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ALWAYS READY: THE COAST GUARD'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

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ALWAYS READY: THE COAST GUARD'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2005

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:37 a.m., in room SD–342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Susan M. Collins, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Collins, Lieberman, Carper, and Dayton.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN COLLINS

Chairman COLLINS. The Committee will come to order.

Today the Committee continues its investigation into the preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina. Our focus this morning, at our sixth hearing, is on the performance of the U.S. Coast Guard before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of this disaster.

Amidst a sea of failures across all levels of government, the Coast Guard stands out as a shining example of a mission accomplished through careful planning and outstanding execution. We must learn from the failures that this investigation has revealed, but we must also learn from its successes.

The Coast Guard's extraordinary performance provides models for other agencies at all levels of government to emulate. In advance of this powerful storm, the Coast Guard anticipated the potential devastation and executed plans to relocate its personnel, aircraft, and vessels, including evacuating 18 small boat stations. Personnel and assets were moved to a predetermined inland military installation precisely so that they would not be trapped in flooded coastal stations and unable to respond.

As a result of this foresight, the Coast Guard was able to launch extensive search and rescue operations even while Katrina continued to pound the Gulf Coast. Pollution response strike teams and teams to restore aids to navigation were readied, and they were deployed just as soon as conditions allowed.

The result of this careful preparation is that, during the chaotic days and weeks immediately following the storm, the Coast Guard rescued or evacuated 33,544 people. In that same period, the Coast Guard responded to more than 1,100 pollution incidents with a total discharge of more than 7 million gallons of contaminants. And furthermore, the Coast Guard restored 39 critical aids to navigation and repaired, replaced, or repositioned over 900 navigational

aids to reopen the vital waterways of the Gulf Coast, New Orleans, and the Mississippi River.

Most of us can only imagine how overwhelming the search and rescue mission in the Gulf States must have appeared in the hours and days following the storm. The photograph now being displayed shows how sections of New Orleans filled with water rushing out of the 17th Street Canal on the day of the storm.[1]

The next series of photos show how the Coast Guard used every means available to rescue people trapped by the flood waters. The first two show the Coast Guard rescues by helicopters.

During Senator Lieberman's and my journey to the Gulf region, Coast Guard pilots described to us harrowing rescues amidst live power lines, whirling blades of other choppers, and frantic cries for help from attics and rooftops in the dark and stormy night. One of the pilots said to me, "Senator Collins, I was trained to rescue people from the open sea. Here I was, rescuing people in an urban setting from rooftops with live power lines all around me."

It showed to me the ability of the Coast Guard to innovate, to use its training to react to new and extreme circumstances.

The next photograph shows how the Coast Guard went house to house in small boats, looking for people who were trapped and needed assistance. Another photo shows how the Coast Guard commissioned a barge to bring people trapped from St. Bernard's Parish to safety.

The Coast Guard's resourceful, sometimes remarkable, performance is noteworthy in its own right. But what makes it all the more extraordinary to me is that it occurred while more than 70 percent of Coast Guard personnel and their families stationed in the Gulf region were themselves initially displaced by the storm.

Moreover, the Coast Guard was hampered by damage to its own facilities. The photo now being displayed shows the Coast Guard Station in Gulfport, Mississippi, which was devastated by the storm. Nevertheless, despite coping with personal losses and a destroyed headquarters, the Coast Guard persevered and carried out its mission.

The Coast Guard's success story is one of both dedicated and courageous actions by front-line personnel and of effective leadership. Among the key questions I intend to explore today is how the Coast Guard's operational and command structure allowed individual components within the Agency to act so quickly without having to wait for specific instructions or permissions from up the chain of command.

The contrast between the Coast Guard's situational awareness and the disconnect between the FEMA official on the ground and the Washington hierarchy for FEMA could not be a greater contrast. I think that is very instructive for us.

I am also very interested to learn the extent to which the Coast Guard was able to act without having to wait until State and local officials asked for help.

The three Coast Guard officials here today as witnesses occupy key positions in its operational and command structure. Their testi-

[1] The photographs displayed at the hearing by Senator Collins appear in the Appendix on pages 36 through 41.

mony will provide insights on how the Coast Guard way, exhibited in its motto, "always ready," can be translated to other agencies across all levels of government.

Senator Lieberman.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LIEBERMAN

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks very much, Madam Chairman, for convening the sixth in a series of hearings that this Committee is holding to examine the preparations for and response to Hurricane Katrina.

Today I am happy to say we are going to examine the pre- and post-Katrina efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard. It strikes me that this is a good news story. Maybe looking around the room, I would reach the conclusion that good news does not draw a crowd. But it is important for us to focus on and to learn from and to certainly make this part of the public record.

The fact is, in a local and regional experience, this Hurricane Katrina, which obviously was watched by the Nation and the world, the people of America had their confidence in their government's ability to protect them in time of crisis shaken. And it is, in that sense, even more important that we point out to them that there were agencies of their government that performed remarkably well, with competence and courage. And the U.S. Coast Guard was at the head of that list.

I only give part of the reason for that to the fact that the Coast Guard Academy is located in Connecticut, and I say that with pride. I know that two of the three people before us were trained at the Academy.

I do want to give a special welcome to Captain Paskewich, who hails from New London and I gather, for the record, whose mother lives in Groton. I do not want to put the other two of you at a disadvantage, but I am proud to welcome all three of you here obviously, and thank you for a job well done.

As you gentlemen know, the modern Coast Guard is a combination of several historic agencies, including one that was known originally as the Life-Saving Service. In the hours and days after Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast, the Coast Guard more than lived up to its predecessor's name. You really did save lives.

The advance planning, quick decisionmaking, and round-the-clock effort of the men and women under your command, gentlemen, led to the rescue, as has been said, of 33,000 people in a matter of days, eight times the number of search and rescue missions you generally perform in 1 year. That is a record that deserves our praise and our gratitude.

So we will ask today why was the Coast Guard able to perform at such a high standard when others in the Federal, State, and local governments did not?

One of the most important reasons, clearly, is that you were prepared. As we are going to hear from you today, the units operating under Admiral Duncan began preparing for Hurricane Katrina several days before landfall. The week before the hurricane struck—and that was, of course, based on information that you were receiving from people who were charting the course of the hurricane—the week before the hurricane struck, helicopters based at the New

Orleans Air Station were inspected in anticipation of heavy workload after the storm, even though I probably could not have imagined how heavy the workload would have been.

One of the helicopters, I was really interested to learn, needed major repair, discovered in the lead up to landfall. And that repair was done in advance of the storm so that helicopter was able to be used, literally, in saving lives. Unable, probably, to have done that if it had not been inspected in advance of the hurricane.

Another reason for the success of the Coast Guard in Hurricane Katrina, in my opinion, clearly was that you had plans, that you had continuity of operations plans in effect, blueprints to follow, that assumed in most cases a worst-case scenario, and that the three of you therefore implemented those plans effectively, evacuating—as Senator Collins said—your respective staffs and critical assets the weekend before Katrina when we were all hearing on television the rising anxiety of the National Weather Service about the intensity of this storm and yet not seeing other branches of government getting ready for what we were all being told on the TV.

You removed those assets and established those remote command centers. Admiral Duncan had the additional foresight to request backup helicopters, increased the number of aircrew personnel and additional ships. All of these steps were taken, I repeat, well before Katrina hit land on Monday, August 29. And I must say, based on the record we have compiled so far, well before the Department of Homeland Security and Secretary Chertoff formally declared a so-called incident of national significance on Tuesday, August 30.

The Guard was not only prepared, not only had plans, but of course executed its mission with courage and precision. And in this case, the victims of the hurricane benefited tremendously from that fact.

In addition to its successful search and rescue missions, the Coast Guard—I do want to restate and emphasize—ensured that the Mississippi River was navigable as soon after the storm hit as possible in order to maintain free-flow of commerce on the river, helped restore navigational aids that were damaged or destroyed on the river and around the Gulf Coast, and worked with the Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA to make channels navigable again.

Here is the really impressive fact. By the Friday after the Monday Hurricane Katrina hit, traffic was already back on those key waterways.

The Guard also assisted with environmental hazards, identifying eight oil spills around New Orleans and working with other agencies and private contractors to clean them up. So the Coast Guard really was the model in this case.

But there are still lessons to learn, and I know that you gentlemen agree with that. We want to ask some questions about information sharing, about how reports from the scene made their way up to the decisionmakers in Washington.

Our staff's investigation finds that the Coast Guard sent its first written report that the levees in New Orleans had broken in the early morning hours of Tuesday, August 30. But we have also learned that Admiral Duncan had two phone conversations on

Monday, August 29 with the Coast Guard Commandant in Washington. And we know that the Commandant had phone conversations with Deputy Homeland Security Secretary Jackson on Monday.

So I am interested in learning about the contents of those conversations so we know whether the information flowed up. Because as was indicated here earlier in a hearing we held with Mr. Bahamonde of FEMA, Secretary Chertoff and Secretary Rumsfeld had indicated earlier that they did not know the levees had broken until Tuesday.

Bottom line, the Coast Guard performed the way we wish all government agencies had performed, with speed, resourcefulness, efficiency, bravery, and effectiveness. You really set a model for the rest of the government, and I thank you for that.

I also want you to know that I have written to the Director of OMB, Josh Bolton, asking for an additional $500 million for the Coast Guard to cover the costs related to your work in Katrina. I know that many of your facilities were damaged and some were completely ruined as that picture indicates. Obviously you have expenses related to the evacuation and temporary housing of your staffs, and for unanticipated fuel costs.

Apparently, OMB plans to include $270 million for the Coast Guard in a supplemental Katrina request that will be made soon. I do not believe that is enough, and I am going to again urge the Administration to rethink that supplemental budget. I will ask you today about your needs.

But most of all, thank you. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Senator Dayton, usually we do not have other Members make opening statements, but since you are the only other Member here today, if you would like to make some opening comments, feel free to do so.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR DAYTON

Senator DAYTON. I think the two of you said it very well, and I join with them in commending you. And I will not hold the Connecticut connection against you. If you would like to check out more suitable quarters in Minnesota at any time, just contact me.

Thank you.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you.

I would now like to officially welcome the witnesses before us today. Our first witness, Coast Guard Rear Admiral Robert Duncan, assumed command of the Coast Guard's Eighth District in May 2003. While the Eighth District is headquartered in New Orleans, Admiral Duncan's area of responsibility covers 26 States, more than 1,200 miles of coastline, and 10,300 miles of inland waterways from Florida to Mexico and from Louisiana to Minnesota, as it happens. He has served in the Coast Guard for more than 30 years.

Admiral Duncan is joined today by two of his commanding officers, Captain Frank Paskewich and Captain Bruce Jones.

Just 11 days before Katrina's landfall, Captain Paskewich took command of Sector New Orleans. The Captain arrived in New Orleans in July 2004 and has continued, since that time, to serve as the Captain of the Port, the Federal Maritime Security Coordi-

nator, the Federal On-Scene Coordinator, and the Officer in Charge of Marine Inspection.

Captain Bruce Jones is the Commander of Air Station New Orleans, where he has served since July 2004. In his 22 years in the Coast Guard, Captain Jones has been engaged in response efforts for a number of hurricanes, including Ivan, Dennis, and now Katrina and Rita. He has distinguished himself in the military aviation community and has received several awards for his flying skills.

Gentlemen, I would like to ask you each to stand so that I can swear you in.

Do you swear that the testimony you are about to give to the Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you, God?

Admiral DUNCAN. I do.

Captain PASKEWICH. I do.

Captain JONES. I do.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. You may be seated, and Admiral Duncan, we will begin with you.

TESTIMONY OF REAR ADMIRAL ROBERT F. DUNCAN,[1] COMMANDER, EIGHTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT, U.S. COAST GUARD

Admiral DUNCAN. Madam Chairman, Senator Lieberman, Senator Dayton, thank you so much for those very kind words and the opportunity to discuss the Eighth Coast Guard District's role in response to this incredible tragedy, Hurricane Katrina.

I should note, in the picture that shows all of those people on the barge, every one of them has a personal flotation device, a life jacket. Some chose not to wear it, but they are all there. Just so you know that we follow that in all of our missions.

And if my wife is to have her way, I think we are likely to find ourselves retired in some community where I will be shoveling snow 6 months of the year. So Mr. Dayton, I may give you a call, sir.

My written statement covers our preparations for and approach to the unprecedented natural disaster. Essentially, plan seriously, test those plans, recognize it is a dynamic environment, and be open to modifying the plans to meet changing circumstances.

Second, to establish a shared vision and a concept of operation in advance of the need. Make sure that that is well understood, anticipating that there will be lapses in communications in impacted areas.

Survive the impact. Evacuate people, evacuate equipment, place them in places where they are safe. The balance here is moving them not too soon so that they are able to provide services up until it no longer makes sense. And then place them in positions where they will be able to respond immediately behind the storm, as we did in this case, and in Rita, and others.

In the first few days, over 10 percent of the U.S. Coast Guard, about 40 percent of the Coast Guard helicopters, air crews from every Coast Guard Air Station, including Kodiak, Alaska, and Bar-

[1] The prepared statement of Admiral Duncan appears in the Appendix on page 42.

bers Point in Cape Cod, hundreds of boats, major cutters, and specialty teams, which include active duty, reservists, civilian employees, and America's finest group of volunteers, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, from every part of this country converged on a devastated Gulf Coast. Together they saved, as you have indicated, 33,544 people, and not a small number of dogs by the way, contained or remediated hundreds of oil spills, eight major spills, on the Mississippi from New Orleans to the Gulf of Mexico. In that area alone, the total amount of oil spilled was about two-thirds of the oil spilled from the Exxon Valdez. Any one of those would have been national news at other times. Restored major ports and waterways.

You may recall a footnote in the discussions at the time about the grain harvest. The U.S. grain harvest needed to move to world markets, and it moves through the Mississippi River and past New Orleans. Captain Paskewich's team was able to restore, as Senator Lieberman mentioned in some detail, the waterway to accommodate that grain shipment to international markets, itself a major accomplishment.

The accomplishment I am most pleased to report to you today is that we did that with no injuries, aside from cuts and bruises to some very heroic rescue swimmers, to ourselves or anybody that we assisted. That is a record of which I am most proud.

I am extremely proud of this team. I am most proud of the 582 Coast Guard men and women and their families who lost their homes to Katrina, and another 69 a few weeks later who lost their homes to Rita, and who nonetheless continued to work full out to bring aid to others in the best tradition of our service.

In doing this, we were part of a large team of Americans, and frankly some international sisters as well, who worked hard to bring relief to a vast devastated region. That need and that work continues today.

The men and women of the Coast Guard deeply appreciate the kind words and the praise that has been offered today and at other times in reference to our work in this chamber. Our aspiration is, as always, to live up to our service's motto across all of our missions and be Semper Paratus.

I would be happy to answer your questions.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Captain, do you have any formal statement that you would like to present?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes ma'am.

Chairman COLLINS. Please proceed.

TESTIMONY OF CAPTAIN FRANK M. PASKEWICH, COMMANDER, COAST GUARD SECTOR NEW ORLEANS, U.S. COAST GUARD

Captain PASKEWICH. Madam Chairman, Committee Members, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today to discuss Sector New Orleans' role in the response to Hurricane Katrina.

As the Sector Commander overseeing more than 700 Coast Guard personnel, including 19 area subunits, I was responsible for ensuring we were prepared in advance to deal with five primary mission areas within the sector: Search and rescue, port and waterway safety, environmental protection, maritime salvage and debris

removal from navigable waterways, and maritime homeland security.

Our hurricane plan mission statement says it all, Sector New Orleans will provide search and rescue support, restore essential aids to navigation, respond to hazardous material spills, manage waterways including traffic and safety or security zones, provide transportation of victims, provide essential waterborne and airborne logistics support, deliver vital supplies and materials, provide access to storm damaged areas to key response personnel, and perform any and all acts necessary to rescue and aid persons and protect and save property.

Our concept of operation is built around this mission statement. We took proactive measures in anticipation of Hurricane Katrina's impact 3 days before the storm, advising the port community, the maritime industry, and the public to take necessary precautions.

Due to the storm's forecasted intensity, we established our alternate incident command post in Alexandria, Louisiana. Additionally, we evacuated our personnel from Venice, Grand Isle, Gulfport, and New Orleans, and prepositioned our patrol boats, river tenders, and our small boats and crews away from their exposed home ports.

We dispersed these assets over a wide area to the north, east, and west of the intended track to ensure that we maintained the ability to surge back into the affected area.

Additionally, we placed liaison officers at the Offices of Emergency Preparedness in New Orleans and Baton Rouge and coordinated with the maritime industry. By Sunday noon, we closed the Mississippi River to all vessel movements, ceased cargo operations, and sent out final advisories to the industry on necessary precautions to safeguard property.

Within 2 hours of the storm's passage on Monday, and when it became safe to do so, our forces began to mobilize back to the affected area. Under Captain Bruce Jones' superb leadership as the on-scene commander for air search and rescue, air crews from Air Station New Orleans arrived on-scene to commence what became round-the-clock air rescues for a week-and-a-half straight.

By Tuesday morning, our small boats, river tenders, and crews had remobilized back into the city to commence large-scale urban search and rescue. And within 2 days, a Coast Guard medium endurance cutter was on-scene providing command and control and security presence on the river.

The ability to rapidly respond back into the affected areas, integrate with other agencies, and surge additional forces was critical to our success and resulted in more than 13,000 rescues and assists by small boats alone.

In addition to the heroic efforts of Coast Guard personnel conducting search and rescue, we were well poised to effectively deal with our other Coast Guard missions, as well. Reopening the Mississippi River and Gulf Intercoastal Waterway became a national priority since this region is host to four of the Nation's top 11 ports. Eighty percent of the aids to navigation below New Orleans were destroyed, and numerous sunken or grounded barges and ships threatened the waterway.

Through long-standing relationships with the maritime industry, pilots associations, Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA, we were able to rapidly assess the impact to 255 miles of the Mississippi River and more than 200 miles of Gulf Intercoastal Waterway. Within 1 day, we reopened portions of the river and Gulf Intercoastal Waterway. And by Friday, 4 days after the storm, ocean-going ships were entering port. Our Aids to Navigation Teams went above and beyond reestablishing critical aids under arduous working conditions.

Sector New Orleans responded to hundreds of pollution response reports, 134 minor oil spills, and 10 significant oil spills, totaling more than 8 million gallons of produced crude oil discharged from storage tanks, refineries, pipelines, and marine facilities across 130 miles of rivers, canals, bays, and adjacent sensitive wetlands. At the peak of the response, the Coast Guard coordinated the efforts of more than 750 pollution responders, deployed more than 30,000 feet of boom, and recovered more than 3.3 million gallons of free-floating oil.

Additionally, the Coast Guard supervised several controlled burns of marshland to consume any remaining oil.

Furthermore, Sector New Orleans has engaged in long-term salvage recovery to remove hundreds of sunken and grounded vessels which pose serious hazards to navigation or the environment. Within our unified command, we successfully brought together a team of experts from the private and public sector, including the Navy Supervisor of Salvage and members of the American Salvage Association, to complete this task.

The Coast Guard's success in completing all of our assigned missions after one of the most devastating storms in the Nation's history was a result of well-honed first responder skills, our ability to pre-plan, and our multi-mission nature.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Captain Jones.

TESTIMONY OF CAPTAIN BRUCE C. JONES, COMMANDING OFFICER, COAST GUARD AIR STATION NEW ORLEANS, U.S. COAST GUARD

Captain JONES. Yes, ma'am, good morning. Madam Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for allowing me to speak with you about how a relatively small Coast Guard aviation force was able to save more lives in 7 days than it typically does in several years.

Like all of our Gulf Coast units, Air Station New Orleans exercises its hurricane plans several times each season. We prepared for and responded to five named storms this year prior to Katrina. Our response crews witnessed firsthand their devastating power.

Consequently, we take hurricane planning very seriously and were well-prepared as Katrina approached.

As Katrina cleared New Orleans on August 29, prepositioned Coast Guard aircraft from New Orleans, Houston, and Mobile responded rapidly and were confronted by scenes of utter devastation with entire communities flattened or submerged and survivors waving for help from rooftops in every direction. Every available

helicopter immediately began hoisting survivors, beginning when my unit's rescue swimmer, Laurence Nettles, was lowered from an H65 and threaded his way between tree limbs to reach a 4-month old infant, her mother, and grandmother stranded in deep flood waters in lower Plaquemines Parish at 2:50 that day.

Coast Guard Air Stations around the country quickly dispatched aircraft and crews to join this historic rescue effort, and our Mobile and New Orleans units rapidly expanded to accommodate the influx of resources.

Assisted by Department of Defense aircrews and coordinating our efforts with the Louisiana National Guard air operation, Coast Guard crews responded to distress in all Southeast Louisiana parishes, rural and urban communities, hospitals and schools, homes and floodwaters.

Aircraft and crews were pushed to their limits, hoisting in obstacle-strewn environments, often on night vision goggles with unlit towers and other hazards, including power lines and trees. Our rescue swimmers struggled with steep slippery roofs, contaminated water, and debris. They hacked their way through roofs. They broke out windows to free survivors.

And after the storm passed, sweltering 100-degree heat, high humidity, and no winds severely degraded our helicopters' performance and challenged our pilots' ability.

Despite these many hazards and around-the-clock flight operations over 7 days, the Coast Guard using helicopters saved over 7,000 lives and assisted many thousands more by delivering critical food, water, and other supplies.

As the Admiral noted, Coast Guard aircrew suffered no significant injury to themselves or to their survivors and no major aircraft mishap, a testament to their professionalism and to the Coast Guard's unsurpassed training, safety, maintenance, and standardization programs.

Coast Guard personnel worked tirelessly and effectively without regard for their own needs, despite their facilities, and in many cases their own homes, being destroyed or severely damaged and with virtually all of our families dislocated and scattered around the country.

Like the several hundred Coast Guard boat forces operating surface rescue missions, they had no power, no running water, or adequate rest. Yet they went back out again and again to save lives.

A month later, our crews rushed in immediately behind another Category 5 hurricane, the strongest to have ever entered the Gulf of Mexico. The first helicopters to respond to Rita, Coast Guard air crews rescued 67 survivors from rooftops in 50 to 60 knot winds. And then they worked with local parish officials on the ground to ensure the victims were properly cared for.

So many others deserve your attention and thanks. The men and women in our small boat crews working with local and State police, Fish and Wildlife, Red Cross, FEMA, out-of-state urban SAR teams, the National Guard, DOD, and others exhibited unnoticed courage and initiative day after day.

Unheralded incident command post staff and liaison staff at numerous locations worked tirelessly to bring players from disparate

organizations and agencies together, and they created teams which achieved results far exceeding the sum of their parts.

Madam Chairman, the Coast Guard consistently achieves greater results than should reasonably be expected of any comparably sized and funded organization. We look forward to the opportunity to tell you how that is possible.

As you seek solutions to improving national disaster response, I will leave you with this thought: What matters the most in a crisis is not the plan, it is leadership. It is not process, it is people. And it is not organizational charts, it is organizational culture.

I thank you for the opportunity to answer any questions.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you, Captain.

The final statements that you made are a perfect segue into my first question for the panel, and that is every agency had plans. Every agency had done exercises. Every agency knew that the hurricane was coming. Every agency had been warned that it was going to be a monster storm.

What is it about the Coast Guard that enabled you to respond so much more effectively than many other agencies?

I am not asking you to criticize other agencies, although frankly I would welcome hearing any criticisms, but what is it that is different about the Coast Guard?

A disaster expert whom I met with earlier this week said that he felt that one of the problems with Louisiana and in New Orleans is that although there were plans, the plans were not followed. But what is it about the Coast Guard that allowed for an effective response?

Admiral, we will start with you, and then I would like to just go down the panel.

Admiral DUNCAN. Thank you. Madam Chairman.

It is something I have thought about for some time now. I think our culture is one of service. We are attracted, as I think Senator Lieberman's point was, to life-saving. That is always our top priority. It remains that in any context.

Over the years, we have adapted to other missions that the government has seen fit to give us to execute, and we have tried to do that with skill.

What has emerged is a multi-mission organization where I think every Coast Guardman sees a role for himself, a personal role, in the success of the organization, in delivering services along a whole series of missions, and is used to shifting priorities from say fisheries enforcement to life-saving in the middle of a flight or on a patrol.

The idea that this is a full portfolio of missions that we are charged with executing and are trained to do those. I think we have an adaptive culture that says, right now September 11 has happened. We are not going to do fisheries enforcement. We are going to surge everything to find out what this terrorism thing is all about and try to provide whatever assets, whatever service we can, to the event that is unfolding.

When it turns out to be a hurricane of monstrous proportion, I think everybody in the organization feels that ability to have their hand on the tiller, if you will, to control the outcome, to really bring personal benefit to the event.

In our case, we are familiar with hurricanes. We exercise before hurricane season. We typically have about a third turnover in personnel at the beginning of each year. It is a good opportunity for us to bring people into the culture, to understand what the threats are in the Gulf Coast, how we would deal with that, make sure they have their own plans for their families, to talk about those things, and to exercise our Continuity of Operations Plan in the event that we do need to maintain command and control in a remote location.

We came very close to pulling the trigger on that, I came close to that, last September during Ivan. It was a very close call frankly, but we have every year sent a team up to make sure that the command center that we have in St. Louis was connected, the computers were up, that the phones were working, that the phone numbers were right, that the berthing was ready to receive people and ready to move.

We did that this time. We actually left the area. And we have modified the plan to deal with exigencies. The plan does not call for a forward command element. Due to the nature of the storm and the impacted area, the anticipation that there were going to be communications lapses, it appeared to me a good idea to have a forward command element where I would remain forward, not in St. Louis, but connected with my Chief of Staff who ran the day-to-day operations of the District but allowed me to have an executive eye's view of unfolding events in the area that looked to be most challenged. I think that was helpful.

I think the other speakers can talk about adaptations to the plan at their level, as well.

But there was an understanding ahead of time what the priorities are. And it is written, we have a concept of operations. I called both sector commanders in advance of the storm, as is my practice, and I think every district commander got alignment verbally on what we were going to do, how we were going to survive the impact, stage our resources, come into the community afterwards. And if we never spoke or had difficulty speaking for several days, there was that understanding ahead of time.

I also called each governor in advance of the storm and then as soon as the storm hit, and advised them of our preparations, what our intentions were. I made sure that we were in alignment with the governors' expectations. And of course, there is no argument over life-saving and restoration of channels. That appears to be very much in line with the governors' direction but it is appropriate to make that contact.

I did that with Governor Blanco, I did that with Governor Barbour, and I did that with Governor Perry when Hurricane Katrina threatened Texas.

So there is an active dialogue. I think individuals are used to taking responsibility or been given responsibility at a very early level in their career, are used to moving between missions and tooling up for whatever the requirements of the Nation are for the service.

I think there is a real shared understanding of what needs to be done and an expectation they will be supported if they see something different that was not anticipated when they arrived, that

they will be supported in carrying out the mission that they get when they get there.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you, but my time on this round is almost expired. If I could get brief answers from the other two captains, thank you.

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, ma'am.

I think it begins with a comment I made about well-honed first responders. These are missions that we do every single day, search and rescue, response to collisions, response to oil spills.

I maintain a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week watch center. I am not sure I can recall in the last 2 years actually making it through a night without getting a phone call about responding to a particular incident. We are trained to do that, and I think that is our strength. We respond, and it is ingrained in our culture.

With respect to hurricane planning, we certainly take all hurricanes seriously, do lessons learned, and then retool our plan appropriately. After a near brush with Hurricane Ivan, we put together a tiger team to take a comprehensive look at our plan and made changes appropriately, which helped us in this particular situation.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Captain.

Captain JONES. Ma'am, the only thing I could add to what the Captain and the Admiral have said is probably the human factor. We place a great emphasis on interagency coordination and working well with others.

You put a Coast Guard lieutenant into a room with representatives of 20 different Federal agencies where there is a lot of activity going on but maybe not a lot of cohesion, the Coast Guard lieutenant will pull those people together, get a meeting going, and come up with a plan. That is what happened numerous times during Katrina.

That is what we do every day, day in and day out. That is what Captain Paskewich's folks do in the maritime community, with maritime industry. We simply would not dream of not responding. If there is a possibility to use a Coast Guard asset or Coast Guard people to help out when people need assistance, we are going to find a way to do it. We are not going to wonder whether we have the authority to do it, we are just going to take action.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Madam Chairman.

I want to pick up on your questions. As I hear you answer, what I find very impressive is that you are obviously a hierarchical organization. And yet, consistent with the best of what we know of modern organizations, particularly the private sector, it seems to me you are very agile and, in some sense, not bureaucratic. You are problem oriented. And you have a willingness to break through to get the job done, which is the most important thing.

And how we replicate that is an interesting challenge for us in other organizations.

I just want to ask a few baseline questions about why you did so successfully. Admiral, let me just ask you quickly, under what authority was the Coast Guard acting in preparing for and responding to Hurricane Katrina?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir and I apologize for taking so much time the last time. I did not realize it was 10 minutes for everybody.

Senator LIEBERMAN. No, go right ahead.

Admiral DUNCAN. The succinct answer is 14 U.S. Code, specifically Section 88. Section 89 and 88, taken together, give us quite a number of authorities. And 88, which I have here, goes into a lot of detail about what we are authorized to do, and it is very expansive.

We have the largest grant of law enforcement authority, I believe, in the Federal Government. We are, at the same time, a law-enforcement agency and an Armed Force.

Senator LIEBERMAN. What does law enforcement mean in this case, briefly?

Admiral DUNCAN. Law enforcement is less significant, I think, in this case but to give us the authority. This is the first time that I am aware of that we were very concerned about safety of our life savers. So we did bring in force protection elements that were able to control crowds at marshaling stations, that were able to provide convoy support where necessary, those sorts of things.

Senator LIEBERMAN. But the Coast Guard does not share the concerns that the Department of Defense has about Posse Comitatus?

Admiral DUNCAN. No, sir. Posse Comitatus, as you are aware sir, affects the DOD, specifically the Army and the Air Force and by policy the Navy. The Coast Guard, from its constitution, it is organic in statute. It is a law enforcement authority as well as an Armed Force. The restrictions on use of Armed Forces do not apply to the Coast Guard.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Got it.

So as you began to get information about Hurricane Katrina, am I correct—let me just ask you—did you need to go to any other authority or person, I mean, within the government, to get authority to begin to implement and prepare as you did? In other words, do you need to get authority from the Secretary of Homeland Security or the President, as Commander-in-Chief?

Admiral DUNCAN. I guess I am attracted to the line in the old movie "that we do not need no stinking badges." It is a wonderful quote, and I guess it sort of underscores the culture.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That is a good line.

I want the record to show that was not your statement. That was a quote.

Admiral DUNCAN. No, sir, I am making my statement under oath. I am aware that, sir.

No, sir. Not to be glib, truly we have the authority and exercise it on a daily basis. The difference here was the scale, rather than the mission. As Captain Jones indicated, we do life-saving. That is our statutory authority. We enforce fisheries offshore. We interact with foreign vessels.

Senator LIEBERMAN. This is my point and this is fascinating and very important. Not that I suppose you do not want every agency of the government to be able to do that, but you did not have to get a lot of check-offs. This is what you do. And when you had the indications that a hurricane was coming, you sprang into action.

Admiral DUNCAN. To the contrary, sir, I think my job would be in jeopardy had I not taken those actions.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Am I correct that what was moving you to get ready was exactly what I referred to earlier, except maybe you were getting more detailed information. You were getting the weather reports that said that this hurricane was going to be a big one.

Admiral DUNCAN. We had that view, sir, and we have had experience in the Gulf for quite some time now. We have worked with our partners in the community. We understand first, make sure that we remove potential targets. Captain Paskewich indicated that we interacted with those that could be targets, the commercial shipping community, button up the ports. Make sure that the ships at sea understand there is something coming. We broadcast——

Senator LIEBERMAN. So you were working on the days coming with the authorities that have to do with private shipping and the ports to make sure that——

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. And to be specific, those are the Captain of the Port authorities that someone in the Sector Commander's position, as Captain Paskewich was, can use to prepare ports for a strike, and working with the pilots. There is 100-and-some-odd miles of river there that need a pilot.

So working with those partners to control traffic.

Senator LIEBERMAN. You have ongoing relations with them?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. How about other governmental agencies? Did you, in the days leading up to landfall of Katrina, have any interactions with FEMA?

Admiral DUNCAN. At my level, I was aware in reviewing our plans, that we were providing support to FEMA, as we had in other contexts. Specifically, during Hurricane Ivan we had assisted FEMA in the Panhandle, the Florida Panhandle, for locating sites for their urban search and rescue teams, which are very effective units.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Sites them some to——

Admiral DUNCAN. Sites for them to stage out of, to understand where they would be effective, how they would move into the area, provide support to them. We had done that in the Florida Panhandle not too long before.

Senator LIEBERMAN. How about in the days before Katrina? Was there interaction?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. The point I was hoping to make there was that we had a similar arrangement, and I put a check in the box in my mind that we had already contacted FEMA. FEMA had requested and we were going to be providing flights as soon as they were aviationally technically sound to get a FEMA representative in the air to do their survey for their purposes.

Senator LIEBERMAN. In fact we know, from Mr. Bahamonde's testimony, that he went up, I guess twice on that Monday, August 29, with the Coast Guard.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. I did not know his name but I did know that we were going to provide——

Senator LIEBERMAN. He went up with you, did he not, Captain Paskewich?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Was there any interaction with the Department of Defense, National Guard, or active military leading up to Katrina?

Admiral DUNCAN. I would not say any formal interaction, no, sir. The National Guard is more present in the community on a regular basis so we know the National Guard pretty well, and they are taking their preparations, as well.

Senator LIEBERMAN. My time is gone, but I want to ask two quick questions.

One is, did your plans for response to Hurricane Katrina assume that the levees would either be topped or broken? In other words, since most of what we saw was your rescue, was rescue because of flooding and not because of wind damage?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. The flooding was the difference in Katrina.

We participated in the exercise Hurricane Pam the year before that did posit breaches in the levees. We were concerned about that. We were aware that New Orleans is largely under sea level. And that was part of our assessment, that we would be looking for those things.

Now in my assessment flight on Monday, I was aware that there was substantial flooding throughout the city. But I am not sure that I could have made the connection that it was due to any particular injury to either overtopping or a breach in the levee system. The salient fact for me to use in my situational assessment was that we had massive flooding and needed to direct a response towards that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks.

My time is past due, so I will come back and ask more questions in the second round. Thank you. That was very helpful.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Senator Dayton.

Senator DAYTON. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Thank you again. It is even more extraordinary hearing you recount the heroism that was involved and the dedication.

Did I understand you correctly when you said that the equivalent of two-thirds of the Valdez oil spill occurred at various sites?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. Taken in total, I understand 11 million gallons was discharged in the Exxon Valdez. And I believe the number we had was about 7.9 million gallons in this.

Senator DAYTON. What caused those spills and what can be done in the future? Because as the Chairman said, there was forewarning of this. So is it possible to prevent something like that happening in the future?

Admiral DUNCAN. Certainly, that is the sort of thing that we will be looking at to see—we are going to scrub every aspect of our response and others in the area to see how we make it a more hardened system and a more efficient responsive system.

The short answer, if I can, is breaches in tanks, tanks, and disrupted pipelines. There was at least one occasion where a pickup truck was floating, and when the water went down it landed on a pipeline and ruptured the pipeline, sort of a secondary injury to the system.

Captain Paskewich can go into great deal about all of those.

Senator DAYTON. I will wait until you have made the assessment of what can be done because hindsight is 20/20 and in something of that magnitude there is going to be unforeseeable consequences. But it would be good to know what can be done and make sure somebody has the authority to do whatever is possibly necessary to prevent those kind of occurrences in the future.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. I can point you to the offshore environment and say that the thousands of platforms that are active in the Gulf of Mexico are shut in. They shut in their production to mitigate potential disruption out there.

So those are the sorts of things I think they would be looking at.

Senator DAYTON. Good.

You also mentioned there were barges or other boats or whatever that were blocking part of the passageway down the Mississippi into the Gulf? Again, who has the authority to clear out, or is there necessary additional authority to clear out before a storm like this occurs, so that again the few cannot block the many subsequently?

Admiral DUNCAN. Let me ask Captain Paskewich to answer that, sir.

Captain PASKEWICH. Sir, as Commanding Officer of Sector New Orleans, two of the hats that I wear—as Federal On-Scene Coordinator and Captain of the Port—give me broad authority to basically take the appropriate actions along the river, along the navigable waterways. So there was certainly hundreds of barges which had gone aground and/or sank, ships which had pushed up on the levees. And there were oil spills, as well.

We did not wait. Essentially, we went out and took the action that we needed to bring in the right contractors to exercise leverage against the owners of the vessels and have them do an immediate removal of that particular asset.

Senator DAYTON. Did you get cooperation in the hours leading up to the storm, in terms of clearing as many of those kind of barges and others out of the possible path?

Captain PASKEWICH. Pre-storm, we had a team in our Alexandria office made up of members from the American Salvage Association, the big operators, the ones with the heavy lift equipment, in advance, in anticipation that we could potentially have severe impact. It certainly panned out that that occurred.

Senator DAYTON. So my question is do you, or somebody, have the authority 48 hours ahead or whatever it takes—I realize barges move quite slowly—to get them to clear out of the way in advance?

Captain PASKEWICH. As part of our pre-port requirements, we have different port conditions. And I send out broadcasts. I commenced the first broadcast that Thursday, advising the industry that a potential storm was on its way. And as the storm crept closer and closer, I would start implementing our port conditions, Whiskey, X-ray, Yankee, Zulu, depending on how close—the time within 72, 48, 24, and 12 hours.

Each one of those tells them a condition that the hurricane is getting close. And within my broadcast I say you should either leave now or if you are going to stay, you should hunker down and double up the lines, move to a safe mooring, take extra precautions, and advise them that by Sunday we would probably be shutting everything down.

Senator DAYTON. I have only got a minute left so I have one more question I want to ask. I have to leave because I have some Minnesotans testifying at another hearing. Thank you, I apologize.

How do you contrast your response and the effectiveness of it with other agencies? You talked about leadership and people and culture. What did you see lacking in the response, efficiency of response of other agencies, Federal in particular?

Admiral DUNCAN. I am going to dodge that question respectfully, sir.

I feel comfortable talking about our culture and what we did. Honestly, I can say with true candor, everybody I met downrange was seriously concerned about the suffering and trying to provide relief. Some were more effective than others. But I do not think I saw anyone that I would nominate as a bad player, sir.

Senator DAYTON. In terms of communications between Federal agencies, State and local, it seems that there is this almost tension that is irresolvable in the moment of crisis between who has the authority to do what. Is that a problem we need to address for the future or not?

Admiral DUNCAN. I do not think so. We exercise regularly with others. We work with Fish and Wildlife, people who did a wonderful job by the way, Louisiana Fish and Wildlife folks worked very closely with our boat people, our boat forces. We have those kind of arrangements.

I will offer just one observation. We were asked a couple of years ago to fly on Mardi Gras parades. The local police had asked to do that. Mardi Gras is a very large celebration, and it lasts for about 2 weeks. There are many parades. And they asked us to fly the parade routes on the major routes.

And I authorized that for a couple of reasons. One, because it gave us familiarity with the city. It gave us familiarity with the police organization. We took a police officer with us in Captain Jones' helicopters.

And in the event—and frankly, if we saw a Homeland Security event that was attracted by a large gathering of Americans for a celebration, we were on scene. We were there. We had people in the air. We had connectivity with the local folks who would be responding on the ground.

As an aside, they told me that that cut street crime along the parade route by a substantial amount. So we have done that for several years now.

I think that is a significant factor. Coast Guard air crews in New Orleans knew where Lee Circle was. They knew the Ninth Ward. They knew how to get from one place to another. They knew how to work with local police.

So those types of relationships that are built up in advance of a desperate situation, I think stand us in good stead. And it is probably not the sort of thing that can be written into a plan. It is a kind of culture that says we are working with people that we may need to work very closely with in a very significant event.

Senator DAYTON. Thank you again. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Senator Carper.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARPER

Senator CARPER. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Let me preface my questions by saying when I was a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 10 years, I was privileged to serve on the Coast Guard Subcommittee of what was then the Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. I entered my time on that Committee as an old Navy guy with a good deal of respect for the Coast Guard, and when I left 10 years later, I had an even greater respect. I have been a fan of the work that you and the folks that you serve with have done for a long time, probably never more than in the wake of Katrina.

Let me say, we have had a whole series of hearings on Katrina-related issues. I just came from a hearing a few minutes ago on the Environment and Public Works Committee. Sometimes I say it seems like Katrina all day, all night as we try to figure out what went right, what went wrong.

Let me just start off by asking, what question or what issue—what have we asked you to answer, as a Committee, and if you just sort of take it one at a time. Let me start with you, Admiral. What have we asked you to answer today?

Admiral DUNCAN. What have you asked me——

Senator CARPER. What questions have you been asked? Usually when we have a hearing, we say, these are the questions we would like for you to address in your testimony. What have been those questions?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. My understanding is that the Committee's focus was that many things went right, many things went wrong during Katrina, and the focus of this Committee is semper paratus, what did the Coast Guard do? How has their culture allowed them to achieve what success we were able to achieve and is it something that can be distilled and recognized—our interactions with others in the community, and generally, you get a better understanding of the details of the work, the rescue and the restoration that went on in our sector, the maritime sector, in this historic event.

Senator CARPER. It would be helpful to me, just take a minute or two in your own words and just answer that question again.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. I think that in our case, as a cultural event, the culture is one of how can we do things rather than what is required of us? Where do we bring talents that can be best used to meet the challenge? We have a very broad charter in the statute. It gives us many responsibilities, and I think that allows us to look at things in different ways, saying more why not do that rather than why do that? If there is something happening in a community that looks like our capabilities or our authorities would be helpful in providing relief, I think our natural inclination is to say, why not? Why not do that? How can we do this?

In this event, it comes to deciding to distribute water to people who were not moved on. Once we have moved them out of positions of imminent peril and put them in places of temporary refuge, we added life sustainment to that set and said, let us keep water and food moving until people can be moved to final, or at least intermediate, places of refuge.

We have a culture that speaks both DOD and law enforcement. We understand J systems. We understand N codes. We understand ICS and NIMS, and in some cases, we are a translator between those systems. That is helpful. I think there is a whole host of things. We take it seriously that the motto is semper paratus. I think we really do want to be ready. We look at our plans. We make sure our plans are adaptive. We make sure that our people understand that they are empowered to act consistent with the guidelines that have been understood ahead of time, and where they see something as a first responder that is not quite exactly what we describe, to take the right action when they get there, consistent with the concept of operations, saving lives, sustaining lives, and evacuating.

Senator CARPER. It is interesting. I say to my colleagues, every now and then, I visit the Amtrak shops back in Delaware where they work on the locomotives and repair the cars, and this one guy who works at one of the shops wears almost every day to work a T-shirt that says on the back, "Attitude is everything." When I hear you talk about sort of the idea is not why can't we do something, but why can we, it reminds me of in the Navy, we had what I call a "can do" spirit. Basically, we felt we could do just about anything, get just about anything done. That was our attitude to it, and it sounds like it is very much the kind of attitude that pervades the Coast Guard.

When I was privileged to be Governor of Delaware, we would await—not really await, we prepared for emergencies, whether hurricanes or Noreasters or blizzards or ice storms, whatever it was. We would go through a drill. We would prepare for, we would practice the emergency with the relevant agencies, Federal and State and local. We would also do, literally, every several hours during the course of the day as the disaster, natural disaster was approaching, we would do what we called a bridge call. We would have all the relevant agencies on the phone. It could be Coast Guard—it probably was. It included the weather folks. It included all of our National Guardspeople, our DEMA people.

Did they have that kind of operation in Louisiana and Mississippi? How did it work?

Admiral DUNCAN. In a variation of that. I made contact with the Governor's office in advance of the storm and then after the storm hit, I know that Captain Paskewich made contact at the local level. We had liaison officers in every place that we could think would be useful. Some places were not struck by the storm. We called those people back. Others were right at the center of things. We had Lieutenant Commander Sherry Banaesaw in the Mayor's office in New Orleans. That was a vital connection that gave us situational awareness of what was going on, what the Mayor understood was happening in the city, and how we could interact with that.

We had liaison officers in the State Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge as well as in Mississippi. Some of those liaisons became pivotal in our understanding of other players and being able to interact with those on a regular basis, and that was a pipeline of sharing information back and forth.

Within our organization, we had daily conference calls at 0800 and 2000, eight and eight, if you will, myself and my boss, Vice Ad-

miral Vivian Crea in Portsmouth, Virginia, and I had direct authority to call the Commandant at any time should I need to do that, and I did several times. So he had good situational awareness right to the very top of the organization, at least as I understood it.

It was important, I thought, to remain forward in this event, to maintain situational awareness and be able to contact at that level so that when DOD moved into the community, the JTF, I was able to attend the Commander's conferences on the Iwo Jima and make sure that if we were able to provide support in alignment with the JTF's mission, we could do that, as well.

So I think we looked for those opportunities for connectivity. There were regular, structured contacts. There were less formal contacts. And we held conference calls daily to make sure we had shared understanding of what was happening in each of these places.

Senator CARPER. Thanks. I think my time has expired. Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and again, to each of you, thanks.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you.

Captain Jones, you referred in your testimony just briefly to the Coast Guard's effort to transport food and water to evacuees. It is my understanding that you could shed some light on an incident that a FEMA witness, Marty Bahamonde, described to this Committee where FEMA trucks with water and food in them were locked and in a Wal-Mart parking lot. Are you familiar with that incident?

Captain JONES. Yes, Senator.

Chairman COLLINS. Could you explain the Coast Guard's role?

Captain JONES. On Wednesday, August 31, one of my officers, Lieutenant J.G. Williams, who was a liaison working with Task Force Eagle, the Louisiana National Guard Air Rescue Operation staged out of the Superdome, a parallel rescue operation to ours, linked up through this liaison officer. He had some face-to-face with a local FEMA official who let him know that the ten 18-wheelers, five with water, five with food, were at the Wal-Mart on Airline Highway, which had already been used as a staging area for small boat operations the day prior, on Tuesday, August 30, that those trucks had arrived there. They were locked up, but they weren't yet being distributed.

So Mr. Williams contacted my unit, and we tasked two H–53s from the Marine Corps from the *U.S.S. Battan,* which had offered their services to us, and we tasked those two Marine Corps H–53s to go land at that parking lot. They cut the locks on the trucks. They loaded up, again, ten 18-wheelers full of food and water, distributed them to the landing zones we had designated at the causeway, the cloverleaf, the Superdome, and they also brought food and water back to my air station for further redistribution by helicopter to individual groups of survivors.

Chairman COLLINS. So even though these trucks were FEMA trucks, it was the Coast Guard, assisted by the Marines, that actually got into the trucks because they had been abandoned and were locked, and then distributed the food?

Captain JONES. Ma'am, I can't say how long those trucks had been there, but I can say it was a FEMA official who told our liai-

son officer about them, so I would say that the FEMA, Coast Guard, and Marine Corps together coordinated the distribution of that food and water.

At the same time, on the same morning, a Coast Guard C–130 brought in the first shipments of water to arrive at New Orleans International Airport, water purchased by Coast Guard officers on Tuesday, August 30. And additionally, on Tuesday, August 30, my junior officers had the idea to break into the Navy exchange retail store, which they did with the permission of the Navy commanding officer, loaded food and water into my pilots' pickup trucks, put it on Coast Guard H–60–Js, and flew it out to St. Bernard High School in St. Bernard Parish for distribution to 400 survivors who were stranded there in eight feet of water without food and water.

Senator CARPER. Madam Chair, that sounds like a real Navy "can do" spirit. [Laughter.]

Chairman COLLINS. They needed the Coast Guard's help, though, did you notice. [Laughter.]

Admiral DUNCAN. The Navy are good people.

Chairman COLLINS. They are, indeed.

Captain Paskewich, I am curious why the Coast Guard pilots kept bringing people to the Superdome when the Superdome was becoming overwhelmed, short of water and food. The floodwaters were starting to encircle the Superdome. Why was the decision made to bring the rescued individuals to the Superdome? Or Captain Jones, if you know the answer to that.

Captain JONES. Yes, Senator. The landing zones and staging areas in use is a very dynamic situation. Hour by hour, we would receive reports, the cloverleaf is closed. Don't bring anyone else. The Superdome is closed. Don't bring anyone else. The hospitals told us, don't bring anyone else unless they are on death's door. Then they told us, don't bring anyone else if they are on death's door.

The problem was that all the staging areas, all the landing zones were full by the second day and not happy at all about receiving more people. They were short of food. They were short of water. They were short of medical supplies. So all of the staging areas were overwhelmed by certainly the second and third day after the hurricane. It was a question of there was no better alternative. If we took them to the cloverleaf after the Superdome turned us away, it would have been putting them down with 2,000 other of their friends and neighbors who also had no food and water and inadequate EMS personnel on scene to provide security.

Chairman COLLINS. Did the Coast Guard express concerns to any Federal, State, or local officials that more shelters were needed and more places for sanctuary?

Captain JONES. Yes, ma'am. I passed that concern up through my chain of command on a regular basis, and they passed that concern on through their contacts with the OEP in Baton Rouge. I also expressed that concern at the Superdome to the task force where they were staged there.

Admiral DUNCAN. If I may add to that, ma'am——

Chairman COLLINS. Admiral Duncan.

Admiral DUNCAN. I was also at the Superdome where we discussed that concern and the need for providing better, more perma-

nent relief. I also flew to Baton Rouge. I met with Mr. Brown to express personally my concern about us moving people to places of temporary refuge and them not being moved on to more permanent places. It led to our decision to equip every Coast Guard helicopter with a full suite of water, and we moved 60 to 90 pallets of water a day that we purchased to people who were in need of it in very difficult circumstances.

Chairman COLLINS. What was Mr. Brown's response when you raised this concern with him?

Admiral DUNCAN. I began trying to contact Mr. Brown on Wednesday through my aide. He was initially unavailable, and we left messages through the day. A message was passed that if I could get to Baton Rouge, he would be happy to meet with me. I went to Baton Rouge and talked to him. He was about to do a presentation, and we had a short amount of time, 15 minutes or so, where I explained my observations from the theater, what I thought needed to be done next. I made reference to a Berlin airlift kind of an operation to get resources to people who needed it. He indicated interest and said, "Let us get together again." He needed to do this press conference. "Let us get together at eight."

I showed up at 8:10. I had been detained before getting there. The meeting was over. Others were leaving the trailer he was in, and we were unable to really meet to pursue that. His chief of staff said that my concerns had been heard and that they were going to act on those in some way. But I was unable to meet with Mr. Brown at that time. He had moved on to other things.

Chairman COLLINS. Did anything change, from your perspective on the ground, after you brought those concerns?

Admiral DUNCAN. That was Thursday evening. It appears that Friday, things did change. We did get recognition that water and food was necessary. We did see the JTF move resources into place that provided some relief that was needed up until that point.

Chairman COLLINS. Were alternative shelters established as a result of that conversation?

Admiral DUNCAN. I can't say that anything came as a direct result of that conversation. For all I know, some of these things were planned before I had a conversation with Mr. Brown. But the movement out of congested areas began, medical triaging at the International Airport, alternatively referred to as Moisant or Louis Armstrong, began. Water and food distribution was better supported. And it did appear at that point that we were starting to see a turn.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks. I want to go back to the questions of communications, which are very important, obviously critically important, in disaster response. Some of the most pathetic moments in watching what happened and reading afterward in New Orleans was the inability, for instance, of the Mayor to communicate with his personnel, etc.

Captain Paskewich, you were on both Coast Guard flights with Mr. Bahamonde and have indicated that you, too, were clearly able to see significant flooding in New Orleans at the time. Admiral Duncan, you have indicated that you were aware of significant

flooding from a damage assessment flight that you took about 5 p.m. on that same Monday, the day of landfall, August 29.

I wanted to ask you both how and when did you communicate that information to your superior officers in the Coast Guard, to the Louisiana Emergency Operations Center, or to any other Federal agencies or operations centers?

Admiral DUNCAN. Do you want to take it?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Captain, why don't you start.

Captain PASKEWICH. I was certainly on both flights with Mr. Bahamonde, and when I came in from Baton Rouge, or from Alexandria via Baton Rouge, and went down the river to survey, do a quick scan, and then headed across the city to the airport, at the Superdome to pick up Mr. Bahamonde, he wanted to go up on an overflight, do an assessment of the area just like I did. It was our first opportunity to get a nice, good, detailed survey or good look of the area.

We flew up to the north. We were on an H–60. We went up toward where my station was, and you could see houses burning. You could see my station was intact, and I could see intense flooding in the Lakeview neighborhood area, up to the rooftops. At that point, you could also hear chatter on the radios that there was thousands of people on the rooftops that needed to be saved.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Where was that coming from?

Captain PASKEWICH. That was coming from—to the 60 helicopter. I think that was general, other helicopters——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Other helicopters were flying, right.

Captain PASKEWICH. Correct. There were multiple helicopters in the area.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Captain PASKEWICH. I counted four Coast Guard helicopters within my own visual, and then the H–60 pilot asked permission if he could bring us back because they are a big asset. They can rescue a lot of people. So our first flight was about 10 minutes.

Then we went back to the Superdome and told him we would get him back up again——

Senator LIEBERMAN. You are talking about Mr. Bahamonde?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. On that first flight, could you see that the levees had broken?

Captain PASKEWICH. We went right over the area where the levees were broken, and I am pretty positive Mr. Bahamonde saw the levee breach. I was focused on the flooding in the neighborhoods——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Sure.

Captain PASKEWICH [continuing]. And I was trying to get a visual as to how many assets we needed.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Captain PASKEWICH. The second flight we took with one of Captain Jones' 65 crews. We went east, New Orleans East and Slidell. I believe we were the first ones to see the twin span drop, and then Slidell was under water. New Orleans East was very much under water, as well, Shalmet, you could see the Ninth Ward off in the

distance. Intense flooding. So north of I–10, intense flooding, and then Shalmet, Ninth Ward south, intense flooding.

Senator LIEBERMAN. So did you report what you saw to any superiors?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, sir. When we landed at the Dome, we made—we called back three separate times——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Who did you call?

Captain PASKEWICH. I called up our Incident Command Post in Alexandria, relayed information that there was intense flooding in the area and that we needed to marshal as many resources, both aircraft and small boats, as many as possible because this would be an extended, protracted search and rescue effort.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Admiral Duncan, I am interested in—I presume you were a recipient of some of that information that Captain Paskewich reported?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Then I am curious. I know you did speak to Deputy Secretary Jackson and apparently you were in conversations with, I am sorry, the Commandant and Secretary Jackson.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir, that is correct.

Senator LIEBERMAN. You were in conversations with the Commandant and senior Coast Guard officials, so just help me with that chain of command——

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN [continuing]. To the best of your recollection, as to communication.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. I moved on Sunday to Houston to be in a position to come in immediately behind the storm.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Admiral DUNCAN. When the storm conditions were abating, I flew to Alexandria, took a brief from—this is the tie-in with Captain Paskewich. His information goes to this IMT in Alexandria. I went to see what was known across the entire theater. So I tried to find out what was happening in Sector Mobile, which covered the Mississippi Coast, and also what was happening in Louisiana——

Senator LIEBERMAN. So this is Monday evening?

Admiral DUNCAN. Monday afternoon, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Monday afternoon, OK.

Admiral DUNCAN. Two o'clock in the afternoon, I took off from Houston, arrived probably about, I think it says about three o'clock or so—three o'clock. I am sorry, 2:30. I received initial reports from whatever was known by our folks or any source that we could—news, anything we could find——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Admiral DUNCAN [continuing]. Preparatory to my flight going into the area. My notes indicate that at that time, there was some reports of overtopping. I believe the Industrial Canal was mentioned. We were prepared for flooding. Myself and my chief of operations got on a flight with a petty officer, and we took a 60, a Falcon jet out down over Grand Isle, which is on the coast, out over Loop, which is a substantial oil production facility out in the Gulf, and then up the Mississippi River, over the City of New Orleans,

and then to the east along the coast until we got to Bayou La Batre, Alabama, turned around and came back and landed.

At that point, I had personally seen very substantial flooding, not really able to attribute, I think in my mind, what caused that flooding at this point——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right, but you saw the effect——

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. Absolutely.

Chairman COLLINS. And you reported that to the Coast Guard Commandant?

Admiral DUNCAN. That is correct. I contacted the—in fact, the time I have is—I took a brief from the sectors at nine o'clock, when I landed. Then I called the Commandant and the Area Commander, and the notes I have say it was at 10 o'clock, 2200, and I discussed with Admiral Crea and the Commandant my observations, supplemented by what I was able to gather from others who were doing other detailed assessments on the ground.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yourself, you did not speak to Secretary Jackson in DHS——

Admiral DUNCAN. I did not, no, sir.

Senator LIEBERMAN. But do you have any idea what the Commandant reported to Secretary Jackson?

Admiral DUNCAN. No, sir, I would——

Senator LIEBERMAN. We will have to talk to him directly.

Admiral DUNCAN. If I could also add——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Please.

Admiral DUNCAN [continuing]. Because there is another element to your question, if I might, sir——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Go ahead.

Admiral DUNCAN [continuing]. How do we pass that information to others.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

Admiral DUNCAN. That information, the normal tie-in at the State Emergency Operations Center to all the players, including the State, who has primacy in responding to incidents in the State, of course, is to pass that information up through the OEP, or the Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge. That information was passed through to them, and our sit-reps, our situation reports, which lag, of course, by an hour or two in typing it up and sending it along, try to capture the detail of these observations and any other source of information that might be available to us and send that up to others, as well, and those would have been developed and sent to the OEP, which is the Louisiana Emergency Operations Center.

Senator LIEBERMAN. OK, I appreciate that. I want to just quickly ask one more question and go to you, Captain Jones; and Captain Paskewich, if you want to add. How were you and your personnel receiving information about—communicating with one another, but also receiving information about who on the ground needed help, or were you just doing observation when you saw people on the rooftops?

Captain JONES. Senator——

Senator LIEBERMAN. I know that the Coast Guard itself had some communication difficulties under the circumstances.

Captain JONES. Senator, regarding communications, communications between aircraft was not degraded in any way, other than the volume of radio calls being made, which simply made for a short wait in having to get a phone call in, or a radio call in. Radio communications between Coast Guard aircraft and Coast Guard ground stations were degraded because of the fact that the coastal antenna, the high sight antenna had been destroyed in many cases.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes. There is a lesson right there.

Captain JONES. Yes, sir. But I would add that I think we are always working to improve the technology. The technology is always susceptible in a catastrophic incident like this. The primary operational concept that we employ is that all of our forces in the aviation world should be ready to work without communications for extended periods of time. The briefing I give my crew prior to deployment in response to any hurricane, the briefing I gave all of my air crew on August 28 when we left New Orleans in evacuation to preposition for a response to Katrina, was that each air crew should be prepared to operate independently for up to 72 hours with no contact with me, no contact with the district, have to find our own food and water and shelter, have to find our own jet fuel. Now, I told them, I hope that is not the case, but you should all be prepared to do so, and they were prepared to do so. So if you have people that are extremely well trained, extremely well equipped, and understand the commander's intent and what the mission objectives are, they can operate without communications without floundering about.

In regards to mission tasking, there were two primary ways we tasked missions. There were literally hundreds each day, if not thousands, of specific mission requests that came in. Evacuate this many people——

Senator LIEBERMAN. In this particular area?

Captain JONES. Yes, sir. Evacuate people from this hospital, from that hospital, this high school, this community center, this house. There were hundreds of phone calls coming in, to both the district INT, the sector INT, the Baton Rouge EOC, being funneled through our Coast Guard liaison officers in each of those places either to Eagle Base, to the Coast Guard liaison officer working with the National Guard to task National Guard and DOD helicopters, or to my air station, or to Coast Guard Aviation Training Center, Mobile, Alabama, which was also launching mass helicopter rescue operations. So there were many targeted specific distress calls coming in and everyone else was assigned to general areas where there were—for the first 4 days, Senator—were so many thousands of people that were readily apparent to be rescued, we didn't need to assign them to specific homes or blocks.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Admiral Duncan, did you want to add anything?

Admiral DUNCAN. If I may just elaborate, Senator, a parallel effort was going on at the State Office of Emergency Preparedness, so 911 calls were coming in through there, as well. Those were dispatched to appropriate liaison officers to have their agency respond. So if the call was for a State police response, the State police desk was given that ticket. If it looked like an aviation response was appropriate, then we would get that and pass that

down. So these parallel systems, really quite a number of things coming.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thank you.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you.

Captain Jones, I just want to clarify and follow up on the discussion we had of the Coast Guard's role in trying to get to the FEMA trucks at the Wal-Mart that contained vitally needed food and water and what FEMA knew and didn't know about these trucks. Our staffs recently interviewed William Lokey. Are you familiar with Mr. Lokey?

Admiral DUNCAN. No.

Chairman COLLINS. He is the FEMA official who was designated as being the Federal coordinating officer, so the key person for logistics. We told him about the Coast Guard, and you have elaborated the help that you got from the Navy, also, in coming to the trucks, breaking the locks, getting the desperately needed food and water out of them, and airlifting them to the Superdome.

My staff asked Mr. Lokey if he was aware of this. He said, "No, this is the first that I have heard of that."

The staff went on to say, "You don't know anything about trucks being abandoned in the Wal-Mart parking lot?"

He responded, "It doesn't surprise me, but this is the first time I have heard of trucks abandoned in the Wal-Mart parking lot, and I am glad they cut the locks and helped get the food over there. They did the right thing."

Question, "Is it possible in your mind that these could have been trucks that were either contracted for by FEMA, either directly or from mission assignment?"

"I do not know. I didn't think we had any mission-assigned trucks because most of our trucks and logistics people directly contracted with their contractor to provide, but I would be interested to know about this. Literally, it is the first time I have heard of having to go commandeer food in an abandoned parking lot."

I tell you about this because I think, once again, this shows the disconnect of FEMA not knowing what assets they had, where they were, and how they could be tapped. Obviously, Marty Bahamonde knew about these trucks, or had seen these trucks, but the individual at FEMA who should have been aware of this was not. Since I think your testimony created some doubt on that point, I just wanted to clarify that.

Captain JONES. Yes, ma'am. I don't know anything about the history of those trucks, how they came to be there, how long they had been there, or if they were truly abandoned or simply there was someone on the way to get the materials and our helicopters, our tasked helicopters got there first. I don't know. I only know that a FEMA person who spoke face-to-face with one of my officers who worked with the Marine Corps to get a helicopter over there and distribute that desperately needed food and water. I really can't speak as to whether it was truly abandoned and forgotten, or whether that was part of the process. The trucks may have just arrived there and FEMA worked with the right people, which is the Coast Guard, to get it distributed.

Chairman COLLINS. Well, I think it is clear from—and I just read you an excerpt of the transcript, it is much longer—that the indi-

vidual who should have known did not, so that, in fact, those were trucks that were lost track of, which is very troubling in this situation.

Admiral, as you know, this Committee is studying the mechanics of the National Response Plan and the National Incident Management System and its implementation in response to Hurricane Katrina. Senator Lieberman has often said that this was the first big test since September 11 and the system failed.

It appears, based on our initial investigation, that there was considerable confusion over the various roles played by different individuals at all levels of government under the National Response Plan and that some individuals involved in the response efforts may not have been adequately trained to the National Incident Management System standards. What are your observations?

Admiral DUNCAN. I think, in large part, there is truth in that observation. The National Response Plan was barely 8 months old when Katrina hit, so I think it is not surprising that we would find different levels of understanding in different agencies. It was not a huge shock to the Coast Guard. It operated under the Federal Response Plan previously and had helped with drafting elements of the National Response Plan for which we would be coordinating officials or coordinating agencies. We have significant experience in oil pollution, where we have learned how to deal with the National Incident Management System and ICS. We have since incorporated that for all hazards, all events. So there is a fairly high understanding of those concepts in the Coast Guard.

One of the lessons learned I come away with for our organization is we want to push that down further. We want to make sure that petty officers at a lower level are more conversant with ICS and take less ramp-up time when they show up in an organization like that. So that is a lesson learned for us, to develop that expertise at a lower level.

I guess I would say there is merit in the National Response Plan. I think elements of the Response Plan were more effective than others, but I do think it provided a good framework for, for instance, the ESF organization, mission assignments, the way that the government looks at a very large problem that cuts across the scope of all agencies that might bring something to it. I think it is a very good framework, and as we get more conversant in it, I think we will probably fine-tune it or maybe find that it is exactly what we need.

But the National Response Plan, I think, is a good framework for starting. We did find different levels of understanding and, frankly, different levels of usage of it among some of the participants.

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you. Senator Lieberman.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks. I want to follow up on the last series of questions asked about communications, and this is in the spirit of lessons learned.

In terms of the antennas going down and inhibiting communication between your planes in the air and base operations or locations, what are the alternatives that we might pursue in the future there?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. One of the things that we did in advance of the storm was to take specialized communication equip-

ment and place it in areas we thought would be necessary. That was part of the dialogue I had with my immediate supervisor, which is Vice Admiral Crea, the Area Commander.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Admiral DUNCAN. We took things called a TMAC and a TMIC—they are specialized communication bands. We put them in Mobile, which was expected to be an impact area. We moved one to Alexandria. And we reestablished communications through those, not the kind of robust communications that we would have on an ordinary basis, but enough to move through an emergency until we could restore other things. We found that text messaging worked.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Interesting.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes. I was the Group Commander in Charleston, South Carolina, when Hurricane Hugo hit, and I thought the first thing that was going to go was my cell phone. As it turned out, the cell phone towers remained up, and we were able to communicate with what was then pretty new technology.

Senator LIEBERMAN. But they didn't here, did they?

Admiral DUNCAN. They did not, no.

Senator LIEBERMAN. No.

Admiral DUNCAN. And we ended up—I am wearing a phone on my belt. This is the third phone I have had since August. It is an area code not affected by the storm, and I am able to communicate very nicely with that. It is in Northwestern Louisiana. The 504 area code was greatly impacted. My wife's phone, it was difficult to find out where she was.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

Admiral DUNCAN. But that was a matter of trial and error to try and find something we could bring up as we experienced problems.

Again, communications are always one of those things you wish were better, and I know that we have mobile communications van projects that are very near completion that we hope will provide that kind of——

Senator LIEBERMAN. I appreciate that. The staff just told me that they have learned that the helicopters were able to intermittently use your own C–130s or order Customs and Border P–3s as communications centers. Tell me a little about that.

Admiral DUNCAN. I will address it broadly and ask Captain Jones, as the aviator among us, to do the details.

The air traffic management package, again, with that many helicopters in the air, every time I flew in there, I was looking out the window to make sure there wasn't a helicopter on the next roof over. That air traffic management piece was done by two aircraft, a Coast Guard C–130 and a Customs P–3 in an elliptical orbit over New Orleans, much like an AWACS kind of a thing.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Was this part of the plan, in other words, that you——

Admiral DUNCAN. It was perceived ahead of time and put into place. Those aircraft showed up as ordered before the storm.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right. Unique to preparation for Katrina, or is that part of the continuing plan?

Admiral DUNCAN. I think any time we expect a congested air space, we make an effort to make sure that that is there, and the

Navy brought assets with them when they came, as well, that could take care of that.

If I might throw that to Captain Jones to describe the details of that communications.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Sure.

Captain JONES. The Navy provided an E–2–C Hawkeye, also, for that role, but primarily, they benefitted us by not only reeling information—if we had to send out a broadcast to all helicopters, we sent it to the overhead aircraft, and then they could talk to an on-scene helicopter better than we could from my operations center. But also, they were able to do phone patches, so if I needed to talk to the District IMT in St. Louis, we could contact the overhead fixed-wing aircraft from 10,000 feet, and they could do a phone patch and actually get on a land line in St. Louis.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Let me ask a different question—Captain, did you want to say something?

Captain PASKEWICH. Could I add just a couple more things on the communications, sir?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Please.

Captain PASKEWICH. There were some novel approaches to overcoming some of the limitations. We did actually get a ham radio operator in, which turned out to be effective. We had our own——

Senator LIEBERMAN. This is after you saw how bad it was?

Captain PASKEWICH. Yes, sir. They came in within the first couple days.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

Captain PASKEWICH. And then we had a group of auxiliarists who actually went out to one of our towers to establish the link between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. This key tower halfway in between, once it was up and running, we could have the communications leap-frogged through that site to our station, once we regained access to our station. And out-of-state cell phones actually worked quite well, if you had that ability.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Again, a real sign of resourcefulness.

You know, the contrast, and I don't want to ask you to talk about this, but—maybe I will ask you a different question, the contrast between how you responded and others did.

Has there been any after-action work done within the Department of Homeland Security about, for instance—in preparation for the next, or even in implementation around Hurricane Rita, about you and FEMA, for instance, working more closely together? I mean, here you are in the same Department and, honestly, a night and day—that may be unfair because of different histories, etc.—in the reaction of the two agencies, but what has happened since all this happened in Katrina?

Admiral DUNCAN. I think we are capturing many lessons learned, pages and pages of things. Some are small, single points of failure or to be avoided, lots of things like that, the business about pushing training down to a lower level in ICS in our community.

When Rita approached, we put the word out that we were going to treat this as an expeditionary event. We were not going to assume that anything would have survived the strike. There would be nothing to go back to. Bring everything you need with you.

Bring communications, bring food, water, bring RVs. I think I am the largest owner of RVs in the government right now. We try to provide our ability to move into an area and sustain operations for a long period of time.

Efforts to integrate with FEMA and others in DHS and others in the government, I think, are being looked at and probably smoother. We put liaison officers—I put a Coast Guard Admiral in the PFO organization before Admiral Allen was assigned to try to make that kind of connectivity during the event. Admiral Acton was assigned to be Mr. Brown's assistant earlier on in that.

We did the same thing with Hurricane Rita. We actually moved Admiral Acton over to Rita to be part of that PFO cell and to also make the connections with the Joint Task Force as DOD came in with their own capabilities and their own mission sets. So interconnectivity, interoperability are very big on our list of lessons learned.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Let me ask you this final question, maybe if each of you want to offer a quick answer. I think one of the reasons you are as good as you are is you probably don't rest on your laurels and you are always asking, what could we have done better here? So I am going to give you an opportunity, each of you, to—and maybe this time I will start with Captain Paskewich and go around the other way—what went wrong or what lessons did you learn for the next time?

Captain PASKEWICH. I would say it is a strength, and at times we are pretty tough on ourselves. In fact, we are incredibly tough on ourselves, and we constantly reevaluate where we can improve, and we have captured lessons learned across a whole broad spectrum, not just communications. There are whole lessons learned within that whole communications segment, but organizationally, what do we need to do better? How can we set up? How can we connect the dots? I call it connecting the dots between all the agencies. It is very important to me.

The liaison officers are key people, and what I take out of this is that that is one of the major bonds that has to take place and we have to do it even better——

Senator LIEBERMAN. Liaison——

Captain PASKEWICH. Liaison officers. For instance, we had assigned officers at the City Office of Emergency Preparedness. We had SAR controllers at the State level, trying to stay linked with those folks and linked with other key agencies who we overlap with and interact with. That is a key, and I think if I take anything away from that, I want to build upon that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Great. Captain Jones.

Captain JONES. Honestly, Senator, I think Captain Paskewich hit it on the head when he said we beat ourselves up. We are perfectionists in the Coast Guard. After a miraculous rescue, a crew will sit around and agonize over what they should have done better.

On the first day of Katrina response, I flew 9 hours and my rescue person was Dave Foreman, a young man who is incredibly heroic, hanging from gutters at 10 o'clock at night when I was hovering on night-vision goggles, smashing windows out of a second-story building over by Lakeview to try to get an elderly woman out who we then had to abandon because he just couldn't get her out.

She was immobile, and it was just not physically possible to get her out that night in those conditions.

This is the same young man who, 2 years ago, you may remember the Bow Mariner rescue mission, the 600-foot tanker that sank off Cape Henry at Chincoteague with highly-toxic chemicals aboard, and he went into that water in January in the Atlantic Ocean with highly toxic fumes that made the helicopter crew pass out and saved six lives, and he beat himself up after that. I couldn't save anyone else. And we have to just slap ourselves sometimes and say, you just did the most successful rescue operation in American history, so don't beat yourself up so much.

Honestly, the factors that the Admiral and Captain Paskewich have pointed out, our ability to interact with other agencies, our ability to empower our people to make decisions on the fly, to look at what needs to be done and make those decisions, and we can empower them to do that because of the fact that they are so well trained and they are experienced and they are local first responders who are part of the local communities and know the local officials and know where the local geographic landmarks are.

There were times after Katrina where we sat around and we were practically saying, gee, what could we have done more? Could we have plugged the levees ourselves? Could we have built the tent cities ourselves? My Command Master Chief had to slap me one time and say, "Captain, we did a hell of a job."

Senator LIEBERMAN. You did a hell of a job. Admiral Duncan.

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. It would make your hair hurt, honestly, to go through the details of lessons learned. We had a single point of failure in a server in one of our subordinate commands that provided the routing for our E-mail, and it either went underwater or ran out of fuel. Those pretty much are concurrent events at this point. And we said, man, that cost us a couple of hours in restoring, rerouting through St. Louis, where we put our COOP, our E-mail. So we are really hard on ourselves that our E-mail went down, which was a significant thing. We really wanted that to be up.

So that is the level of things. Just briefly, we have broken these lessons learned down into people, training, equipment, supply, infrastructure, and information, and then there are subsets under all of those and a good part of this book are lessons learned.

Senator LIEBERMAN. That is great. And I presume you are not only working that over internally, but you are sharing it with the rest of DHS?

Admiral DUNCAN. Yes, sir. Captain Paskewich made a good point. One thing that we did this time was we took commanding officers out of command positions in a non-impacted area, the Texas coast, for instance, and moved them into those key liaison positions and let the executive officers fleet up and run the show in day-to-day operations. So we ensured that the quality of people we had interacting with other agencies were our top command-level people. That was a significant event. That is the best case that I think we are going to offer for Coast Guard-wide operations.

Remain flexible. For instance, it has struck me as we are going through this that we probably want to think about putting a fluorescent mark on the top of roofs of houses that we had taken peo-

ple off of, and that looked like an adaptation in the plan. I looked just like you do now, sir. That is a good idea.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yes.

Admiral DUNCAN. It turns out not to be a good idea in practice. Now, you wouldn't have known this, sir——

Senator LIEBERMAN. You tricked me there. [Laughter.]

Admiral DUNCAN. Well, it was my idea, and sometimes the Admiral doesn't have good ideas, but if he talks to people, he finds out that the rescue swimmers are going down, and they say, we have marked this house, but flying back, we saw new people on this house, people who just decided to come out now, or people who have moved up from other areas and found easy access to this roof. So what looked like a promising variant of that plan, in practice, we were quick enough to recognize it was putting people at risk if we went forward with that. There would be people there again. So we scratched that.

So remaining agile, questioning fundamental assumptions, listening to the petty officer who is hanging from a wire rope and seeing what his experience is. Captain Jones can tell you that we put axes on his helicopters and then we got electric saws so that we could get into roofs of houses—not standard equipment on his helicopters, developed on the fly.

So that is a lesson learned that we will probably put in and offer as a best practice for other air stations in other hurricane areas.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Fantastic. Thanks very much. Great job. We are very grateful to you. I was thinking, this is probably the ultimate expression of gratitude from American society these days, is that we should go from "NYPD" to a television series called "USCG." [Laughter.]

Admiral DUNCAN. Captain Paskewich has already had enough press. [Laughter.]

I have to talk to him through an agent. He has dark glasses. Please don't make him harder to work with, sir. [Laughter.]

Senator LIEBERMAN. I wasn't thinking of him playing himself, however. [Laughter.]

Chairman COLLINS. Thank you very much for your testimony today. Admiral Duncan, I would ask that you share with the Committee the lessons learned document. That would be very helpful to us.

Admiral DUNCAN. I would be happy to do that, Madam Chairman.

Chairman COLLINS. And again, I want to join Senator Lieberman in commending the Coast Guard for a truly outstanding performance. I think that we can learn a lot from the experience with Katrina by looking at the Coast Guard's preparedness and agile response. The constant innovation as you were going along is really impressive, and that is what we need to learn and adapt for other agencies. So we look forward to working with you further as we continue our investigation, and I thank you very much for your testimony today and your service to the country.

This hearing record will remain open for 15 days, and this hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:20 a.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SENATOR LAUTENBERG

Madam Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing and giving us an opportunity to examine one of the few bright spots in the Federal response to Hurricane Katrina.

I have always admired the U.S. Coast Guard. Before coming to the Senate I served on the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, and I know what a vital role the Coast Guard plays in the shipping industry which is so important to our economy.

The Coast Guard is responsible for ensuring that ships are seaworthy. Since 9/11, they have been given additional responsibilities in the war on terror, but not commensurate resources. New port and maritime security duties increase the myriad activities which the Coast Guard performs. They have always protected the marine environment through enforcement of our laws and treaties, and guarded our marine resources.

We have always looked to the Coast Guard in times of emergency, to protect the lives and safety of citizens.

During Hurricane Katrina we witnessed some deplorable scenes. Many aspects of the Federal response were inexcusable. But we also saw heroism on the part of Coast Guard personnel.

I especially want to note the efforts of two helicopter rescue crews from Atlantic City. I ask that their names be placed in the record for this hearing:

CDR Daniel Taylor
LT Kevin D'Eustachio
AET2 Troy Maxwell
AST3 Josh Rice
LCDR Kurt Richter
LT Eric Purdue
AST1 Craig Miller
AMT2 Clinton Wood
AMT2 Adam Wolfe
AMT3 Shane Sprague

The first crew arrived in New Orleans starting the night the hurricane struck, and by the next day had rescued 24 people, including a pregnant woman who went into labor aboard their helicopter. Her baby was delivered safely. The same crew also evacuated a family with an infant. The second crew arrived shortly thereafter and commenced several days of relief and rescue operations, which resulted in the rescue of 50 people, 2 dogs, and the delivery of 150 pounds of food and water.

These heroic acts were multiplied many times over. Coast guard rescue crews from across the nation *saved orevacuated* more than *33 thousand* victims of Hurricane Katrina.

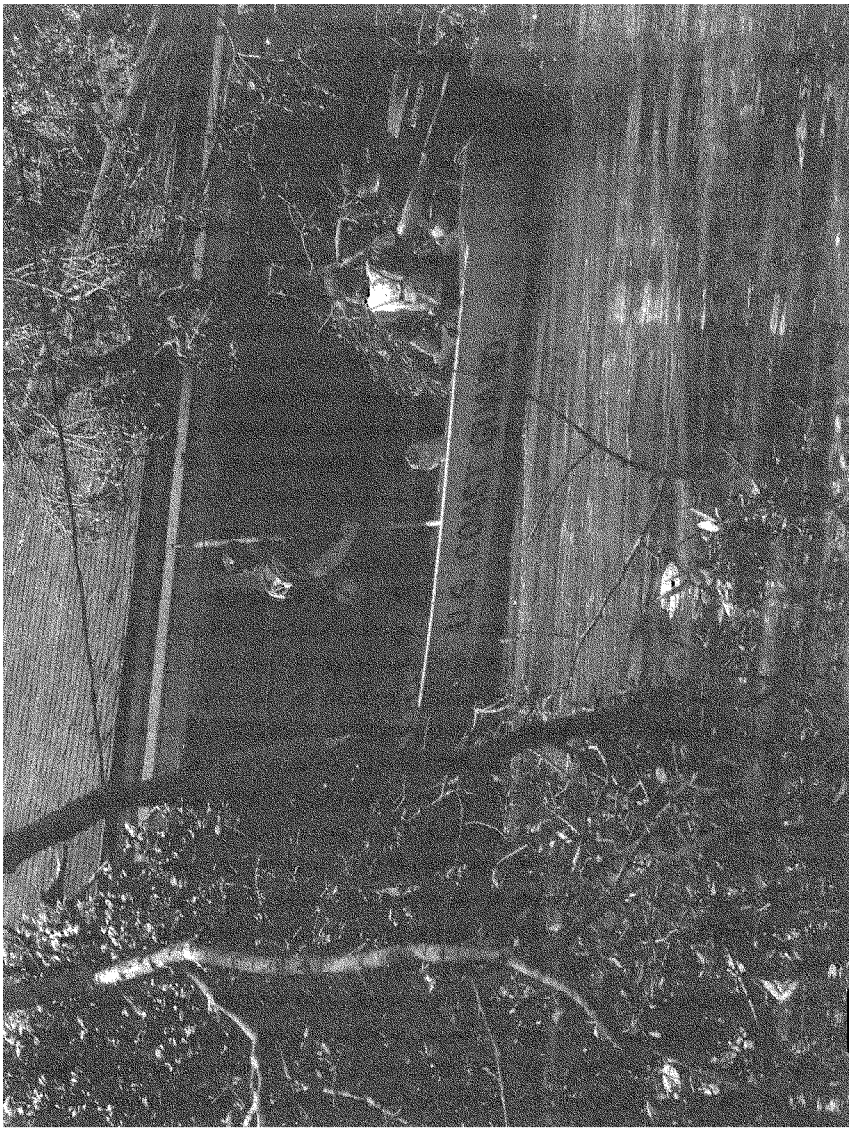
This tragedy brought out the best in the United States Coast Guard. Unfortunately, the current Administration has failed to support providing the necessary resources for the Coast Guard, both for new equipment and for operations.

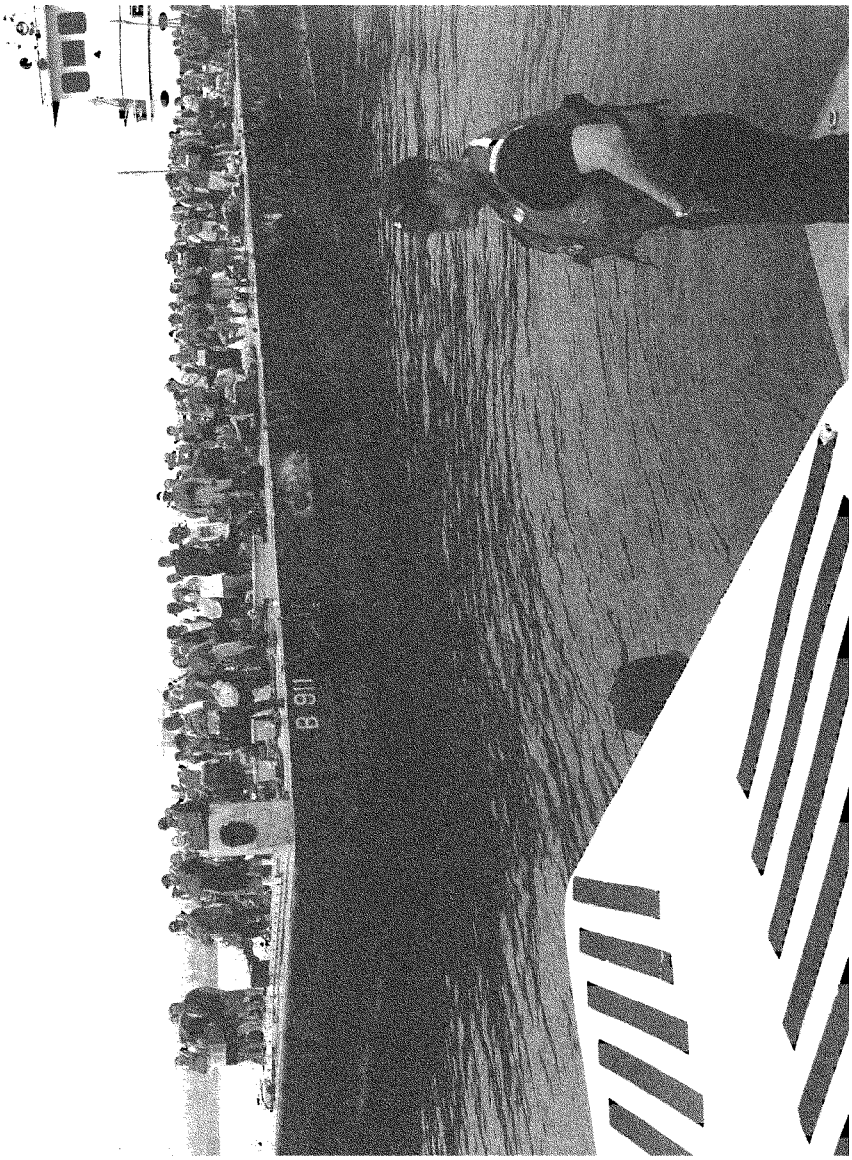
A plan to upgrade and renew the Coast Guard's long-range fleet was adopted several years ago, but it as not been fully funded. As a result, many Coast Guard vessels are outdated, affecting their ability to support operations in the Gulf as well as non-security operations.

The Coast Guard was there when the victims of Hurricane Katrina needed it. If we expect it to be there during the next emergency, we need to be there for the Coast Guard.

We must finish the job of upgrading and modernizing the Coast Guard fleet, and we must ensure the Coast Guard has adequate resources to conduct both their homeland security missions as well as their traditional missions. Thank you.

U.S. COAST GUA





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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL ROBERT DUNCAN
COMMANDER, EIGHTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT

ON

'ALWAYS READY':
THE COAST GUARD'S RESPONSE TO HURRICANE KATRINA

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

U. S. SENATE

NOVEMBER 9, 2005

Chairman Collins and Members of the committee: Thank you for this opportunity to address you today and to discuss the Eighth Coast Guard District's role in the response to hurricane KATRINA. I am extremely proud of the way my Eighth District personnel performed as well as the literally thousands of other Coast Guard personnel from around the country that provided critical and invaluable efforts to making this a truly Team Coast Guard event. The Coast Guard is strategically positioned to play a critical role in effective disaster response because of our unique military, multi-mission, and maritime characteristics. Those characteristics were crucial to our overall performance during and after KATRINA.

To best describe our systematic approach to preparing for catastrophic events such as KATRINA, I will focus on three key attributes of Coast Guard operations: our multi-mission focus, our organizational flexibility, and our continual examination and improvement of exercised plans. Whether we are answering a distress call or responding to an oil spill, response is what we do daily. The operational concept employed throughout the Coast Guard embraces a structured chain of command - while still emphasizing decentralized, on-scene command and control. We routinely delegate authority to qualified people at the lowest possible level because it facilitates rapid response and maximizes effectiveness in dynamic environments. Coast Guard personnel are trained, almost from the day they come aboard, to use Coast Guard doctrine and regulations, an institutionalized operational risk management process, and their own professional and personal experience to make appropriate decisions at the scene of the operation. A significant operational benefit of this is that when disasters occur and communications difficulties develop, our crews still function effectively and achieve desired objectives consistent with command-directed priorities.

Coast Guard standardized training is critical to effective surge operations. Standardized training and equipment allowed people, boats, and aircraft from all over the Coast Guard to surge into the Eighth Coast Guard District and begin operations immediately. For instance, in some cases boat crews responded from Maine, pollution responders came from Connecticut, and support personnel deployed from Alaska. Every Coast Guard air station in the country contributed. A typical helicopter conducting search and rescue may have had an aircraft commander from Massachusetts, a co-pilot from North Carolina, a flight mechanic from Michigan, and a rescue swimmer from Florida. In this example, the aircraft itself may have come from California. All integrated seamlessly because of our rigorous standardization and training programs that ensure mission success, and crew safety.

Hurricanes are a fact of life along the Gulf coast. Each spring, prior to the "official start" of hurricane season, the Eighth District and all of our subordinate units exercise our hurricane plans and make adjustments as needed. This annual exercise is not only an operational check of unit readiness, but also an opportunity to stress the importance of personal and family hurricane plans to all our members. We take hurricanes seriously in the Eighth District, and in the past year we aggressively responded to several significant hurricanes. We visit State, municipal and other emergency operations centers, as well as all our pre-designated primary and secondary "safe havens" in conjunction with these exercises. We validate critical phone numbers, ensure unit materiel readiness, and verify that appropriate liaison officer positions are filled. Additionally, we review and exercise our Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to ensure our uninterrupted ability to maintain essential functions. As crises are dynamic events, we carefully assess our plans during a response to ensure the planning factors fit the situation that is unfolding – and then adapt our plans as appropriate.

As KATRINA approached the Gulf Coast, we responded by taking several actions in advance of the storm's projected landfall. I authorized the evacuation of dependents and initiated the COOP to relocate elements of the District staff from New Orleans to St. Louis, MO. We broadcast warnings to mariners and the offshore community. We pre-positioned District aircraft and surface assets to places which ensured their survival, and their ability to respond immediately to tasking by appropriate command authorities. For example, the Seagoing Buoy Tender Coast Guard Cutter CYPRESS, home ported in Mobile was pre-staged in Houston, TX, and loaded with as many Aids to Navigation supplies as she could physically carry. Her standing orders were to proceed to the KATRINA-impacted area as soon as it was safe to transit. In the days preceding KATRINA's arrival, I had several discussions with my Sector Commanders, as is my standard practice. I also routinely discussed the situation with Vice Admiral Vivien Crea, the Coast Guard Atlantic Area Commander. As a result of our dialogue, Vice Admiral Crea authorized the availability of a Medium Endurance Cutter to act as a command and control platform on the Mississippi River. This cutter, the SPENCER, was on scene two days after KATRINA hit. This was possible only because we anticipated the need and I had frequent, open communications with the Area Commander, which continued throughout the event. I was able to request and move assets as needed because we have a long history of flowing resources to critical areas from all over the Coast Guard. As soon as it was apparent that KATRINA would make landfall in heavily populated areas, units around the Coast Guard were preparing to deploy in support of any request we might make. District Commanders and resource providers throughout the Coast Guard anticipate these needs and ensure a high state of readiness so their assets could be deployed to affected areas without delay.

Although communications were sometimes a problem for all responding agencies in the impacted area, we overcame gaps through a variety of methods including pre-purchased and pre-staged satellite phones, text messaging, and commercial e-mail accounts. My command and control center maintained uninterrupted telephone and computer connectivity as we moved it to St. Louis early in this event. In addition, I operated out of a Forward Command Element in Louisiana. This allowed me to make frequent personal visits to the impacted areas to gain first-hand situational awareness and meet directly with key leaders and government officials. Another important factor was that all units were intimately familiar with my goals for hurricane preparation and response, and that intent was widely disseminated through the chain of command, including by personal calls to my Sector Commanders. The efforts and results of Team Coast Guard attest to the fact that my intent was communicated, understood, and executed – including by those additional resources that came from outside the Eighth District.

Close contact with officials at all levels of government was a critical success factor. I personally called Governors Blanco and Barbour in advance of the hurricane's impact to brief them on Coast Guard preparations and intentions, and to ensure alignment with State priorities. Staffing the various Emergency Operations Centers at the State and local level with Coast Guard liaisons was a valuable lesson learned from previous hurricanes. I and my Sector Commanders detailed representatives well-versed in Coast Guard capabilities, limitations, and responsibilities to fill these key liaison officer positions. They communicated directly with me, the Sector Commanders, and their Federal, State and local counterparts during this incident. To promote synergy and alignment of effort, we placed a flag officer, two current unit commanding officers, and several other senior officers as liaisons to many elements including the Principal Federal Official, Joint Field Office, and Joint Task Force.

Chairman Collins, I could not be happier with the efforts and accomplishments of the Coast Guard's men and women in their response to this disaster. Selflessly putting aside their own personal losses (579 currently have uninhabitable homes) they performed extraordinary feats to rescue over 33,544 people. I have been greatly privileged to lead and serve with them.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

QFR responses from the 9 November 2005 hearing on
"Always Ready: the Coast Guard's Response to Hurricane Katrina"
before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Rear Admiral Duncan

QUESTION: As the response to Hurricane Katrina demonstrated, the Coast Guard helicopters were the first on the scene. The USCG, given its culture and capabilities, is ideally suited to take on the role of the national first responder; yet, it is not clear to me that they have the medium lift helicopters that they would need to perform this mission. Recognizing the requirements of keeping our ports safe and all the other post 9-11 DHS missions, you have a Coast Guard that is severely under resourced when it comes to medium lift helicopters.

- What can or what is the Department of Defense (active, reserve, guard) doing to assist the Coast Guard in identifying the evolving mission requirements?
- What aviation assistance (assets or funding) do you see as important for DOD and DHS interoperability to ensure that in times of crisis the assets can operate in a unified way?

ANSWER: The Coast Guard has the responsibility of developing its own requirements and has not asked the DOD to provide assistance in identifying the evolving mission requirements stemming from Hurricane Katrina. The National Fleet Policy Statement signed by the Navy and the Coast Guard makes it possible to develop the interoperability requirements that can leverage capabilities from both Services. DOD can, and does, assist the Coast Guard in developing communication and interoperability requirements when the Coast Guard is acting in the role of the national first responder.

The Coast Guard presently operates a fleet of 84 HH-65 and 34 HH-60 aircraft; all of which fit into the category of "medium" lift helicopter. The DOD currently provides aircraft communications and airframe logistics support to integrate DOD and Coast Guard aviation assets, primarily for DOD missions. Although these capabilities ensure the ability of DOD/DHS aircraft to communicate the key to effectiveness in civil crisis situations is the ability for DHS/DOD aircraft to be able to communicate with civil first responder entities. The Coast Guard is moving in this direction with planned C4ISR systems upgrades of our Deepwater aircraft fleet.

QUESTION: The Fiscal Year 2005 Homeland Security Grant Program linked NRP/NIMS compliance and implementation to receiving grant funding from DHS, a requirement that I understand will continue in future year programs. While this requirement has not been part of the port security grant process that you may be familiar with, many of the entities you partner with are beneficiaries of other DHS grants. Those grant recipients are required to implement and train their personnel to be proficient in NIMS and to understand the concepts and responsibilities of the NRP.

- In general, can you comment on the level of compliance with and proficiency with NIMS and understanding of the NRP with the State and local agencies that you are engaged with on a routine basis?
- How do we reach the level of compliance we need to ensure that the NRP works as intended?

ANSWER: State and local agencies continue to incorporate NIMS into training, exercises, and planning every day. Given the USCG's historical use of ICS and its implementation in every response, this has only served to increase the integration on a routine basis between local, State, and Federal partners.

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There is also a growing awareness of the National Response Plan and its ability to identify and explain the coordination activities among Federal agencies as well as the coordination with State and local officials. At the same time however there is an increasing interest beyond roles and responsibilities to try to understand how the NPR will be operationalized and those Federal partners will work in the field with the State and local agencies.

While understanding NIMS and the NRP will aid in the Federal / State / local interface, compliance alone with NIMS will not ensure successful execution of the underlying operations plans. G&T is working with other partners, intra- and interagency, to enhance existing planning guidance to aid the planners at the State and local level to develop plans that are adequate, feasible, and acceptable. This guidance will incorporate not only NIMS but also the ESF structure identified in the NRP to ensure consistency in planning, coordination, and operations.

In conjunction with the DHS Preparedness Office of Grants and Training and FEMA Regional personnel, the NIMS Integration Center is currently monitoring NIMS compliance for the FY2005 Homeland Security Grant Program. Compliance monitoring for FY2005 is focused around the following actions:

- Incorporate NIMS into existing training programs and exercises.
- Ensure that federal preparedness funding, including DHS Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funds support NIMS implementation at the state and local levels, in accordance with the eligibility and allowable uses of the grants.
- Incorporate NIMS into Emergency Operations Plans (EOP).
- Promote intrastate mutual aid agreements.
- Coordinate and provide technical assistance to local entities regarding NIMS.
- Institutionalize the use of the Incident Command System.

FY2006 NIMS Implementation will be monitored in FY07 and will focus on the 23 compliance activities for States and Territories and the 17 compliance activities for tribes and local governments. In FY2007 the NIMS Integration Center, in collaboration with the DHS Preparedness Office of Grants and Training, will launch an initiative that will result in a system of measurements for all future NIMS compliance activities. This system of measurements will be released to States, Territories, Tribes and Local governments with the FY2007 NIMS Compliance Activities. Monitoring of the measurements for FY2007 will occur in FY2008.

QUESTION: Since 9/11, how have homeland security duties impacted your District's ability to perform traditional missions like search-and-rescue and oil pollution law enforcement?

ANSWER:
Coast Guard performance in its traditional mission areas has been relatively stable while the service has embraced expanded homeland security duties. Six of nine "traditional" mission programs (including mobility, safety and law enforcement programs) met or exceeded their performance goals in 2004, while seven of nine programs met or exceeded their goals in 2005. It

is the Coast Guard's multi-mission strengths, coupled with a risk-based approach to resource allocation, which facilitates improved efficiencies and effectiveness both in homeland and non homeland security missions. Coast Guard platforms are inherently multi-mission capable, and possess an on-demand capability which may not be reflected in actual mission performance when a particular service is not needed. For example, a Coast Guard vessel conducting a port security function also serves as a standby search-and-rescue (SAR) platform should a SAR case develop. Similarly, Coast Guard members conducting a port security boarding are also trained to identify and enforce marine environmental protection infractions in the course of carrying out their security duties.

The Coast Guard strives to improve mission effectiveness and efficiency by better positioning assets through enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness and intelligence. The Coast Guard's multi-mission character promotes synergy between "traditional" and homeland security duties. For example, a unit servicing an aid to navigation can immediately shift to a Ports, Waterways and Coastal Security or Law Enforcement mission if required to do so.

The Coast Guard uses risk management to align its activities to better counter maritime security threats to the Nation. Efficiencies in lower-risk activities are re-invested in higher risk areas, while still meeting the Coast Guard's overall performance goals across all mission areas. For example, improvements in aid to navigation servicing technologies have allowed previously dedicated surface assets to be reinvested into additional law enforcement and security operations. Performance, rather than level of effort, drives Coast Guard resource allocation efforts.

QUESTION: After your experiences with the current hurricane season, do you feel your District has sufficient resources to conduct search and rescue missions, without harming drug interdiction efforts and other important missions?

ANSWER: Yes. During major catastrophes, like Hurricane Katrina, the Coast Guard has the capability to surge additional assistance to meet an overwhelming demand placed on local resources. It is the Coast Guard's multi-mission nature that provides us the flexibility to conduct these surge operations, whether a major natural catastrophe, mass migration event or terrorist attack. Such surge operations may necessitate redirecting some resources from other missions temporarily. However, with the Coast Guard's inherent flexibility and multi-mission capable assets, critical gaps can be avoided.

Illegal migrant flow and landings via maritime means increased significantly in September 2005, likely due to the perception that the Coast Guard would be pre-occupied with Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. In particular, the flow of Cuban migrants nearly doubled from 581 in August to 1,001 in September. The Seventh Coast Guard District in Miami conducted a surge operation one month after Katrina to counter the increased activity.

Additionally, the domestic and foreign fisheries enforcement missions saw a reduction of 39 major cutter days in District Eight, only 75% of the planned enforcement activity for September. There was a reduction of nearly 50 % in the number of enforcement boardings for the month of

September. There were no EEZ incursions detected and no significant violations issued for the month of September due to reduced patrol efforts in the Gulf of Mexico. By the end of October, enforcement efforts had returned to normal levels.

Coast Guard cutters and aircraft redirected to Hurricane Katrina response resulted in a reduction of 78 major cutter days and 30 C-130 days from counter drug mission support. This was a 50% reduction in USCG support to stopping the drugs transiting the Caribbean Sea. Normal levels of counter drug cutter support were regained at the end of October. Despite this temporary reduction in counter drug support, the Coast Guard anticipates exceeding its target for 2005, based on a record breaking amount of cocaine seized in the early months of this past year.

QUESTION: It was reported that shots were fired at helicopter rescue crews in New Orleans. How many of these instances were documented?

ANSWER: The Coast Guard has no record of our helicopters being fired upon during Hurricane Katrina recovery operations.

QUESTION: If the District had already received the new equipment being procured under the Deepwater program, how would your response capability during Katrina have been affected?

ANSWER:
The enhanced capabilities provided by the Deepwater program may have played a role in three primary areas:

- Aircraft: The CASA CN-235-300M could have supplemented the C-130 aircraft by providing logistics transport of supplies to and around the disaster area. A mix of HH65C (re-engined model) and HH65B (unmodified model) helicopters performed rescue operations during Katrina response. In the extreme heat/humidity, the HH65B aircraft could only take on a minimal fuel load, hoist a few adults at a time and depart because of limitations of the currently-installed engines on these helicopters. On average, HH65C helicopters were able to pick up 3 to 4 more survivors per sortie. If the Multi-mission Cutter Helicopter (MCH) Deepwater project were fully complete, the upgraded HH65C helicopters could have carried as much as 900 lbs of additional passengers, fuel or supplies per aircraft during Katrina response conditions and increased aircraft endurance by almost one hour per sortie.
- Search and Surveillance: Upgraded HH60/HH65 aircraft, with improved Electro Optic/Infrared systems (EO/IR), could have aided in night search and recovery operations. The Maritime Security Cutter Medium (WMSM) could have been able to operate the Vertical Takeoff and Landing (VTOL) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (VUAV). With its video and EO/IR capability linked to a cutter or shore based command and control center, there could have been enhanced, real-time surveillance capability and greatly improved situational awareness, aiding a host of response activities such as monitoring the status of flooding and aiding the search for survivors.

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QUESTION: In the Homeland Security Act of 2002, I fought for language that would allow the Coast Guard to exist as a distinct entity within the Department of Homeland Security. This language also prohibited the Department of Homeland Security from reducing the Coast Guard's capability to perform non-homeland security missions. Have these provisions helped the Coast Guard respond to disasters such as Hurricane Katrina?

ANSWER:
Yes. The diversity in the types, locations, and capabilities of Coast Guard response assets is driven by our many mission assignments, including assignment of non-homeland security missions. As a result of the diversity maintained by keeping the Coast Guard a distinct entity, we are capable of surging multi-mission assets to meet emerging threats or mount an effective response to disasters and other urgent regional emergencies.

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