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Two Bush 2000 Florida recount aides were rewarded with top FEMA posts

Reversing an eight-year crusade to rid the now-embattled Federal Emergency Management Agency of political patronage, a newly elected George W. Bush in 2001 named two key players in his Florida recount fight to important FEMA posts.



Neither man, Jacksonville attorney [Reynold Hoover](#) (pictured at left) and Miami lawyer [Mark Wallace](#), had any experience in emergency management before they were named by the Bush administration to FEMA, now under fire for its botched response to Hurricane Katrina.

Hoover, a longtime "explosives expert" with the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms who became a lawyer in 1996, is still with FEMA as its director of national security coordination. Wallace left the Bush administration in 2004 to become deputy manager of the president's re-election campaign, and is now a lobbyist.

They are two more names to add to the list of political appointees and out-and-out hacks at FEMA. Many are [calling for the firing](#) of agency chief [Michael Brown](#), the ousted head of a horse association who was hired at FEMA in 2001 along with his college roommate, top Bush advisor Joe Allbaugh. And [it was reported yesterday](#) that FEMA's No. 2 and No. 3 officials, Patrick Rhode and Scott Morris, are also former campaign aides.

Consider this quote:

"FEMA is widely viewed as a 'dumping ground,' a turkey farm, if you will, where large numbers of positions exist that can be conveniently and quietly filled by political appointment," the preliminary report said. "This has led to a situation where top officials, having little or no experience in disaster or emergency management, are creating substantial morale problems among careerists and professionals. "

Appropriate in the wake of the agency's bungled efforts over the last 10 days in Louisiana and Mississippi? Yes -- but the above quote is from 1992, during the administration of George H.W. Bush. It came from a preliminary report from the staff of the House Appropriations Committee, and it was written *before* FEMA came under fire that year for a tardy response to Florida's Hurricane Andrew. (Note: Any article not linked came from the Nexis search engine.)

The Andrew debacle was one of many factors in the first President Bush's failed re-election bid. They say that good government is good politics, and so when Bill Clinton arrived at the White House in 1993, he made a serious effort to rid FEMA of political hackery.

Clinton hired a professional, James Lee Witt, to run the agency and that May Witt told a Senate Appropriations subcommittee, according to a Washington Post article, "that FEMA 'will not be doing business as usual' and that he was committed to making his organization 'one of the most respected agencies in this nation.'

Did he succeed? Here's what the Atlanta Journal-Constitution wrote in a January 1996 editorial:

FEMA has developed a sterling reputation for delivering disaster- relief services, a far cry from its abysmal standing before James Lee Witt took its helm in 1993.

*How did Witt turn FEMA around so quickly? Well, he is the first director of the agency to have emergency-management experience. **He stopped the staffing of the agency by political patronage.** He removed layers of bureaucracy. Most important, he instilled in the agency a spirit of preparedness, of service to the customer, of willingness to listen to ideas of local and state officials to make the system work better.*

But if Clinton and Witt stopped the staffing of FEMA by political patronage, George W. Bush re-started it within days of taking the oath of office -- rewarding some of the people who'd helped him become president in the grueling 2000 Florida recount.



One of those was Wallace (pictured at left) -- a young lawyer who, according to [a July 14, 2002, article by the Miami Herald's](#)

[Carol Rosenberg](#) -- "fought on behalf of the GOP in Palm Beach County during the butterfly ballot brouhaha." He was hired in 2001 as FEMA's general counsel and was the chief lawyer for the agency on its Sept. 11 recovery effort. After his 2004 stint as a top official in the Bush campaign, he was hired in March as a D.C. lobbyist for a Florida-based law firm, Akerman Senterfitt.

Hoover, the former ATF agent turned attorney, was active in the Duval County GOP at the time of the Florida recount, and because a point man in the Jacksonville area. He initially served as FEMA's chief of staff for a time, but he's currently listed on the [agency's organizational chart](#) as director of the Office of National Security Coordination.

Of course, we all know that Bush has rewarded a number of people who went to bat for him in Florida in 2000 with plum jobs. One of those is his new UN ambassador John Bolton, who -- as the Herald article reminds us -- "[burst] into a Tallahassee library on behalf of the Bush-Cheney campaign to stop a recount of Miami-Dade County ballots." Another was recently picked by Bush to become chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, [John Roberts](#).

What's more, Wallace and Hoover -- and Brown and Rhodes and Morris -- aren't the only political hires at FEMA. Indeed, the officials tasked with the response to Hurricane Katrina -- [Dan Craig](#), the director of the recovery division -- is another. As his bio notes, "Craig worked as a campaign advisor, and political fundraiser and research analyst" and was also a lobbyist. At the risk of stating the obvious by this point, he did not have emergency management experience.

He was the key player in a 2004 FEMA controversy that may get some new scrutiny in light of recent events. From a May 15, 2005, Knight-Ridder article:

As Hurricane Frances made landfall 100 miles north of Miami-Dade County in September, a top official at the Federal Emergency Management Agency declared the county a major disaster area with no evidence of damage and contrary to a presidential order, federal auditors have found.

That decision allowed more than 12,000 Miami-Dade residents, many with minimal or no damage, to collect \$31 million and brought unprecedented scrutiny to the federal disaster aid program...

On Sept. 5, as the storm continued its trek into central Florida, FEMA added to the declaration Miami-Dade and the other 12 counties originally requested by Gov. Jeb Bush. The decision was made by FEMA's recovery division director in Washington. The report did not name him, but Nicol D. Andrews, FEMA spokeswoman, identified him as Dan Craig.

The ruling came just two months before the 2004 presidential election, with Florida the top battleground state.

Also in 2004, up the Gulf Coast, FEMA was involved in a mock drill called [Hurricane Pam](#), in which a hurricane with 120 mph winds topped the levies of New Orleans. FEMA's chief representative at the drill was its regional director at the time, Ron Castleman.

"We made great progress this week in our preparedness efforts," said Ron Castleman, FEMA Regional Director. "Disaster response teams developed action plans in critical areas such as search and rescue, medical care, sheltering, temporary housing, school restoration and debris management. These plans are essential for quick response to a hurricane but will also help in other emergencies."

When the very real Hurricane Katrina struck last month, Castleman had already moved on to a job in the private sector. Would his presence have helped? We don't know.

We can only tell you Castleman's immediate job before he became FEMA's top person in the Gulf region. He had been the chief administrative officer -- for the 2000 Bush-Cheney campaign.

Posted on September 7, 2005 11:19 AM

Comments

from tpmcafe:

<http://www.tpmcafe.com/story/2005/9/7/1451/35623>

Sep 07, 2005 -- 01:45:01 AM EST

As we look at the collection of political hacks and washouts who turned the highest ranks of what was FEMA into what bureaucrats call a "turkey farm," let's not forget the debate that was front and center in the fall of 2002:

George Bush's insistence that the critical issue in the creation of the Department of Homeland Security was the elimination of civil service protections for employees of the new department.

This was no trivial thing, but a major election issue. At a fundraiser for Republican Senate candidate Doug Forrester, Bush charged that "Democrats are not interested in national security" when it conflicts with the interest of federal employee unions, and

the issue was a big part of the campaign that defeated Max Cleland, and figured in other Senate campaigns of that most dismal year.

But of course, Bush's concerns were entirely high-minded. Here's how he put it on July 26, 2002: "The new Secretary must have the freedom to get the right people in the right job at the right time, and to hold them accountable. He needs the ability to move money and resources quickly in response to new threats, without all kinds of bureaucratic rules and obstacles."

Needless to say, after the election, Congress passed exactly the bill Bush wanted. While "Brownie" and his deputies are political appointees, not civil service, it's still worth asking, how did that work out? Do you think the Secretary actually did get the "the right people into the right job"? Is he holding them accountable? Did they move money and resources quickly? And if the answers to those questions are No, do Cleland and other Democrats deserve an apology?

Posted by: [lutton](#) at September 7, 2005 02:40 PM

ruh, roh, rheorge, even Michelle gets it:

<http://michellemalkin.com/archives/003458.htm>

MEMO TO BUSH: FIRE MICHAEL BROWN

By Michelle Malkin · September 04, 2005 08:17 AM

During his visit to Mobile, Ala., on Friday, President Bush singled out Michael D. Brown, head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, for praise: "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job."

Really? "Brownie's" job is to direct the federal response to natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. Let's review his public statements during the past week:

- He admitted that he didn't act more aggressively because as late as last Sunday he expected Katrina to be a "standard hurricane" even though the National Weather Service in New Orleans was already predicting "human suffering incredible by modern standards."

- He proved himself utterly clueless about the disaster unfolding in New Orleans. He claimed that the federal relief effort was "going relatively well" and that the security situation in New Orleans was "pretty darn good."

- He blamed the flood victims in New Orleans for failing to evacuate on time, even though local authorities failed to make municipal vehicles available to residents who could not drive or did not own their own cars.

"It took four days to begin a large-scale evacuation of people stranded in the

Superdome stadium and to bring in significant amounts of food and water to an American city easily accessible by motorway," the Observer notes. "Relief agencies took half that time to reach Indonesia after the Boxing Day tsunami. "

Although the delay was not entirely the fault of the Bush Administration, Brown's complacency clearly didn't help. And his bumbling statements after the hurricane struck have not inspired confidence.

This is not the time to give a weak performer the benefit of the doubt. The FEMA director's role in the ongoing recovery effort is too important to be entrusted to a clueless political hack with such poor judgment.

Rather than praise Michael Brown, Bush should fire him.

Update, 9:15am: Brendan Loy has a superb post about Brown's failure to anticipate the enormity of Katrina (hat tip: Glenn Reynolds):

No one -- NO ONE -- who knows anything about New Orleans's geography and topography and levee system would ever have thought for a single moment on Saturday and Sunday that Katrina, if it followed the predicted path, was going to be a "typical hurricane situation." Jesus Christ!! For how many years now has this article been out there?!? And this one? And many more like them? Did Michael Brown never read them? Was he not familiar with the science? Was FEMA's director unaware of what has been acknowledged for many years as the #1 most serious natural disaster threat in all of America?!?

9:45am EDT: Brown is being criticized on FOX News Sunday. "He has a lot to answer for," says Bill Kistol. "He clearly did not know what was going on."

Posted by: [lutton](#) at September 7, 2005 02:47 PM

These appointments should erase any doubt about the presence of politics in FEMA. For those who say that politics should not play a role in the criticism, too late. That decision was made when these political hacks were named to FEMA with limited, if any experience. That is not how you protect lives. Thanks Will!

Posted by: [wynooska](#) at September 7, 2005 03:50 PM

that is business and lawyers for you, do the two guys do anything but get a government check for life?..can i have free government money? for doing nothing but being who i am?..don't think so, in fact if the boys really knew me, i would be in prison for life, but maybe someday both will be put in prison by the other guys who will take power over and look for two good scapegoats.

Posted by: [Fred Dawes](#) at September 7, 2005 04:36 PM

If folks are serious about having FEMA do better, they might want to study the problems FEMA had in responding to Hurricane Floyd and the unexpected wide-scale flooding from that large Cat 2. Witt was FEMA director for that one and had been director for seven years.

Maybe FEMA needs a large-hurricane plan (as opposed to a strong hurricane, they ain't always the same - Andrew and Charley were both strong and compact, limiting the width of the impacted area).

Out of all the hurricanes last year, FEMA seemed to have the most trouble with Ivan, which was a fairly large storm.

FEMA seems to have trouble with disasters that cover a large geographical area - and apparently that was the case with Witt and now with Brown.

There might need to be a military activation component when the projected impacted area (or population) exceeds a certain size. This could also apply to a 9.0 earthquake off the coast of Washington State.

(In case you think I'm exaggerating, scientists have estimated that a 9.0 earthquake - the same magnitude last year that triggered the tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean - happened off the coast of Washington State in 1700 - such a quake would cause widescale devastation).

Posted by: [db_cooper](#) at September 7, 2005 04:40 PM

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Posted by: db_cooper at September 7, 2005 04:40 PM

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Hey, JAYEF, hows it hangin'??

Interesting that you refuse to address the qualifications of the top administrators in the FEMA agency. Part of being a good administrator is the ability to circumvent obstacles, expeditiously, professionally and in a competent manner. Not suprisingly, the top three positions in FEMA are currently filled by people that have ABSOLUTELY NO EXPERIENCE in crisis, emergency, or civil service management.

To ignore, condone, excuse, or rationalize such cronyism within our nation's emergency response agencies is an exercise in anti-Americanism. How can any self respecting American believe that cronyism in such important positions advances the interests and the security of the American people?? Your heroes excuse the appointment of unqualified managers by pointing their fingers at elected officials. If the elected officials are derelict, they should face the piper at the polling booth. There is a HUGE DIFFERENCE between voting in someone you BELIEVE is qualified to fill a position, as opposed to APPOINTING someone you KNOW has no qualifications or experience. The upper echelon of the FEMA management reads like a who's who of former Bush campaign officials. NONE OF WHICH have any background eperience in emergency management.

Thats OK with you? It must be, as you refuse to comment on the REAL ISSUES, instead choosing to deflect the issue.

Like the thread that addresses Bush's funding cuts, you will post your deflective and disingenuous BULLSHIT, such as we see above, then you will promptly scurry for a fresh screen name or two, in which to effect a charade of concensus.

FEMA packed with W's pals

Campaign pros get top jobs

By KENNETH R. BAZINET
DAILY NEWS WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON - The three top jobs at the Federal Emergency Management Agency under President Bush went to political cronies with no apparent experience coping with catastrophes, the Daily News has learned.

Even if Bush were to fire embattled and suddenly invisible FEMA Director Michael Brown over his handling of Hurricane Katrina, the bureaucrat immediately below him is no disaster professional, either.

While Brown ran horse shows in his last private-sector job, FEMA's No. 2 man, deputy director and chief of staff Patrick Rhode, was an advance man for the Bush-Cheney campaign and White House. He also did short stints at the Commerce Department and Small Business Administration.

Rhode's biography posted on FEMA's Web site doesn't indicate he has any real experience in emergency response.

In addition, the agency's former third-ranking official, deputy chief of staff Scott Morris, was a PR expert who worked for Maverick Media, the Texas outfit that produced TV and radio spots for the Bush-Cheney campaign. In June, Morris moved to Florida to become FEMA's long-term recovery director.

"The Bush administration has apparently transformed FEMA from a professional, world-class emergency responder into a dumping ground for former campaign staff and political hacks," said Rep. Carolyn Maloney (D-Manhattan).

FEMA also is hampered by several midlevel and regional director's jobs currently held by acting directors.

"Just like our military, FEMA should be immune to this kind of political staffing. It should be run by career emergency response professionals," Maloney added.

Traditionally, the Commerce and Labor departments have long been Washington's dumping ground for presidential pals and campaign operatives - not the disaster relief agency.

Government sources blame Bush's first FEMA director, Joe Allbaugh, with turning FEMA into a patronage shop.

He was chief of staff when Bush was Texas' governor and later headed the 2000 Bush-Cheney campaign.

"He stacked the deck with political appointees," a knowledgeable source said of Allbaugh, who had a reputation for running an efficient FEMA operation until he left the job in March 2003.

FEMA is overseen by the Department of Homeland Security. Officials at both agencies did not return phone calls or E-mails yesterday.

Originally published on September 7, 2005

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 7, 2005 06:09 PM

that is business and lawyers for you, do the two guys do anything but get a government check for life?..can i have free government money? for doing nothing but being who i am?..don't think so, in fact if the boys really knew me, i would be in prison for life, but maybe someday both will be put in prison by the other guys who will take power over and look for two good scapegoats.

Posted by: Fred Dawes at September 7, 2005 04:36 PM

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Hey, its hard work licking Bush's ass.

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 7, 2005 06:11 PM

WHEN WILL THIS INSANITY END?????

YOU HAVE UNQUALIFIED BUSH ASSSLICKERS RUNNING FEMA, WHILE HIGHLY QUALIFIED AND TRAINED FIRST RESPONDERS HAND OUT FLYERS. IT IS TIME TO TAR AND FEATHER THESE SONS OF A BITCHES OUT OF WASHINGTON.

Frustrated: Fire Crews to Hand Out Fliers for FEMA

By Lisa Rosetta

The Salt Lake Tribune

Tuesday 06 September 2005

Atlanta - Not long after some 1,000 firefighters sat down for eight hours of training, the whispering began: "What are we doing here?"

As New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin pleaded on national television for firefighters - his own are exhausted after working around the clock for a week - a battalion of highly trained men and women sat idle Sunday in a muggy Sheraton Hotel conference room in Atlanta.

Many of the firefighters, assembled from Utah and throughout the United States by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, thought they were going to be deployed as emergency workers.

Instead, they have learned they are going to be community-relations officers for FEMA, shuffled throughout the Gulf Coast region to disseminate fliers and a phone number: 1-800-621-FEMA.

On Monday, some firefighters stuck in the staging area at the Sheraton peeled off their FEMA-issued shirts and stuffed them in backpacks, saying they refuse to represent the federal agency.

Federal officials are unapologetic.

"I would go back and ask the firefighter to revisit his commitment to FEMA, to firefighting and to the citizens of this country," said FEMA spokeswoman Mary Hudak.

The firefighters - or at least the fire chiefs who assigned them to come to Atlanta - knew what the assignment would be, Hudak said.

"The initial call to action very specifically says we're looking for two-person fire teams to do community relations," she said. "So if there is a breakdown [in communication], it was likely in their own departments."

One fire chief from Texas agreed that the call was clear to work as community-relations officers. But he wonders why the 1,400 firefighters FEMA attracted to Atlanta aren't being put to better use. He also questioned why the US Department of Homeland Security - of which FEMA is a part - has not responded better to the disaster.

The firefighters, several of whom are from Utah, were told to bring backpacks, sleeping bags, first-aid kits and Meals Ready to Eat. They were told to prepare for "austere conditions." Many of them came with awkward fire gear and expected to wade in floodwaters, sift through rubble and save lives.

"They've got people here who are search-and-rescue certified, paramedics, haz-mat certified," said a Texas firefighter. "We're sitting in here having a sexual-harassment class while there are still [victims] in Louisiana who haven't been contacted yet."

The firefighter, who has encouraged his superiors back home not to send any more volunteers for now, declined to give his name because FEMA has warned them not to talk to reporters.

On Monday, two firefighters from South Jordan and two from Layton headed for San Antonio to help hurricane evacuees there. Four firefighters from Roy awaited their marching orders, crossing their fingers that they would get to do rescue and recovery work, rather than paperwork.

"A lot of people are bickering because there are rumors they'll just be handing out fliers," said Roy firefighter Logan Layne, adding that his squad hopes to be in the thick of the action. "But we'll do anything. We'll do whatever they need us to do."

While FEMA's community-relations job may be an important one - displaced hurricane victims need basic services and a variety of resources - it may be a job best suited for

someone else, say firefighters assembled at the Sheraton.

"It's a misallocation of resources. Completely," said the Texas firefighter.

"It's just an under-utilization of very talented people," said South Salt Lake Fire Chief Steve Foote, who sent a team of firefighters to Atlanta. "I was hoping once they saw the level of people . . . they would shift gears a little bit."

Foote said his crews would be better used doing the jobs they are trained to do.

But Louis H. Botta, a coordinating officer for FEMA, said sending out firefighters on community relations makes sense. They already have had background checks and meet the qualifications to be sworn as a federal employee. They have medical training that will prove invaluable as they come across hurricane victims in the field.

A firefighter from California said he feels ill prepared to even carry out the job FEMA has assigned him. In the field, Hurricane Katrina victims will approach him with questions about everything from insurance claims to financial assistance.

"My only answer to them is, '1-800-621-FEMA,' " he said. "I'm not used to not being in the know."

Roy Fire Chief Jon Ritchie said his crews would be a "little frustrated" if they were assigned to hand out phone numbers at an evacuee center in Texas rather than find and treat victims of the disaster.

Also of concern to some of the firefighters is the cost borne by their municipalities in the wake of their absence. Cities are picking up the tab to fill the firefighters' vacancies while they work 30 days for the federal government.

"There are all of these guys with all of this training and we're sending them out to hand out a phone number," an Oregon firefighter said. "They [the hurricane victims] are screaming for help and this day [of FEMA training] was a waste."

Firefighters say they want to brave the heat, the debris-littered roads, the poisonous cottonmouth snakes and fire ants and travel into pockets of Louisiana where many people have yet to receive emergency aid.

But as specific orders began arriving to the firefighters in Atlanta, a team of 50 Monday morning quickly was ushered onto a flight headed for Louisiana. The crew's first assignment: to stand beside President Bush as he tours devastated areas.

DO YOU BELIEVE THIS SHIT????? THESE SLIMEY BASTARDS!!! THROW THIS LYING TREASONOUS ASSHOLE IN A FEDERAL PENITENTIARY AND THROW AWAY THE GOD DAMNED KEY.

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 7, 2005 07:03 PM

If you think this is bad just wait until the next guy or girl becomes president and that low life will act just like the last one, like a precision drill team raping you. fear really fear in the coming years, that is if we have any coming years?.

Posted by: [Fred Dawes](#) at September 7, 2005 08:52 PM

I thought I made clear what I thought about FEMA. Fire them all, disband the agency and spend its budget on rebuilding. If that's the program you've got in mind, then you've got my vote.

Posted by: [jayef](#) at September 7, 2005 10:12 PM

The reason Mike Brown and the rest of Bush Administration didn't believe that Katrina was going to be serious????

Katrina's magnitude, landfall and effects were predicted by.....

Scientists.

Posted by: [GRennels](#) at September 7, 2005 10:13 PM

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Posted by: jayef at September 7, 2005 10:12 PM

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OOPS, Gee Jayef, didcha forget what screen name you were posting under? Seeing as how this is your first post on this thread, how could you have made anything clear? However, DB Cooper seems to have spoken for you in the manner you describe, Gee, golly, whatta coincidence.

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 7, 2005 11:01 PM

Hilarious. It appears that db cooper and I have access to the same Bushbot Control

Interface.

Or maybe you could consider an alternate hypothesis. You and I have posted in response to each others arguments in other threads. I assume that you remember arguments I've made in other threads and that references to them in this thread would be remembered by you. Is that too much of a stretch?

Posted by: [jayef](#) at September 7, 2005 11:15 PM

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Posted by: jayef at September 7, 2005 11:15 PM

=====

Yes, it is. You're a liar. In no post, on this thread, or any other that I am participating in, have you advocated disbanding FEMA. Not under the screen name "Jayef", anyway. But hey, lets give you the benefit of the doubt. Lets see a post from you that advocates firing anyone at FEMA. Steer us to it, troll.

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 7, 2005 11:47 PM

THE SPIN.....

Who is Bob Williams, and why is he on TV talking about Hurricane Katrina?

On September 6 and 7, numerous national media outlets featured G. Robert "Bob" Williams, president of the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, falsely criticizing Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco and New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin -- both Democrats -- for their handling of the Hurricane Katrina disaster. But none of these media outlets disclosed that the Evergreen Freedom Foundation is a conservative think tank that espouses "limited, accountable government" and receives funding from numerous conservative donors. Nor did they make clear how Williams, who was a Washington state legislator during the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, is qualified to comment on hurricane disaster relief efforts.

Williams's media tour appears to have been launched by a September 6 Wall Street Journal op-ed. He also was featured on the September 6 editions of CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight, ABC's World News Tonight, and Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor, as well as the September 7 edition of MSNBC's Connected: Coast to Coast.

On his guest appearances on The O'Reilly Factor and Connected: Coast to Coast,

Williams claimed that Blanco was largely to blame for the slow government response to Katrina's devastation, because "the feds can't come in" to provide disaster relief unless requested by the governor. This is false; in fact, the Department of Homeland Security's National Response Plan clearly states that the federal government may take a "proactive" response to a catastrophe and bypass state requests for aid. Normally, it is a governor's responsibility to request federal aid in the event of an emergency. But under a "proactive" response, "[s]tandard procedures regarding requests for assistance may be expedited or, under extreme circumstances, suspended in the immediate aftermath of an event of catastrophic magnitude." Moreover, Blanco requested federal aid three days before Katrina made landfall in Louisiana. The New Orleans Times-Picayune reprinted Blanco's August 27 request to Bush to declare a state of emergency in Louisiana and to provide "supplementary Federal assistance." Further, the White House had already authorized the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to assist with the hurricane emergency. According to an August 26 White House statement, FEMA was authorized "to identify, mobilize, and provide at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency."

In his Journal op-ed and his appearances on The O'Reilly Factor and Connected, Williams claimed that, "sadly, it apparently took a personal call from the president to urge the governor to order the mandatory evacuation." But news reports indicate that Bush -- in an effort to ensure such a precaution was being taken -- called Blanco "shortly before" the press conference at which the evacuation was announced -- casting doubt on Williams's claim that Bush's phone call precipitated the announcement. Lou Dobbs Tonight and World News Tonight featured brief videotaped segments of Williams criticizing New Orleans' evacuation plans.

None of these media outlets noted that the Evergreen Freedom Foundation, which purports to "advance individual liberty, free enterprise and limited, accountable government," is a conservative group that receives funding from conservative grant-making organizations such as the Scaife Foundations and the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation.

Nor did they make clear exactly how Williams is qualified to comment on hurricane disaster relief. According to the Evergreen Freedom Foundation website: "Our primary research areas are budget and taxes, education, health care, welfare, and citizenship and governance." Williams's biography on the site states that he "is known as a budget and tax expert in the state and is frequently consulted for advice on fiscal and tax policies."

ABC News correspondent Dan Harris noted that Williams "dealt with emergency response issues after the eruption of Mount St. Helens," while Fox News identified Williams as a "Fmr. State Legislator in Mt. St. Helens Area." But the Mount St. Helens eruption (which occurred 25 years ago) and Hurricane Katrina are notably dissimilar -- specifically in their respective impacts and the amount of warning and preparation time

preceding them. The eruption of Mount St. Helens on May 18, 1980, killed 57 people and was foreshadowed by two months of unusual seismic activity and an emergency declaration on March 31. According to census figures, Skamania County, where the volcano is located, had a population of 7,919 in 1980. By contrast, Blanco declared a state of emergency on August 26, noting that "Hurricane Katrina poses an imminent threat to the state of Louisiana." That same day, the National Weather Service predicted that there was a 17 percent chance Katrina would strike New Orleans by August 29. According to the most recent census figures, New Orleans' population in July 2004 was 462,269.

— S.S.M.

Posted to the web on Wednesday September 7, 2005 at 7:50 PM EST

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:22 AM

THE LIES.....

Media provide forums for administration officials and conservatives to spread falsehoods about hurricane relief efforts

In the past week, Bush administration officials and conservative commentators have repeatedly used the national media to spread misinformation about the federal government's widely criticized response to the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina.

1. Bush: "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees"

On the September 1 broadcast of ABC's Good Morning America, President Bush told host Diane Sawyer, "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees" that protected New Orleans from flooding. As Media Matters for America has noted, Sawyer did not challenge Bush's claim, despite numerous, repeated warnings by government officials, experts, and the media that a major hurricane could cause levee breaches resulting in catastrophic flooding. A September 2 New York Times front-page article repeated Bush's false claim without challenge -- even though a Times editorial the same day declared, "Disaster planners were well aware that New Orleans could be flooded by the combined effects of a hurricane and broken levees."

A September 5 CNN.com article reported that Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff falsely told reporters that "planners" did not predict a breach of the levees that would flood the city. As CNN.com reported, Chertoff said, "That 'perfect storm' of a combination of catastrophes exceeded the foresight of the planners, and maybe anybody's foresight." But unlike the Times, CNN.com noted that "officials have warned for years that a Category 4 [hurricane] could cause the levees to fail." The CNN.com

article added that in an August 31 interview on CNN's Larry King Live, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) director Michael Brown said, "That Category 4 hurricane caused the same kind of damage that we anticipated. So we planned for it two years ago. Last year, we exercised it. And unfortunately this year, we're implementing it." But in the same Larry King Live interview, Brown responded to complaints that rescue efforts were not moving quickly enough by insisting, "And I must say this storm is much, much bigger than anyone expected."

Additionally, as journalist Joshua Micah Marshall noted in his Talking Points Memo weblog, National Hurricane Center director Max Mayfield "talked about the force of Katrina during a video conference call to President Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas" on August 28 [St. Petersburg Times, 8/30/05]. The Washington Post quoted Mayfield on September 6: "They knew that this one was different. ... I don't think Mike Brown or anyone else in FEMA could have any reason to have any problem with our calls. ... They were told ... We said the levees could be topped."

2. Chertoff strained credulity in defense of Bush, claimed levee breaks and massive flooding came as a surprise -- more than 12 hours after local media reported them

On September 4, Chertoff appeared on NBC's Meet the Press and attempted to explain Bush's discredited claim that "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees." After host Tim Russert asked Chertoff how the president could "be so wrong, be so misinformed," Chertoff suggested that Bush had been referring to newspaper reports the morning after the storm that New Orleans had "dodged a bullet" because the eye of the storm had passed to the east of the city. But more than 12 hours before the appearance of those headlines in print, a post on the weblog of the New Orleans Times-Picayune -- dated August 29, 2 p.m. CT -- reported, "City Hall confirmed a breach of the levee along the 17th Street Canal at Bellaire Drive, allowing water to spill into Lakeview." This initial report on the Times-Picayune weblog was followed throughout the afternoon and evening of August 29 by reports of other levee breaks and massive flooding.

While Chertoff said he recognized that the city's levee system failed sometime Monday night or Tuesday morning -- in fact, the first breaks occurred earlier, as noted above and as Think Progress noted in its detailed Hurricane Katrina timeline -- he insisted that "it was midday Tuesday that I became aware of the fact that there was no possibility of plugging the gap and that essentially the lake [Pontchartrain] was going to start to drain into the city." According to Chertoff, this "second catastrophe really caught everybody by surprise" and was a major reason for the delay in the government's emergency response.

Questioning Chertoff further, Russert pointed out that the Times-Picayune published a five-part series in June 2002, in which it warned that if a large hurricane hit New Orleans, the city's levees would likely be topped or broken -- resulting in catastrophic flooding and thousands of deaths. Russert added that "last summer FEMA, who

reports to you, and the LSU Hurricane Center, and local and state officials did a simulated Hurricane Pam in which the levees broke. ... Thousands drowned."

Chertoff then clarified, "What I said was not that we didn't anticipate that there's a possibility the levees will break. What I said was, in this storm, what happened is, the storm passed and passed without the levees breaking on Monday. Tuesday morning, I opened newspapers and saw headlines that said 'New Orleans Dodged the Bullet,' which surprised people. What surprised them was that the levee broke overnight and the next day and, in fact, collapsed. That was a surprise."

Even accepting as true Chertoff's incredible suggestion that he -- the secretary of Homeland Security -- and the president of the United States relied on the print media for their information on the situation in New Orleans, as Think Progress points out, had administration officials "bothered to read the full text of the three articles they found with favorable headlines, they would have realized that federal government help was needed immediately." Moreover, while Chertoff did not indicate which headlines he was referring to, many newspapers -- in addition to the Times-Picayune -- did report on broken levees and significant flooding. For example, on August 30, the Los Angeles Times reported that a levee break had occurred by late morning August 30, with water from the break "spill[ing] through the area, flooding the town's two main shelters and swamping the local National Guard armory, leaving even public safety officials homeless."

Or Chertoff could have turned on the television. On the August 30 broadcast of NBC's Today, NBC Nightly News anchor Brian Williams reported at 7:05 a.m. ET, "There has been a huge development overnight ... the historic French Quarter, dry last night and it is now filling with water. This is water from nearby Lake Pontchartrain; the levees failed overnight."

Indeed, Chertoff's and Bush's professed ignorance notwithstanding, the federal government was well aware of the continuing threat of the levees breaking. Just hours after the storm passed on Monday, August 29, FEMA director Brown confirmed that the potential for catastrophic flooding remained. In an interview with Brown, NBC Today co-host Matt Lauer noted, "In New Orleans, in particular, they're worried about the levees giving way or the canals not holding, and they're worried about toxic runoff." Brown responded that even though the storm had weakened, there was still a 15- to 20-foot storm surge causing "the water out of Lake Pontchartrain and the Gulf and the Mississippi continue to converge upon Louisiana." Brown added, "So we're still ready for a major disaster."

3. Brown: "We've provided food to the people at the Convention Center so that they've gotten at least one, if not two meals, every single day"

On the September 2 broadcast of NBC's Today, FEMA director Brown told host Katie Couric, "We've provided food to the people at the [New Orleans' Morial] Convention Center so that they've gotten at least one, if not two meals, every single day." Couric

did not challenge this statement.

But on September 1, NBC News photojournalist Tony Zumbado reported on MSNBC Live:

ZUMBADO: I can't put it into words the amount of destruction that is in this city and how these people are coping. They are just left behind. There is nothing offered to them. No water, no ice, no C-rations, nothing, for the last four days. They were told to go to the convention center. They did, they've been behaving. It's unbelievable how organized they are, how supportive they are of each other. They have not started any melees, any riots. They just want food and support. And what I saw there I've never seen in this country. We need to really look at this situation at the convention center. It's getting very, very crazy in there and very dangerous. Somebody needs to come down with a lot of food and a lot of water.

4. Chertoff: "Apparently, some time on Wednesday, people started to go to the convention center spontaneously"

On the September 1 edition of CNN's Paula Zahn Now, Brown claimed, "Every person in that convention center, we just learned about that today [Thursday, September 1]." During a September 4 interview with Chertoff on CNN Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer, host Blitzer replayed Brown's comments. In response, Chertoff said:

CHERTOFF: Well, I mean, this is clearly something that was disturbing. It was disturbing to me when I learned about it, which came as a surprise. You know, the very day that this emerged in the press, I was on a video conference with all the officials, including state and local officials. And nobody -- none of the state and local officials or anybody else -- was talking about a convention center. The original plan, as I understand it, was to have the Superdome be the place of refuge, of last resort. Apparently, some time on Wednesday, people started to go to the convention center spontaneously.

Chertoff's claim that hurricane survivors sought refuge in the convention center under their own initiative echoed his September 4 Meet the Press interview, in which he suggested, "We became aware of the fact at some point that people began to go to the convention center on their own, spontaneously, in order to shelter there." Chertoff's statements were false, but neither Blitzer nor Russert challenged them.

Though scenes of thousands of hurricane victims awaiting water, food, and buses at the convention center were not broadcast on television until Thursday, September 1, Chertoff and Brown would have had access to media reports about the convention center before then. As early as August 29, Times-Picayune staff writer Bruce Nolan wrote an article for the Newhouse News Service in which he reported, "City officials said they might open the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center as a temporary refuge to shelter an estimated 50,000 people made homeless by the storm." Nolan's article appeared in the Times-Picayune on August 30.

Beginning August 31, other reports of survivors at the convention center emerged:

Knight Ridder, August 31: "Derwin DeGruy had been kicked out of two hotels, the first on Sunday right before the storm hit, and the second one on Tuesday morning after it hit. He and about 50 other people found makeshift shelter on a ramp leading to the mall and parking garage at the New Orleans Convention Center. They rigged places for people to go to the bathroom, pooled their water for the babies, placed some blankets on the concrete and decided to wait and see what happened."

Associated Press, August 31: "The 37-year-old banker -- who admitted to looting some food from a nearby supermarket -- said the hotel guests were told they were being taken to a convention center, but from there, they didn't know."

Associated Press, August 31: "After several hours, a small fleet of rented moving trucks showed up to take the people to the downtown convention center so they could be taken out of the city. Police herded people up metal ramps like cattle into the unrefrigerated boxes."

By September 1, when Brown claimed FEMA first learned about the situation at the convention center, TV networks were broadcasting footage of thousands of survivors waiting for water, food, and evacuation buses. Despite Chertoff's later insistence that New Orleans residents "spontaneously" converged on the convention center, the September 1 broadcast of ABC's Nightline included footage of a law enforcement official instructing survivors to go there:

SURVIVOR: Ain't nobody helping us.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL: I understand.

SURVIVOR: No, ain't nobody doing anything for us.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL: Y'all got to go to the convention center.

5. Chertoff pointed fingers: "New Orleans officials and the state officials ... called for the Superdome to be the refuge of last resort"

In his September 4 interview on NBC's Meet the Press, Chertoff attempted to place blame for the conditions at the Superdome solely with state and local officials. Chertoff asserted, "My understanding is, and again this is something that's going to go back -- we're going to go back over after the fact -- is the plan that the New Orleans officials and the state officials put together called for the Superdome to be the refuge of last resort."

But this claim is misleading at best. As The Washington Post reported on September 3, a FEMA official acknowledged participating in meetings in which the plan to use the Superdome as a shelter for thousands of evacuees was discussed:

Brown, the agency's director, told reporters Saturday in Louisiana that he did not have a sense of what was coming last weekend.

"I was here on Saturday and Sunday, it was my belief, I'm trying to think of a better word than typical -- that minimizes, any hurricane is bad -- but we had the standard hurricane coming in here, that we could move in immediately on Monday and start doing our kind of response-recovery effort," he said. "Then the levees broke, and the levees went, you've seen it by the television coverage. That hampered our ability, made it even more complex."

But other officials said they warned well before Monday about what could happen. For years, said another senior FEMA official, he had sat at meetings where plans were discussed to send evacuees to the Superdome. "We used to stare at each other and say, 'This is the plan? Are you really using the Superdome?' People used to say, what if there is water around it? They didn't have an alternative," he recalled.

Moreover, the plan to use the Superdome as a shelter for evacuees was widely known. The 2002 Times-Picayune series on the potential for a catastrophic hurricane reported that of the estimated 200,000 New Orleans residents who would likely remain in the city, "[s]ome will be housed at the Superdome, the designated shelter in New Orleans for people too sick or infirm to leave the city."

6. Chertoff falsely minimized federal government's role in Katrina response as subordinate to states

The Bush administration has responded to criticism of its role in the Katrina disaster by attempting to deflect blame onto state and local officials in Louisiana [The New York Times, 9/5/05]. One way they are doing that is to claim that the federal government's role in a natural disaster of this magnitude is to provide support to state and local governments and work at their behest. Conservative media figures immediately fell into line, echoing the administration's claim that the federal government's role was subordinate (see here and here). In fact, the Department of Homeland Security's December 2004 National Response Plan clearly indicates that in these situations, the federal government will pre-empt state and local efforts and provide immediate assistance to the affected area.

On September 1, two days after the levees were breached, Chertoff, at a press conference announcing the start of "National Preparedness Month 2005," characterized the federal role in response to Katrina as that of providing support to state and local officials: "The Department of Homeland Security will continue to work with federal, state and local partners to support efforts on the ground in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi and Florida. We are working tirelessly to make sure that federal resources are being applied where they are needed all across the Gulf" [Federal News Service, 9/1/05]. But on September 2, Chertoff told reporters that the situation had changed and that federal agencies would now take over the primary role: "The fact of the matter is, this set of catastrophes has broken any mold for how you deal with this kind of weather devastation, and so we're going to break the mold in terms of how we respond. The federal government is not going to play merely its customary role in

giving all necessary support to first responders. The federal government is going to step up and take a primary role, working with state and locals to deal with the outcome of this tragedy." [National Public Radio, 9/3/05]

But Chertoff's September 1 statement ignored the administration's own homeland security response plan, which directed the federal government to act on its own authority to quickly provide assistance and conduct emergency operations following a major catastrophe, pre-empting state and local authorities if necessary. According to DHS' December 2004 National Response Plan (NRP), "catastrophic events," such as what occurred in New Orleans, call for heightened and "proactive" federal involvement to manage the disaster. The response plan listed "guiding principles" to govern the response to these major events. The "Guiding Principles for Proactive Federal Response" make clear that, in these "catastrophic" cases, the federal government will operate independently to provide assistance, rather than simply supporting or cajoling state authorities:

The primary mission is to save lives; protect critical infrastructure, property, and the environment; contain the event; and preserve national security.

Standard procedures regarding requests for assistance may be expedited or, under extreme circumstances, suspended in the immediate aftermath of an event of catastrophic magnitude.

Identified Federal response resources will deploy and begin necessary operations as required to commence life-safety activities.

Notification and full coordination with States will occur, but the coordination process must not delay or impede the rapid deployment and use of critical resources. States are urged to notify and coordinate with local governments regarding a proactive Federal response.

State and local governments are encouraged to conduct collaborative planning with the Federal Government as a part of "steady-state" preparedness for catastrophic incidents."

The NRP also says that, when responding to a catastrophic incident, the federal government should start emergency operations even in the absence of clear assessment of the situation. "A detailed and credible common operating picture may not be achievable for 24 to 48 hours (or longer) after the incident," the NRP's "Catastrophic Annex" states. "As a result, response activities must begin without the benefit of a detailed or complete situation and critical needs assessment."

A September 5 Los Angeles Times article quoted former FEMA chief of staff Jane Bullock saying that "[t]he moment the president declared a federal disaster [on Aug 29], it became a federal responsibility. ... The federal government took ownership over the response." Moreover, DHS' own website declares that DHS "will assume primary responsibility on March 1st [2005] for ensuring that emergency response professionals are prepared for any situation. This will entail providing a coordinated, comprehensive federal response to any large-scale crisis and mounting a swift and effective recovery effort."

7. Wash. Post, Newsweek, Gingrich falsely claimed that Blanco did not declare a state of emergency

In recent days, two news articles falsely reported that Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco had failed to declare a state of emergency, which had supposedly hampered the federal response. An article in the September 13 edition of Newsweek claimed that "Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco seemed uncertain and sluggish, hesitant to declare martial law or a state of emergency, which would have opened the door to more Pentagon help." Likewise, a September 4 Washington Post article incorrectly claimed that "As of Saturday [Sept. 3], Blanco still had not declared a state of emergency," citing an anonymous senior Bush administration official. (The Washington Post's article was later corrected, although Newsweek has yet to correct its article.) Fox News political analyst Newt Gingrich repeated the point on the September 5 O'Reilly Factor, saying, "As you [O'Reilly] point out, the governor [Blanco] failed to call the emergency. And initially, it was the governor who had to call an emergency." In fact, as the Post later noted, Blanco declared a state of emergency on August 26.

8. Gingrich falsely claimed that Nagin could "have kept water pumped out" of city had he ensured that pumps worked

On the September 5 O'Reilly Factor, Gingrich also claimed that if New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin had been able to keep the New Orleans pumps working, the flood waters could have been pumped out of the city. "[F]irst of all, the mayor of New Orleans had a real obligation to make sure the four pumps could work. Three of them didn't. It would have kept water pumped out." In fact, New Orleans has 22 "notoriously fickle" pumping stations, according to an August 31 New York Times article. The Times also reported that, according to Dr. Shea Penland, a coastal geologist, "When the pumping systems are in good shape, it can rain an inch an hour for about four to six hours and the pumps can keep pace. More than that, the city floods." The Times also noted that "[e]fforts to add backup power generators to keep [the pumps] all running during blackouts have been delayed by a lack of federal money." A June 2002 Times-Picayune article, part of a series exploring the probable consequences of a major hurricane hitting New Orleans, indicated that New Orleans' pumps would have been overwhelmed by the rapidly rising floodwaters:

Soon waves will start breaking over the levee.

"All of a sudden you'll start seeing flowing water. It'll look like a weir, water just pouring over the top," [Louisiana State University engineer Joseph] Suhayda said. The water will flood the lakefront, filling up low-lying areas first, and continue its march south toward the river. There would be no stopping or slowing it; pumping systems would be overwhelmed and submerged in a matter of hours.

"Another scenario is that some part of the levee would fail," Suhayda said. "It's not something that's expected. But erosion occurs, and as levees broke, the break will get

wider and wider. The water will flow through the city and stop only when it reaches the next higher thing. The most continuous barrier is the south levee, along the river. That's 25 feet high, so you'll see the water pile up on the river levee."

— R.S.K. & J.S.

Posted to the web on Wednesday September 7, 2005 at 8:40 PM EST

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:25 AM

THE BLAME SHIFTING.....

O'Reilly falsely accused La. governor of not requesting more National Guard troops

Fox News host Bill O'Reilly falsely claimed that Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco "failed to ask for more [National Guard] troops from the feds, knowing she only had about 6,000 to control a city of 1.3 million" and that "[i]t was not until Wednesday, August 31st, three days after the storm hit, that Blanco admitted she didn't have enough security in the city." But according to Department of Defense officials, Blanco and Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour had requested additional Guard personnel before the storm hit.

As Gen. Russel Honoré, commander of the Department of Defense's (DoD) Joint Task Force Katrina, stated in a September 1 briefing, the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi had requested additional assistance from the federal government "as the hurricane was approaching," beginning with a request on August 26 that DoD command centers be set up in their states. And by August 28, Mississippi and Louisiana were collaborating with the National Guard Bureau to have additional security forces sent in.

From the September 1 Department of Defense briefing:

LAWRENCE DiRITA (Pentagon spokesman): You know -- it's Larry DiRita -- I think what people are interested in, if you know, is when specifically or if indeed did the governors specifically ask for additional security forces and when that might have been? And if you don't know that, we'll try and find it, but that would be -- I think that's a little more refined aspect of what the reporter's asking for.

HONORÉ: Yeah, that was incremental. The security force piece was executed through a process called EMAC [Emergency Management Assistance Compact]. That started on Sunday, a collaboration between the [states' National Guard] adjutant general and the National Guard Bureau to flow additional capabilities to Louisiana and to Mississippi. That flow started approximately around Sunday. Forces started moving once the eye of the hurricane had passed and we could start moving forces in and

assist the states, Alabama pushed forces into Mississippi as well as forces from Texas started to flow into Louisiana, as well as other states. But that's the approximate phase of the operation. Again, that was executed through National Guard arrangements to move National Guard capability where it's needed. And that is what is happening, an extension of that, now.

The Associated Press reported that Blanco had accepted an offer for additional troops from New Mexico the day before the hurricane hit, but that help was delayed by paperwork needed from Washington:

New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson offered Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco help from his state's National Guard last Sunday, the day before Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana. Blanco accepted, but paperwork needed to get the troops en route didn't come from Washington until late Thursday.

While O'Reilly placed the blame on Blanco for the delay in the National Guard deployment, the AP reported that "questions linger about the speed with which troops were deployed" and that Congress will likely investigate. AP stated that "Republicans and Democrats alike in Congress are just beginning to ask why one of the National Guard's most trusted roles -- disaster relief -- was so uneven, delayed and chaotic this time around," citing paperwork delays, the depletion of Guard units due to troop deployment in Iraq, and President Bush's decision to not exercise his legal authority to order the National Guard to the disaster area himself, as well as the timing of the governors' requests, as possible factors.

From the September 6 edition of Fox News' The O'Reilly Factor:

O'REILLY: Now, Governor Blanco also made major mistakes. After asking and getting the federal government to declare the hurricane zone a disaster area two days before the storm hit, the governor failed to send any National Guard troops in to secure New Orleans and the surrounding parishes before the storm. Why? She also failed to ask for more troops from the feds, knowing she only had about 6,000 to control a city of 1.3 million. Why not ask for more? Like the mayor, Governor Blanco has no explanation. Surely she knew the potential for chaos. Why not send the Guard in immediately? Then, when the levees were breached, the Guard found itself unable to get into New Orleans. They're outside. It was not until Wednesday, August 31st, three days after the storm hit, that Blanco admitted she didn't have enough security in the city.

— N.C.

Posted to the web on Wednesday September 7, 2005 at 8:21 PM EST

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:28 AM

THE PROPAGANDA.....

News outlets repeated faulty administration claim that deployment of troops to Iraq did not affect Katrina relief effort

At a September 6 Defense Department briefing, Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld and Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Richard B. Myers both declared as "flat wrong" allegations that the deployment in Iraq had somehow hindered the U.S. military's ability to support relief efforts in Louisiana and Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina. But despite the fact that recent statements by Army and National Guard officials appear to contradict Rumsfeld and Myers's assertion, numerous news outlets repeated their claim without challenge.

On the September 6 edition of CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight, CNN senior Pentagon correspondent Jamie McIntyre stated that Rumsfeld and Myers "insisted that the deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq has had no effect on their ability to respond" to Hurricane Katrina. A September 7 Washington Post article reported that Rumsfeld "sharply rejected the suggestion that the commitment of large numbers of troops to Iraq ... had delayed the military's response." The Post article also quoted Myers saying, "Not only was there no delay, I think we anticipated in most cases -- not in all cases, but in most cases -- the support that was required." Articles appearing that same day in The New York Times and the Los Angeles Times highlighted Myers's statement as well.

But all of these news outlets entirely ignored recent comments from military officials that call into question the Defense Department's broad denials. A September 6 Wall Street Journal article (subscription required) highlighted the federal government's "delayed understanding of the scope of the damage last week and its initial slowness in mounting rescues and bringing food and water to stricken citizens." The article listed six problems that had hampered federal relief efforts, including a "military stretched by wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which left commanders near New Orleans reluctant to commit some active-duty units at nearby Fort Polk, La., because they were in the midst of preparing for an Afghan deployment this winter."

The Journal went on to report that a "senior Army official" had conceded that Fort Polk, a five-hour drive from New Orleans, had declined to commit thousands of active-duty soldiers to the beleaguered region because their unit was "preparing for Afghanistan deployment in January." Instead, Fort Polk deployed a mere "few dozen soldiers" on September 4 -- five days after the hurricane struck the Gulf Coast:

The U.S. Army has a large facility, Fort Polk, in Leesville, La., about 270 miles northwest of New Orleans. Officials at Fort Polk, which has nearly 8,000 active-duty soldiers, said their contribution so far has consisted of a few dozen soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division manning purification equipment and driving half-ton trucks

filled with supplies and equipment. The first contingent of soldiers didn't receive orders until Saturday afternoon.

A spokeswoman at Fort Polk said she did not know why the base received its deployment orders so late in the game. "You'd have to ask the Pentagon," she said. A senior Army official said the service was reluctant to commit the 4th brigade of the 10th Mountain Division from Fort Polk, because the unit, which numbers several thousand soldiers, is in the midst of preparing for an Afghanistan deployment in January.

As a result, the Department of Defense committed thousands of soldiers from Fort Hood in Texas -- as well as from other bases around the country -- to the relief effort. In contrast with Myers's claim that there was "no delay" in directing support to the disaster zone, it took these troops "several days" to arrive in Louisiana, according to the Journal:

Instead, the Pentagon chose to send upwards of 7,500 soldiers from the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Hood, Texas and the 82nd Airborne Division from Fort Bragg, N.C., along with Marines from California and North Carolina. Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division are able to deploy anywhere in the world in 18 hours. It took several days for them to arrive on the ground in Louisiana.

The Journal article also noted the concerns voiced by Lt. Col. Pete Schneider of the Louisiana National Guard a month before Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast. In an August 1 interview with a New Orleans TV station, Schneider had worried that the National Guard equipment transferred to Iraq -- including high-water vehicles -- would be needed at home if a natural disaster struck:

When members of the Louisiana National Guard left for Iraq in October, they took a lot [of] equipment with them. Dozens of high water vehicles, humvees, refuelers and generators are now abroad, and in the event of a major natural disaster that, could be a problem.

"The National Guard needs that equipment back home to support the homeland security mission," said Lt. Colonel Pete Schneider with the LA National Guard.

Col. Schneider says the state has enough equipment to get by, and if Louisiana were to get hit by a major hurricane, the neighboring states of Mississippi, Alabama and Florida have all agreed to help.

According to a September 4 Washington Post article, the three neighboring states cited by Schneider were also hit by Katrina and therefore were too "overwhelmed" to provide such resources to Louisiana:

State officials had planned to turn to neighboring states for help with troops, transportation and equipment in a major hurricane. But in Katrina's case, Mississippi,

Alabama and Florida were also overwhelmed, said Denise Bottcher, a Blanco spokesman.

From the September 6 edition of CNN's Lou Dobbs Tonight:

McINTYRE: Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and General Myers also insisted that the deployment of U.S. troops to Iraq has had no effect on their ability to respond here. And, in fact, General Myers said the converse is also true, that the deployment of these troops in the disaster zone is not affecting scheduled deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. They said that the suggestions to the contrary were, quote, "flat wrong" -- Lou.

DOBBS: Absolutely flat wrong, but also at the same time, the Department of Defense, Jamie, has not been the focus of criticism, rather the Homeland Security Department and FEMA. While that's not in his purview, did the defense secretary respond to those charges?

From the September 7 Washington Post article headlined "Bush to Probe Storm Response":

He [Rumsfeld] noted that more than 300,000 Army National Guard and Air National Guard troops remain available to help. He sharply rejected the suggestion that the commitment of large numbers of troops to Iraq -- including National Guard soldiers from Louisiana and Mississippi -- had delayed the military's response. About 41,000 Guard troops are in assisting the region.

"Not only was there no delay," said Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "I think we anticipated in most cases -- not in all cases, but in most cases -- the support that was required."

From the September 7 New York Times article headlined "Bush Promises to Seek Answers to Failures of Hurricane Relief":

At the Pentagon, senior officials pointed to the arrival of forces in the Gulf Coast in recent days, with more than 41,000 National Guardsmen and about 17,000 active-duty personnel committed to the mission. Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, praised what he described as a more than adequate military response.

"Not only was there no delay, I think we anticipated, in most cases -- not in all cases -- but in most cases, the support that was required," General Myers said at a news briefing. "And we were pushing support before we were formally asked for it."

From the September 7 Los Angeles Times article headlined "U.S. Disaster Response Probe Pledged":

At the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard B. Myers,

chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, defended the military's response to Katrina.

"Not only was there no delay, I think we anticipated, in most cases -- not in all cases, but in most cases -- the support that was required," Myers said.

— J.K.

Posted to the web on Wednesday September 7, 2005 at 7:51 PM EST

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:35 AM

QUOTE: Yes, it is. You're a liar. In no post, on this thread, or any other that I am participating in, have you advocated disbanding FEMA. Not under the screen name "Jayef", anyway. But hey, lets give you the benefit of the doubt. Lets see a post from you that advocates firing anyone at FEMA. Steer us to it, troll.

September 5 at 9:47PM I posted the following (to satisfy your paranoid delusion, yes it was posted under the name jayef):

As for his love for FEMA . . . exactly what have they done since 1979 other than be an agency that coordinated responses? Why are we so enamored of this agency now? Can anyone cite any studies that show FEMA has saved any additional lives than would have been saved if things were returned to a pre 1979 condition when STATES were responsible for responding to disasters?

What happened in the intervening years has been a textbook case of bureaucratic turf building. From a budget of \$250 million in 1979 to its current bloat of nearly \$6 billion, FEMA has taken upon itself the role of disaster nanny, horning in on local and state control of disaster resources until disaster management itself has now been pretty much placed in their hands. By duplicating many of the resources that states utilize in the management of natural calamities, FEMA sows confusion and the kind of turf wars mentioned by Governor Blanco.

Now does that look like an endorsement of FEMA, or does that look like the post of someone that recongnizes bureaucratic bloat when he sees it?

Posted by: [jayef](#) at September 8, 2005 12:43 AM

You Can't Pray a Lie, Except if You are George W. Bush

A BUZZFLASH EDITORIAL

The chronic, bald-faced lying of the Bush Administration has been a BuzzFlash focus since before George even assumed office, and regular readers of our news and commentary site are familiar with our documentation of just a small fraction of the daily

mendacity of the Bush Cartel.

Admittedly, no one would accuse politics of being a field that is noted for its veracity. But there are small lies, there are big lies, and there are lies that are beyond the pale of comprehension in terms of civilized interaction and responsibility to the nation.

It is the third category of Bush lies that BuzzFlash has noted for five years. And it the third category that Karl Rove, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, George W. Bush and their minions disseminate with such frequency that we are left like swirling dervishes trying to keep up with their pathological betrayal of the truth.

Yet, the news media, by and large, has covered the Bush brazen lies as though they were a test of Rove's skills to get away with them. The media, we thought, was supposed to try and expose lies, not laud the criminal talents of Machiavellian advisors to divert press attention away from easily disproved attempts to deceive the American people on matters of life and death.

The fact is that despite the perhaps temporary media criticisms of the unforgivable Bush neglect of the disaster in New Orleans, the press is still analyzing whether or not Rove (who the press should have hounded out of office for being a traitor in TreasonGate months ago) can save Bush and his minions from their stupefying deliberate betrayal of the truth.

In fact, the status quo media such as the New York Times and the Washington Post continue to be eager and willing transmitters of the Rovian spin and smear machine. For instance, the Post, through the anonymous sources that outed Valerie Plame, "revealed" to readers that the Governor of Louisiana never asked Bush to declare a state of emergency. This was part of the Rove effort, sanctioned and condoned by Bush, to blame local officials for the disastrous and inexplicable federal delay in responding to Hurricane Katrina.

The only problem is that it wasn't true. A look on the FEMA website would have been all that was necessary to discover that LA Governor Blanco had dealt with the issue of declaring Louisiana in a state of emergency before Hurricane Katrina even hit land. But the Post's political reporters -- and the Times' -- like to do stories the easy way, as stenographers. The Post, due to outrage about the lie that caromed around the Internet, was forced to issue a retraction. But the real question is after five years of the same "lie, spin, smear and PR stunt" strategy of covering up a steady stream of Bush disasters, why are the Post and Times still breathlessly reporting lies from anonymous sources at the White House that can be easily disproved?

Perhaps the Post and Times are afraid somebody might accuse them of practicing journalism instead of being megaphones for slander.

Bush himself last week told Diane Sawyer that no one had ever anticipated the levees in New Orleans would break. It was a lie of such monstrous and blatant proportion

(like so many that have preceded it), it should have been enough -- in and of itself -- to once and for all permanently discredit him. It was disproved by reams of documents, reports, and warnings concerning the levees, as well as administration financial cutbacks to shore up the levees to prevent just such an occurrence.

Then we had Michael Brown, the ludicrously incompetent head of FEMA, announce that people dying of thirst and hunger at the New Orleans Convention Center were receiving two meals a day, which, TV reporters covering the crisis, said was not true (to be polite). Brown and FEMA said federal help was not sent to evacuate the people at the Convention Center because they could not reach it, even though journalists and others could -- and it was on dry ground, with plenty of open space around it for helicopters to land.

The titular head of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff, said that he read the papers on Tuesday and Wednesday and that they didn't indicate New Orleans needed much help, which sent bloggers in search of any paper, just one, that might have played that angle. None existed. All talked about the dire distress of the city.

And Brown told CNN and Ted Koppel that he had just learned about people in need at the Superdome on Thursday, even though it had been reported as the primary New Orleans disaster story on national television for two days prior to that.

Brown himself is the model of the Bush lackey who lies for the boss, someone promoted for his incompetence in order to ensure his absolute loyalty to the Bush dynasty, not to America. Brown had an unusual disqualification for heading FEMA that must have been attractive to Bush, who knows that someone who is unqualified for a job is the best person to promote up, because this person then owes everything to Bush and nothing to the nation. Brown was fired ("asked to resign") from being head of an Arabian Horse Association, which may have explained why, one wag noted, no Arabian horses apparently died in the wake of Katrina.

What we know now, however, is that he was picked for his ability to lie in any fashion possible to protect Bush. This is the key qualification of any Bush appointee.

When Bush made a belated and hastily arranged PR stage-managed photo op trip to the ravaged South, he told the fired Arabian-Horse-Association-Executive-Director-Turned-Bush-FEMA-Head, "Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job." Translated, this means, "Forget about all the colored folks who suffered and died, we'll reward you for your loyalty, Brownie. It's part of what you get with Omerta to the Bush Clan."

As we pointed out in a recent editorial -- and in many ones before that -- Bush lies so frequently, it's the rare exception when he is telling the truth. He lied us into a war. He also lied about not being informed about the threat of Al Qaeda hijackings prior to 9/11. He and Condoleezza Rice were briefed about them in August of 2001, as we have noted numerous times, and neither of them did anything to prevent their occurrence. Bush lies about almost anything, including social security, Medicare, tax

cuts, the economy, stem cell research -- just name it; he lies about it.

By now the press shouldn't be covering the process of whether or not Karl Rove will once again pull Bush out of the gutter by kicking other people into it, people who have stood up for the truth. The press should be reporting about an administration that is built upon a foundation of lies. Lies are the coin of the realm in the White House, and the press keeps coming back for more. Bush's lack of credibility and his betrayal of the truth should be the center stage story, not the Svengali tactics used by Rove to manipulate the press to overlooking Bush's chronic mendacity.

The Democrats are partly to blame here, because those in the Senate, with a few exceptions, have been afraid to call Bush out on his congenital dishonesty and betrayal of the American people.

The media and the Democratic leadership in Congress seem to be cowed by Bush's "amiability" in staged PR stunts and his aura of being religious. But, as we noted in a BuzzFlash editorial some time back, Mark Twain gave us the most accurate assessment of the fundamental dishonest paradox of someone claiming to be a man of God while, at the same time, being a pathological liar. In "Huckleberry Finn," one of Twain's characters has an epiphany about what it means to be honest and decent to another human being when he realizes that "you can't pray a lie." Bush, the privileged wastrel son, has not experienced this realization.

Bush's entire administration has been marked by misfits who are promoted up because of their incompetence and ability to be dishonest in the boldest and most brazen of fashions. They can only be a member of the Bush inner circle if they can prove that they can "pray a lie."

And they also have to prove that their incompetence is a permanent character trait and not just a passing error in judgment.

That's not just calculated negligence; it's a threat to the life, security and safety of every American.

Because we aren't talking about goofing up a job at the Arabian Horse Association here.

We're talking about leaving an entire nation vulnerable to disaster -- and these disasters have taken their enormous toll under Bush's watch, because he values personal loyalty, incompetence and lies over service to the nation.

A BUZZFLASH EDITORIAL

<http://www.buzzflash.com/editorial/05/09/edi05064.html>

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:51 AM

This guy, Zarate, must be buckin' for one of dem dar Pwesidenta Medas a Fweedumb.

<http://www.raisingkaine.com/blog/?p=798>

Terrorism Conference: Bush Administration Speaker Makes a Complete Fool of Himself

Filed under: Republicans National— Lowell @ 6:13 pm

I just got back a little while ago from Day #2 of the two-day New America Foundation conference, "Terrorism, Security and America's Purpose: Towards a More Comprehensive Strategy" Overall, it was a great two days, with a wide spectrum of high-powered speakers speaking about the national security challenges facing America, four years after 9/11.

Obviously, in a conference like this, some speakers are going to be better than others. In this case, however, I've got to say that I was impressed with everybody I saw — with one exception. Take a guess as to where that person works and what he does. Yep, you got it, it was President Bush's Deputy National Security Advisor for Combatting Terrorism, Juan Zarate. Frankly, this guy's speech was not just bad, it was one of the worst speeches I've ever heard in my life. It also was an insult to the 1,000 people in the audience, many of whom are leading experts who have spent their lives working, studying and teaching about U.S. national security and terrorism issues. Sorry to say, but Mr. Zarate's speech was so bad, so clueless, that I observed many people in the audience literally covering their faces in frustration, grimacing, rolling their eyes, shaking their heads, and smirking throughout his talk. Pitiful.

What was so bad about Mr. Zarate's speech? In a nutshell, the Deputy National Security Advisor for Combatting Terrorism conveyed both explicitly (by what he said in his speech) and implicitly (by what he failed to say) that he has ABSOLUTELY NO CLUE about "combatting terrorism." It's frightening to consider, but apparently the Bush Administration has learned nothing in four years. Apparently, the only thing it has to offer on "combatting terrorism" is a Tarzan-like "us good, them bad, we kill bad terrorists" pablum. But then again, they already knew all the answers even before 9/11, didn't they?

Anyway, all we got today from Mr. Zarate was the usual Bush Administration propaganda about how we're "rounding 'em up and hauling 'em in," how we're systematically destroying the ability of Al Qaeda to operate effectively, and basically how we're winning winning WINNING!!! I guess the theory is that if you repeat the same lies enough times with enough fake enthusiasm, maybe someone will believe them? Or at least you can convince yourself that you're doing the right thing?

What I also found extremely jarring - and disturbing — about Mr. Zarate's speech was that he — and, by extension, the Bush Administration — hadn't listened to one word that had been spoken over the two days of this important conference. And Mr. Zarate certainly didn't stick around to find out, almost literally running out the door without

taking any questions — as almost all the other speakers did during the conference. His excuse, of course, was that he had to get right back to the White House. Yeah, I'm sure he did...nasty "war on terrorism" to fight and all. And tough, nasty questions from the mean audience of "experts" awaiting him if he stayed.

The bottom line is that, four years after 9/11, the Bush Administration shows no sign of having learned a damn thing about America's vulnerabilities, its enemies, its first response capabilities, or pretty much anything else. As far as I could tell from today's speech, there's not even a glimmer of comprehension as to what we're facing, who we're fighting, where we're headed, or just about anything else related to the "war on terror." And the Bush Administration certainly show no sign of having listened to any serious terrorism or national security experts the past four years, if Mr. Zarate's speech is any indication.

What's so truly frightening about all this is the fact that — like it or not — the Bush Administration (barring impeachment) is in charge of our country's national security for the next three years. Unfortunately, if Mr. Zarate's speech today is representative, we're in deep, deep trouble. Personally, I recommend that you batten down the hatches, stock up on food and water, get yourself some Cipro, and hone your personal escape plans, because this could be a really bad three years.

P.S. If you want to watch someone who really DOES get it, go here and listen to General Wesley Clark and many of the other fine speakers whose speeches are now available online.

- Terrorism Conference: Bush Administration Speaker Makes a Complete Fool of Himself

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 01:19 AM

On Sunday's Meet The Press, Chertoff said he opened the Tuesday morning newspaper and saw headlines that said, "New Orleans Dodged A Bullet." Therefore, he was "surprised" that the levees breached (or overtopped, or failed, or whatever).

Well, at least Mikey Boy reads the papers. But Russert let him get away with saying it twice and never called him on it.

You know, as in: "Wait a minute, Mr. Secretary: you say you based your next step on what you read in the morning papers?"

Wonkette published an image of MSM newspaper headlines, none of which mention dodging bullets.

No one has mentioned this in any column or TV report. I think it should be brought up over and over and replayed like they're replaying that "poor man, he's hysterical and

irrational, isn't he?" clip of Aaron Broussard weeping.

They never replay where Broussard cites FEMA three times for turning away donated water, cutting emergency communication lines, and refusing to release diesel fuel it OFFERED to local authorities. And Aaron wadn't cryin' then, friends. He said it was "just three examples."

I have to swap around from channel to channel to find a reasonably straightforward news report. It's mostly going the blame-the-victim route in the major networks (forget Fox).

Posted by: [Vanna](#) at September 8, 2005 10:18 AM

Bleh, Katrina debate has degenerated into a food-fight. Everyone grabbing whatever they can and chucking it at each other. I'm sitting this out.

Posted by: [rfus](#) at September 8, 2005 11:16 AM

Dear MoveOn member,

It has been a week since Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, leveled New Orleans and left hundreds of thousands of Americans homeless. We saw the best of America during that time—millions of people stepped forward to offer help. Meanwhile, the Bush administration failed at their most important job: keeping America safe. The federal effort was too little, too late and it is now becoming obvious that hundreds or even thousands of people died as a result.

Then, starting Friday, in a Karl Rove-led campaign, the White House started to blame state and local officials and even the victims who were stranded without transportation when the Hurricane arrived. Sign our petition demanding that the Bush administration stop blaming victims, including state and local officials, and focus on helping them.

<http://political.moveon.org/helpvictims/?id=5967-5275452-CW43X.jeMY6rpxKNdTpYg&t=3>

We'll begin to deliver the earliest signatures to the White House tomorrow, Thursday, when a delegation of MoveOn members from New Orleans, who are now homeless and will come to Washington and join other MoveOn members outside the White House at a petition delivery and protest. The petition is one important way to demonstrate that the public wants more action to help hurricane victims and is getting angry about this blame-shifting game the Bush administration is playing.

It is important that the Bush administration not get away with shifting their responsibility to local officials. Here is what actually happened.

Timeline

Friday, Aug. 26: Gov. Kathleen Blanco declares a state of emergency in Louisiana and requests troop assistance.

Saturday, Aug. 27: Gov. Blanco asks for federal state of emergency. A federal emergency is declared giving federal officials the authority to get involved.

Sunday, Aug. 28: Mayor Ray Nagin orders mandatory evacuation of New Orleans. President Bush warned of Levee failure by National Hurricane Center. National Weather Service predicts area will be "uninhabitable" after Hurricane arrives. First reports of water toppling over the levee appear in local paper.

Monday, Aug. 29: Levee breaches and New Orleans begins to fill with water, Bush travels to Arizona and California to discuss Medicare. FEMA chief finally responds to federal emergency, dispatching employees but giving them two days to arrive on site.

Tuesday, Aug. 30: Mass looting reported, security shortage cited in New Orleans. Pentagon says that local authorities have adequate National Guard units to handle hurricane needs despite governor's earlier request. Bush returns to Crawford for final day of vacation. TV coverage is around-the-clock Hurricane news.

Wednesday, Aug. 31: Tens of thousands trapped in New Orleans including at Convention Center and Superdome in "medieval" conditions. President Bush finally returns to Washington to establish a task force to coordinate federal response. Local authorities run out of food and water supplies.

Thursday, Sept. 1: New Orleans descends into anarchy. New Orleans Mayor issues a "Desperate SOS" to federal government. Bush claims nobody predicted the breach of the levees despite multiple warnings and his earlier briefing.

Friday, Sept. 2: Karl Rove begins Bush administration campaign to blame state and local officials—despite their repeated requests for help. Bush stages a photo-op—diverting Coast Guard helicopters and crew to act as backdrop for cameras. Levee repair work orchestrated for president's visit and White House press corps.

Saturday, Sept. 3: Bush blames state and local officials. Senior administration official (possibly Rove) caught in a lie claiming Gov. Blanco had not declared a state of emergency or asked for help.

Monday, Sept. 5: New Orleans officials begin to collect their dead.

(Adapted from: Katrina Timeline, <http://thinkprogress.org/katrina-timeline/>)

Those are the facts. State and local officials BEGGED for help as people in their city

suffered. The Bush administration didn't get the job done and when their failure became an embarrassment they attacked those asking for help.

The New York Times reported on Friday that Karl Rove and White House communications director Dan Bartlett "rolled out a plan...to contain the political damage from the administration's response to Hurricane Katrina." The core of the strategy is "to shift the blame away from the White House and toward officials of New Orleans and Louisiana."

This is the same pattern of smearing that the Bush political machine has used for a decade. John McCain and John Kerry had their war records smeared. The CIA cover of Ambassador Joseph Wilson's wife was blown after he criticized the Bush Iraq policy. Now, Hurricane victims are attacked when the Bush administration failed to do their duty to help them.

It isn't just the Bush administration. Republican Senator Rick Santorum blamed victims in a TV interview and House Speaker Dennis Hastert suggested New Orleans should not be rebuilt.

We can't let them get away with this. Please sign our petition today and do your part.

<http://political.moveon.org/helpvictims/?id=5967-5275452-CW43X.jeMY6rpdXKNdTpYg&t=4>

This is just the first step. We need to continue to help those in need directly and make sure our government does their job. There will be a time to figure out who specifically to blame and what to change. In the meantime, the Bush administration needs to get to work helping those in need.

Thanks for all you do,

—Tom, Tanya, Joan, Jennifer and the MoveOn.org Political Action Team
Wednesday, September 7th, 2005

P.S. Check out these links for more on the Hurricane relief efforts.

Katrina Timeline, ThinkProgress.org
<http://thinkprogress.org/katrina-timeline/>

Editorial: No time for turf wars. The Times-Picayune, September 7, 2005.
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=869>

Editorial blasts federal response. CNN, September 4, 2005.
<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=870>

The big disconnect on New Orleans. CNN, September 2, 2005.

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=871>

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Not authorized by any candidate or candidate's committee.

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 12:45 PM

KATRINA TIMELINE

Comment on the timeline here.

Friday, August 26

GOV. KATHLEEN BLANCO DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN LOUISIANA:
[Office of the Governor]

GULF COAST STATES REQUEST TROOP ASSISTANCE FROM PENTAGON: At a 9/1 press conference, Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander, Joint Task Force Katrina, said that the Gulf States began the process of requesting additional forces on Friday, 8/26. [DOD]

Saturday, August 27

5AM — KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 3 HURRICANE [CNN]

GOV. BLANCO ASKS BUSH TO DECLARE FEDERAL STATE OF EMERGENCY IN LOUISIANA: "I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster." [Office of the Governor]

FEDERAL EMERGENCY DECLARED, DHS AND FEMA GIVEN FULL AUTHORITY TO RESPOND TO KATRINA: "Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency." [White House]

Sunday, August 28

2AM – KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 4 HURRICANE [CNN]

7AM – KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 5 HURRICANE [CNN]

MORNING — LOUISIANA NEWSPAPER SIGNALS LEVEES MAY GIVE:

"Forecasters Fear Levees Won't Hold Katrina": "Forecasters feared Sunday afternoon that storm driven waters will lap over the New Orleans levees when monster Hurricane Katrina pushes past the Crescent City tomorrow." [Lafayette Daily Advertiser]

9:30 AM — MAYOR NAGIN ISSUES FIRST EVER MANDATORY EVACUATION OF NEW ORLEANS: “We’re facing the storm most of us have feared,” said Nagin. “This is going to be an unprecedented event.” [Times-Picayune]

4PM – NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ISSUES SPECIAL HURRICANE WARNING: In the event of a category 4 or 5 hit, “Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks, perhaps longer. ... At least one-half of well-constructed homes will have roof and wall failure. All gabled roofs will fail, leaving those homes severely damaged or destroyed. ... Power outages will last for weeks. ... Water shortages will make human suffering incredible by modern standards.” [National Weather Service]

AFTERNOON — BUSH, BROWN, CHERTOFF WARNED OF LEVEE FAILURE BY NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER DIRECTOR: Dr. Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center: “We were briefing them way before landfall. ... It’s not like this was a surprise. We had in the advisories that the levee could be topped.” [Times-Picayune; St. Petersburg Times]

LATE PM – REPORTS OF WATER TOPPLING OVER LEVEE: “Waves crashed atop the exercise path on the Lake Pontchartrain levee in Kenner early Monday as Katrina churned closer.” [Times-Picayune]

APPROXIMATELY 30,000 EVACUEES GATHER AT SUPERDOME WITH ROUGHLY 36 HOURS WORTH OF FOOD [Times-Picayune]

Monday, August 29

7AM – KATRINA MAKES LANDFALL AS A CATEGORY 4 HURRICANE [CNN]

8AM – MAYOR NAGIN REPORTS THAT WATER IS FLOWING OVER LEVEE: “I’ve gotten reports this morning that there is already water coming over some of the levee systems. In the lower ninth ward, we’ve had one of our pumping stations to stop operating, so we will have significant flooding, it is just a matter of how much.” [NBC’s “Today Show”]

MORNING — BUSH CALLS SECRETARY CHERTOFF TO DISCUSS IMMIGRATION: “I spoke to Mike Chertoff today — he’s the head of the Department of Homeland Security. I knew people would want me to discuss this issue [immigration], so we got us an airplane on — a telephone on Air Force One, so I called him. I said, are you working with the governor? He said, you bet we are.” [White House]

MORNING – BUSH SHARES BIRTHDAY CAKE PHOTO-OP WITH SEN. JOHN MCCAIN [White House]

10AM — BUSH VISITS ARIZONA RESORT TO PROMOTE MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT: “This new bill I signed says, if you’re a senior and you like the way things are today, you’re in good shape, don’t change. But, by the way, there’s a lot of different options for you. And we’re here to talk about what that means to our

seniors.” [White House]

LATE MORNING – LEVEE BREACHED: “A large section of the vital 17th Street Canal levee, where it connects to the brand new ‘hurricane proof’ Old Hammond Highway bridge, gave way late Monday morning in Bucktown after Katrina’s fiercest winds were well north.” [Times-Picayune]

11:30AM — MICHAEL BROWN FINALLY REQUESTS THAT DHS DISPATCH 1,000 EMPLOYEES TO REGION, GIVES THEM TWO DAYS TO ARRIVE: “Brown’s memo to Chertoff described Katrina as ‘this near catastrophic event’ but otherwise lacked any urgent language. The memo politely ended, ‘Thank you for your consideration in helping us to meet our responsibilities.’” [AP]

2PM — BUSH TRAVELS TO CALIFORNIA SENIOR CENTER TO DISCUSS MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT: “We’ve got some folks up here who are concerned about their Social Security or Medicare. Joan Geist is with us. ... I could tell — she was looking at me when I first walked in the room to meet her, she was wondering whether or not old George W. is going to take away her Social Security check.” [White House]

9PM — RUMSFELD ATTENDS SAN DIEGO PADRES BASEBALL GAME: Rumsfeld “joined Padres President John Moores in the owner’s box...at Petco Park.” [Editor & Publisher]

Tuesday, August 30

9AM – BUSH SPEAKS ON IRAQ AT NAVAL BASE CORONADO [White House]

MIDDAY – CHERTOFF FINALLY BECOMES AWARE THAT LEVEE HAS FAILED: “It was on Tuesday that the levee—may have been overnight Monday to Tuesday—that the levee started to break. And it was midday Tuesday that I became aware of the fact that there was no possibility of plugging the gap and that essentially the lake was going to start to drain into the city.” [Meet the Press, 9/4/05]

PENTAGON CLAIMS THERE ARE ENOUGH NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS IN REGION: “Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita said the states have adequate National Guard units to handle the hurricane needs.” [WWL-TV]

MASS LOOTING REPORTED, SECURITY SHORTAGE CITED: “The looting is out of control. The French Quarter has been attacked,” Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson said. “We’re using exhausted, scarce police to control looting when they should be used for search and rescue while we still have people on rooftops.” [AP]

U.S.S. BATAAN SITS OFF SHORE, VIRTUALLY UNUSED: “The USS Bataan, a 844-foot ship designed to dispatch Marines in amphibious assaults, has helicopters, doctors, hospital beds, food and water. It also can make its own water, up to 100,000 gallons a day. And it just happened to be in the Gulf of Mexico when Katrina came

roaring ashore. The Bataan rode out the storm and then followed it toward shore, awaiting relief orders. Helicopter pilots flying from its deck were some of the first to begin plucking stranded New Orleans residents. But now the Bataan's hospital facilities, including six operating rooms and beds for 600 patients, are empty." [Chicago Tribune]

3PM – PRESIDENT BUSH PLAYS GUITAR WITH COUNTRY SINGER MARK WILLIS [AP]

BUSH RETURNS TO CRAWFORD FOR FINAL NIGHT OF VACATION [AP]

Wednesday, August 31

TENS OF THOUSANDS TRAPPED IN SUPERDOME; CONDITIONS

DETERIORATE: "A 2-year-old girl slept in a pool of urine. Crack vials littered a restroom. Blood stained the walls next to vending machines smashed by teenagers. 'We pee on the floor. We are like animals,' said Taffany Smith, 25, as she cradled her 3-week-old son, Terry. ... By Wednesday, it had degenerated into horror. ... At least two people, including a child, have been raped. At least three people have died, including one man who jumped 50 feet to his death, saying he had nothing left to live for. There is no sanitation. The stench is overwhelming.'" [Los Angeles Times, 9/1/05]

PRESIDENT BUSH FINALLY ORGANIZES TASK FORCE TO COORDINATE

FEDERAL RESPONSE: Bush says on Tuesday he will "fly to Washington to begin work...with a task force that will coordinate the work of 14 federal agencies involved in the relief effort." [New York Times, 8/31/05]

JEFFERSON PARISH EMERGENCY DIRECTOR SAYS FOOD AND WATER

SUPPLY GONE: "Director Walter Maestri: FEMA and national agencies not delivering the help nearly as fast as it is needed." [WWL-TV]

80,000 BELIEVED STRANDED IN NEW ORLEANS: Former Mayor Sidney

Barthelemy "estimated 80,000 were trapped in the flooded city and urged President Bush to send more troops." [Reuters]

3,000 STRANDED AT CONVENTION CENTER WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER: "With

3,000 or more evacuees stranded at the convention center — and with no apparent contingency plan or authority to deal with them — collecting a body was no one's priority. ... Some had been at the convention center since Tuesday morning but had received no food, water or instructions." [Times-Picayune]

5PM — BUSH GIVES FIRST MAJOR ADDRESS ON KATRINA: "Nothing about the

president's demeanor... — which seemed casual to the point of carelessness — suggested that he understood the depth of the current crisis." [New York Times]

8:00PM – CONDOLEEZZA RICE TAKES IN A BROADWAY SHOW: "On Wednesday night, Secretary Rice was booed by some audience members at 'Spamalot!, the Monty

Python musical at the Shubert, when the lights went up after the performance.” [New York Post, 9/2/05]

9PM — FEMA DIRECTOR BROWN CLAIMS SURPRISE OVER SIZE OF STORM: “I must say, this storm is much much bigger than anyone expected.” [CNN]

Thursday, September 1

8AM — BUSH CLAIMS NO ONE EXPECTED LEVEES TO BREAK: “I don’t think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees.” [Washington Post]

CONDOLIEZZA RICE VISITS U.S. OPEN: “Rice, [in New York] on three days’ vacation to shop and see the U.S. Open, hitting some balls with retired champ Monica Seles at the Indoor Tennis Club at Grand Central.” [New York Post]

STILL NO COMMAND AND CONTROL ESTABLISHED: Terry Ebbert, New Orleans Homeland Security Director: “This is a national emergency. This is a national disgrace. FEMA has been here three days, yet there is no command and control. We can send massive amounts of aid to tsunami victims, but we can’t bail out the city of New Orleans.” [Fox News]

2PM — MAYOR NAGIN ISSUES “DESPERATE SOS” TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: “This is a desperate SOS. Right now we are out of resources at the convention centre and don’t anticipate enough buses. We need buses. Currently the convention centre is unsanitary and unsafe and we’re running out of supplies.” [Guardian, 9/2/05]

2PM — MICHAEL BROWN CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE HEARD OF REPORTS OF VIOLENCE: “I’ve had no reports of unrest, if the connotation of the word unrest means that people are beginning to riot, or you know, they’re banging on walls and screaming and hollering or burning tires or whatever. I’ve had no reports of that.” [CNN]

NEW ORLEANS “DESCEND[S] INTO ANARCHY”: “Storm victims were raped and beaten, fights and fires broke out, corpses lay out in the open, and rescue helicopters and law enforcement officers were shot at as flooded-out New Orleans descended into anarchy Thursday. ‘This is a desperate SOS,’ the mayor said.” [AP]

CONDOLIEZZA RICE GOES SHOE SHOPPING: “Just moments ago at the Ferragamo on 5th Avenue, Condoleezza Rice was seen spending several thousands of dollars on some nice, new shoes (we’ve confirmed this, so her new heels will surely get coverage from the WaPo’s Robin Givhan). A fellow shopper, unable to fathom the absurdity of Rice’s timing, went up to the Secretary and reportedly shouted, ‘How dare you shop for shoes while thousands are dying and homeless!’” [Gawker]

MICHAEL BROWN FINALLY LEARNS OF EVACUEES IN CONVENTION CENTER: “We learned about that (Thursday), so I have directed that we have all available resources to get that convention center to make sure that they have the food and

water and medical care that they need.” [CNN]

Friday, September 2

ROVE-LED CAMPAIGN TO BLAME LOCAL OFFICIALS BEGINS: “Under the command of President Bush’s two senior political advisers, the White House rolled out a plan...to contain the political damage from the administration’s response to Hurricane Katrina.” President Bush’s comments from the Rose Garden Friday morning formed “the start of this campaign.” [New York Times, 9/5/05]

9:35AM — BUSH PRAISES MICHAEL BROWN: “Brownie, you’re doing a heck of a job.” [White House, 9/2/05]

10 AM — PRESIDENT BUSH STAGES PHOTO-OP “BRIEFING”: Coast Guard helicopters and crew diverted to act as backdrop for President Bush’s photo-op.

BUSH VISIT GROUNDS FOOD AID: “Three tons of food ready for delivery by air to refugees in St. Bernard Parish and on Algiers Point sat on the Crescent City Connection bridge Friday afternoon as air traffic was halted because of President Bush’s visit to New Orleans, officials said.” [Times-Picayune]

LEVEE REPAIR WORK ORCHESTRATED FOR PRESIDENT’S VISIT: Sen. Mary Landrieu, 9/3: “Touring this critical site yesterday with the President, I saw what I believed to be a real and significant effort to get a handle on a major cause of this catastrophe. Flying over this critical spot again this morning, less than 24 hours later, it became apparent that yesterday we witnessed a hastily prepared stage set for a Presidential photo opportunity; and the desperately needed resources we saw were this morning reduced to a single, lonely piece of equipment.” [Sen. Mary Landrieu]

BUSH USES 50 FIREFIGHTERS AS PROPS IN DISASTER AREA PHOTO-OP: A group of 1,000 firefighters convened in Atlanta to volunteer with the Katrina relief efforts. Of those, “a team of 50 Monday morning quickly was ushered onto a flight headed for Louisiana. The crew’s first assignment: to stand beside President Bush as he tours devastated areas.” [Salt Lake Tribune; Reuters]

3PM — BUSH “SATISFIED WITH THE RESPONSE”: “I am satisfied with the response. I am not satisfied with all the results.” [AP]

Saturday, September 3

SENIOR BUSH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL LIES TO WASHINGTON POST, CLAIMS GOV. BLANCO NEVER DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY: The Post reported in their Sunday edition “As of Saturday, Blanco still had not declared a state of emergency, the senior Bush official said.” They were forced to issue a correction hours later. [Washington Post, 9/4/05]

9AM — BUSH BLAMES STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS: “[T]he magnitude of responding to a crisis over a disaster area that is larger than the size of Great Britain

has created tremendous problems that have strained state and local capabilities. The result is that many of our citizens simply are not getting the help they need.” [White House, 9/3/05]

Posted by: [Pissed Off American](#) at September 8, 2005 01:59 PM

Wow. Condaleeza Rice, who heads foreign affairs, went shopping instead of attending to a domestic matter. That's damning. Maybe she hates black people.

And, a big bureaucracy not respond quickly or well to something (not to mention the big local and state bureaucracies which also messed up) shouldn't be news to liberals. I'm not making excuses, but your faith-based views of government shouldn't cloud you to the fact-based reality of bureaucracies.

The Red Cross was ready to go in immediately with supplies, but they were prevented by the state's homeland security agency. That's a case study of how governmental organizations mess up compared to you private organizations.

Posted by: [Geoff](#) at September 8, 2005 06:45 PM

My eyes are aching for a glimps of light that somewhere harbors within the the hidden shadows of the open sky. I see a maze hub-bub upon us,there's a drab and eeri essence of the darkening breath of life that we exhale and a tear falling from every eye.As I scrutinize the findings within a days search, it quickly adds up within me that what I wish to see just isn't here and yet I fail to let the others things be it's supplement pleasure to my eye, within I see and feel the things that others feel, yet unlike most I fail to find myself a place in the sun, so life around me will merely be nothing but a barrel, and you the shell that unloads the sounding of a race, a race that for real, never really begun, it's a race that I won't enter, for all to soon, don't you see it will nothing but ashes in the sun.

Posted by: [newscruzer1](#) at September 8, 2005 06:59 PM

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Posted by: [newscruzer1](#) at September 8, 2005 07:02 PM

SORRY ABOUT THE TRIPLE ENTRY, my post did not go through and I was asked to wait awhile and try again. (impatient me)pounding on the key

Posted by: [Richard Bastian](#) at September 8, 2005 07:06 PM

MORNING – BUSH SHARES BIRTHDAY CAKE PHOTO-OP WITH SEN. JOHN MCCAIN

McCain hates black people too?

Posted by: [jayef](#) at September 8, 2005 07:58 PM

Time to heed the preamble to the Declaration of Independence..

Posted by: [tuckett](#) at September 8, 2005 08:20 PM

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