a result, IIMG members were recalled to DHS headquarters and the IIMG was officially activated at approximately 2:00 p.m. on that day. This decision was based on the fact that a potential long-term flooding of New Orleans represented a “catastrophic crisis within a crisis,” and that the Secretary would now require the additional layer of incident management capability provided by the IIMG. Secretary Chertoff also issued a formal memorandum designating Michael Brown, FEMA Director (already on the ground in Baton Rouge), as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) under the NRP.

As the events of that first week unfolded, three factors combined to negatively impact the speed and efficiency of the Federal response. The first was the sheer amount of physical devastation caused by Katrina in terms of both wind damage and flooding. Response teams had to cope with severely restricted geographic access to core parts of the impacted areas of New Orleans due to the extent of the flooding. Secondly, the tenuous initial security and law enforcement environment in New Orleans and the immediate surroundings significantly impacted rescue and response efforts until a degree of stability was achieved later in the first week of the response. Finally, as the week progressed after landfall, Federal officials did not fully implement key aspects of the NIMS and the NRP, which impeded the Federal response. As an example of this latter shortcoming, the PFO and core staff, following landfall, did not establish a robust Joint Field Office (JFO) and Emergency Support Function structure as called for in the NRP.

According to the NRP, the JFO serves as a key hub of Federal incident management coordination at the local level and enables integrated interaction with key State and local officials. Although the NRP envisions the JFO normally becoming operational within a 48- to 96-hour period after the initial occurrence of an event, the completely functional JFO in Baton Rouge, in fact, was not fully activated until much later.

Moreover, the PFO did not establish a robust Federal unified command structure in Baton Rouge or in New Orleans as called for in the NIMS. The concept of unified command provides for the coming together of senior representatives from each agency involved in incident response operations to enable informed, collective decision-making, resource allocation, and coordinated multi-agency operations. While many support agencies had liaisons co-located at the Louisiana and Mississippi Emergency Operations Centers, full unified command was not accomplished until after the first week (the sheer devastation brought about by the hurricane fully contributed to this situation). Finally, the PFO did not establish sufficient means for providing situational awareness back to DHS headquarters from Baton Rouge or, more importantly, from New Orleans itself—the main center of gravity from a catastrophic incident perspective. Lack of “eyes and ears” on the ground in New Orleans significantly hindered the ability of NRP entities at DHS headquarters to put together a common situational awareness and common operating picture for the Secretary and other senior decision-makers. This situation was dramatically turned around following the arrival of Vice Admiral Allen in theater and his assumption of overall PFO responsibilities, as well as improved communications.

The Department has moved aggressively to identify additional shortcomings associated with the Federal response to Katrina and to design and begin to implement

appropriate solutions. A key focus area is improving tactical-level situational awareness and command and control connectivity for catastrophic incidents. The Department leadership has also been working closely with FEMA headquarters and field components to restructure FEMA logistics and mission assignment processes for catastrophic incidents. More details will follow regarding this effort in the coming weeks. The Department is also committed to taking a close look at the NRP and its associated education and training process and making the adjustments necessary to ensure that we are fully prepared for the 2006 hurricane season. The Department looks forward to continuing its cooperative relationship with this Committee and other partners, as it continues to look back retrospectively in order to operate more effectively and efficiently during future incidents.

I would like to close by recognizing the extraordinary efforts of the men and women of FEMA who worked diligently—and continue to work diligently—to provide a wide variety of assistance to those whose lives were impacted by the hurricanes of 2005. The situation they faced at all levels was extremely complex, and in some cases, heretofore unprecedented. I hold these folks in the utmost regard; they deserve our continued respect and support in the road ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.