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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

November 30, 2017

The Honorable Brock Long
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Long:

I write to request information about contracts the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has awarded to supply emergency tarps to protect homes damaged by Hurricane Maria. FEMA distributes these “blue tarps” or “self-help tarps” to homeowners who use them to cover damaged roofs and protect their homes from further damage until permanent repairs can be made.¹

A recent news article by the *Associated Press* has raised concerns about more than \$30 million in contracts that FEMA awarded to Bronze Star, LLC – a Florida company formed only two months before the contracts were awarded. According to the report, FEMA recently canceled its two contracts with Bronze Star after the company failed to deliver the 500,000 tarps and 60,000 rolls of plastic sheeting called for in the contracts.²

FEMA has also awarded a large contract for emergency tarps to another company that appears to lack prior experience of performing similar work for the federal government. Federal contract records show that on October 19, 2017, FEMA awarded a \$34 million contract to Global Computers and Networks, LLC “to supply self-help tarps” to Puerto Rico. The company is listed as having only one employee and an annual revenue of \$240,000, and it appears that this \$34 million contract from FEMA is its sole federal contract.³ It does not appear that this corporate entity possesses an internet website.

Additionally, I recently learned that a similar effort to protect hurricane-damaged homes managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is experiencing a significant backlog.

¹ See, FEMA: *FEMA Tarps and USACE Blue Roofs Aid in Protecting Homes from Further Damage*, FEMA Press Release (Oct. 19, 2017) (www.fema.gov/news-release/2017/10/19/4339/fema-tarps-and-usace-blue-roofs-aid-protecting-homes-further-damage).

² *Big Contracts, No Storm Tarps for Puerto Rico*, AP News (Nov. 28, 2017) (www.apnews.com/cbeff1a939324610b7a02b88f30eafbb).

³ Data obtained from the Federal Procurement Database System (fpds.gov) (accessed Nov. 28, 2017).

As of November 13, 2017, approximately 9,000 homes in Puerto Rico had a protective “blue roof” installed, while more than 37,000 homeowners remained waiting for help to protect their homes from further damage.⁴ These serious delays on the part of the USACE, coupled with Bronze Star’s failure to deliver under FEMA contracts, are prohibiting survivors of Hurricane Maria from accessing urgently needed supplies.⁵

As I wrote to you on November 28, 2017, I have many concerns about FEMA’s management and oversight of the more than \$2 billion in contracts it has awarded to support response and recovery efforts in the wake of recent hurricanes.⁶ FEMA’s decision to award Bronze Star contracts to provide critical supplies raises further questions about FEMA’s contract award process. In particular, I am concerned about how FEMA is ensuring that contractors with limited performance records have the sufficient capacity to meet a contract’s requirements. FEMA reportedly evaluated multiple proposals and determined that Bronze Star was the most qualified potential contractor and would be able to meet the delivery timeframes. However, Bronze Star’s co-founder indicated that it was unable to meet the contract’s delivery schedule due to the need for materials manufactured in areas affected by Hurricane Harvey.⁷

FEMA must take appropriate steps to manage and oversee hurricane relief contracts to ensure that the taxpayer dollars reach disaster survivors and are not wasted or mismanaged. To assist me in my oversight of FEMA’s contract management and oversight, I request you provide the following documents and information.

1. Please describe how FEMA made the determination that Bronze Star was the most qualified applicant for each contract it was awarded by FEMA.
2. What information did FEMA have about the manufacturers that Bronze Star intended to rely on to fulfill its contracts? Was FEMA aware that Bronze Star planned to rely on raw materials produced in Houston, Texas?
3. Please explain the current status of each contract awarded to Bronze Star, including the date and terms of any cancellation. Please state if and how much FEMA has paid to Bronze Star under all contracts.
4. Please provide a copy of all contract proposals submitted by Bronze Star to FEMA.

⁴ Briefing by Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Staff to Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Staff (Nov. 15, 2017).

⁵ *Big Contracts. No Storm Tarps for Puerto Rico*, AP News (Nov. 28, 2017) (www.apnews.com/cbeff1a939324610b7a02b88f30eafbb).

⁶ Letter from Ranking Member McCaskill to Brock Long, Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (Nov. 28, 2017).

⁷ *Big Contracts. No Storm Tarps for Puerto Rico*, AP News (Nov. 28, 2017) (www.apnews.com/cbeff1a939324610b7a02b88f30eafbb).

5. Please explain the terms and circumstances of the contract award to Global Computers and Networks, LLC.
6. Please provide a list of all contracts awarded to date to provide emergency blue tarps or other material used to provide temporary protection to damaged homes, including the date of the solicitation, contract vehicle, extent of competition, and scope. For each contract, please identify the dates and quantities of all materials delivered under the contract.
7. Did FEMA have any pre-positioned or standing contracts for the provision of blue tarps in place prior to September 20, 2017? If so, please explain how they have been used, and if not, please explain whether FEMA has considered establishing such contracts.

I ask that you provide the requested information no later than December 21, 2017. If you have any questions related to this request, please contact Claudine Brenner of my staff at Claudine_Brenner@hsgac.senate.gov or (202) 224-2627. Please send any official correspondence related to this request to Lucy_Balczak@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman