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Hurricane Center Director Tells Paper He Briefed Brown and Chertoff on Danger of Severe Flooding

By E&P Staff

Published: September 04, 2005 6:55 PM ET

NEW YORK Dr. Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center, told the Times-Picayune Sunday afternoon that officials with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Homeland Security, including FEMA Director Mike Brown and Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff, listened in on electronic briefings given by his staff in advance of Hurricane Katrina slamming Louisiana and Mississippi--and were advised of the storm's potential deadly effects.

"Mayfield said the strength of the storm and the potential disaster it could bring were made clear during both the briefings and in formal advisories, which warned of a storm surge capable of overtopping levees in New Orleans and winds strong enough to blow out windows of high-rise buildings," the paper reported. "He said the briefings included information on expected wind speed, storm surge, rainfall and the potential for tornados to accompany the storm as it came ashore.

"We were briefing them way before landfall," Mayfield said. "It's not like this was a surprise. We had in the advisories that the levee could be topped."

Chertoff told reporters Saturday that government officials had not expected the damaging combination of a powerful hurricane levee breaches that flooded New Orleans.

Brown, Mayfield said, is a dedicated public servant. "The question is why he couldn't shake loose the resources that were needed," he said.

Brown and Chertoff could not be reached for comment on Sunday afternoon.

In the days before Katrina hit, Mayfield said, his staff also briefed FEMA, which under the Department of Homeland Security, at FEMA's headquarters in Washington, D.C., its Region 6 office in Dallas and the Region 4 office in Atlanta about the potential effects of the storm. He said all of those briefings were logged in the hurricane center's records.

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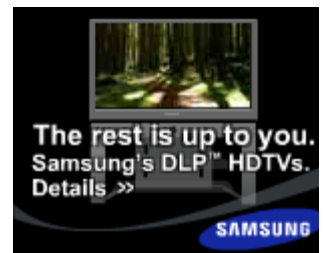
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Two children raped at the Superdome in New Orleans. Thirty dead in a collapsed apartment complex in Biloxi. Reporters covering the historic devastation of Hurricane Katrina have heard stories like these repeatedly, but separating fact from fiction has proved a growing challenge.

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firing a reporter who was found to have fabricated a report about next month's nationwide parliamentary elections.

Copy Chief Uses Webcam to Nab Burglar

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