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United States
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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

U. S. COAST GUARD

STATEMENT OF

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ON

FEMA'S PLACEMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

U.S. SENATE

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Introduction

Good morning Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Lieberman and members of the committee. It is a pleasure to be here today to discuss the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) placement in the federal government. I know that Congress has made substantial contributions to affecting changes that will better position our Nation for responding to catastrophic incidents in the future, and I sincerely respect this hard work. This hearing is a testament to the continuing priority this committee places on emergency response and protecting our Nation.

My testimony today will highlight my personal observations of FEMA while serving as the Principal Federal Official (PFO) during the Hurricane Katrina response, why FEMA should remain in the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and how the Coast Guard's relationship with FEMA has been strengthened since the creation of DHS.

Observations as Principal Federal Official (PFO)

My personal experience as PFO during both Hurricanes Katrina and Rita has made it fundamentally clear to me that the Department of Homeland Security is the optimal location for FEMA within the Federal government. I believe this for the following reasons.

First, the Homeland Security Act together with Homeland Security Presidential Directives 5, 7, and 8 have created the statutory and policy structure for the Secretary of Homeland Security to serve as the national incident manager for all events not related to national defense. This role has been reaffirmed in every review of the government's response to Hurricane Katrina and there has been no recommendation to change the Secretary's responsibility. Accordingly, there is little to be gained by placing FEMA outside the Department that will manage every major incident that involves FEMA and Stafford Act support to state and local governments.

Second, the synergies created between FEMA and the other operating components of the Department of Homeland Security would be lost if FEMA were relocated. Operationally, the Coast Guard and FEMA have never worked closer together. The interaction between Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and FEMA employees in the evacuations from New Orleans Airport were facilitated by a shared departmental structure. The amount of security forces available in the Department of Homeland Security creates an ability to force package responses from within the Department.

Third, the evolving joint requirements process in the Department has created the opportunity to aggregate requirements for capabilities such as land mobile radio communications, emergency notification systems, deployable logistics support, and credentialing. For example, in 2004, the Joint Requirements Council (JRC) reviewed a host of component projects and acquisition programs that shared a common "wireless communications" facet. The Coast Guard's Defense Messaging System (DMS), Coast Guard Data Network (CGDN) and Rescue 21 programs were featured, as were FEMA's National Emergency Management Information System (NEMIS), Alerts and Warning System, the National Radio System, and the DHS Integrated Wireless Network (IWN). As a result of the JRC's review, requirement overlaps and redundancies were identified, IWN was designated as the lead acquisition program for wireless communications

technologies, and the Department's Wireless Management Office took the lead to ensure interoperability, value delivery and standardized enterprise architecture. Locating FEMA outside DHS would make this process difficult if not impossible.

Finally, FEMA's regional structure, which is being used as the base for improved preparedness planning, would be removed from the Department with the potential to create separate field structures where one exists now.

Coast Guard's relationship with FEMA before and after the creation of DHS

The Coast Guard is the Nation's maritime first responder and well-positioned to respond to disasters due to its unique blend of authorities, capabilities, competencies and relationships with federal, state and local partners. Our flexible, multi-mission forces and agile command and control systems provide the solid foundation from which we respond to major catastrophes. These capabilities, combined with our experience operating with other components, such as FEMA, provide vital emergency response services to the nation.

Although the Coast Guard and FEMA have had a history of jointly responding to disasters prior to the creation of DHS, the relationship between the two has been greatly strengthened since becoming components within DHS. From an intra-agency perspective, the Coast Guard's relationship with FEMA is excellent and will continue to improve. Having FEMA within DHS promotes close working ties with the Coast Guard, the Preparedness Directorate, and many other DHS assets and components; thus gaining critical law enforcement, communications and intelligence synergies. The Coast Guard's transition to DHS also brought an extensive knowledge base related to first response that has evolved for decades in oil and hazardous material spill response, including extensive knowledge and application of the incident command system in actual response operations.

To illustrate why it is important to maintain FEMA in DHS, let me highlight our relationship prior and post-DHS.

Pre-DHS

Prior to the creation of DHS, Coast Guard and FEMA interaction was infrequent and far less extensive. The relationship was largely driven by the Federal Response Plan, which focused the Coast Guard's role on only two Emergency Support Functions (ESFs): ESF 1 (Transportation) and ESF 10 (Oil/Hazardous Material Response). Although the Coast Guard and FEMA interacted, the relationship was based primarily on avoiding duplication of efforts rather than on enhancing effectiveness.

Notable interactions occurred in the 1990s, when the Coast Guard supported FEMA response efforts in the following events:

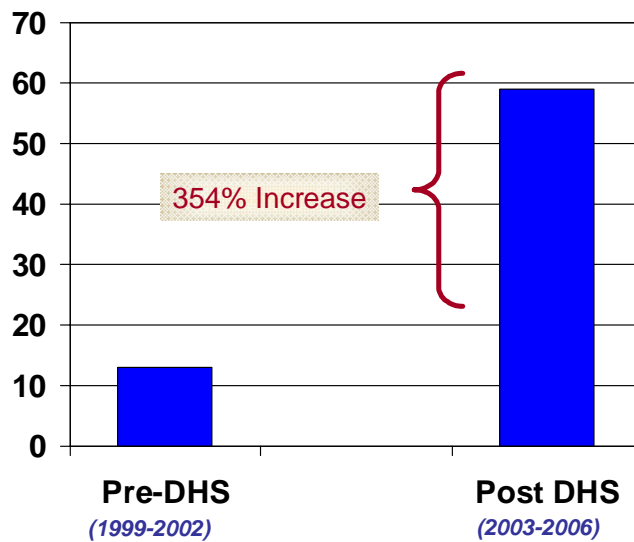
- Restoration of the transportation system to the Ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach in the aftermath of the 1994 Northridge Earthquake,
- Providing emergency transportation of FEMA officials during Hurricanes Andrew (1992) and Marilyn (1995), and

- Providing search and rescue for flood victims in Georgia (1994), the Mississippi River Delta (1993) and the Red River in Minnesota (1997).

Post-DHS

Since the creation of DHS, the relationship between the Coast Guard and FEMA has significantly improved. The below charts highlight the facts that since the formation of DHS, the number of joint exercises involving FEMA and Coast Guard has increased by 354% (13 exercises from 1999 to 2002, and 59 exercises from 2003-2006), and how Coast Guard ESF expenditures, obligations and roles have grown.

Coast Guard and FEMA Joint Exercises



Listed below are some of the more significant examples of how planning and joint training have resulted in more potent disaster response capabilities. The list is not exhaustive and does not even take into account the numerous benefits gained from the Coast Guard and FEMA’s interaction with other DHS components.

Planning

Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments (PSMAs)

In major disasters and emergencies, Mission Assignments are a common mechanism used by FEMA to task and reimburse federal agencies for providing emergency assistance to affected state and local jurisdictions. In the spirit of continual improvement, and based on the lessons learned from Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and the other major storms we faced last year, the Coast Guard and FEMA finalized PSMAs that can be quickly executed to deploy Coast Guard resources as needed. These PSMAs have been created to enhance the Coast Guard’s coordination during disaster responses across all Emergency Support Functions (ESFs). They prompt the Coast Guard to be used for up to 22 possible Mission Assignments, organized under 10 (ESFs). As threats and envisioned consequences continue to evolve, the Coast Guard remains committed to working with FEMA in making necessary adjustments and additions to the PSMAs. As noted above, the Secretary has the authority to move these resources when needed while requests are processed.

Pre-designated lead federal officials

On April 26, 2006, DHS pre-designated five teams consisting of 27 experienced Coast Guard and FEMA officials that will coordinate the Federal Government's role in preparing for, and responding to, the upcoming hurricane season. Several of these teams have already participated in regional exercises to bolster their response readiness.

Joint Training

Bringing Coast Guard and FEMA together under DHS has led to a continued increase in cooperation across a broad spectrum of joint training, including:

- Joint coordination of strategic response development within the Emergency Support Function Leaders Group (group comprised of all federal agencies that respond to disasters under NRP) and participation in numerous interagency emergency management projects;
- Working with FEMA and DHS to create the FEMA Incident Management Handbook, the National Response Plan and FEMA's Emergency Response Team-Advanced (ERT-A) (modeled after the Coast Guard's National Strike Teams);
- Continuing to work together on the new Madrid Seismic Zone Catastrophic Workshop Program, developed in collaboration with the Coast Guard led Spills of National Significance (SONS) 2007 exercise, which will involve response to a nationally significant earthquake event involving the states of the U.S. Central Earthquake Consortium; and
- Having Coast Guard personnel participate in FEMA's Master Exercise Practitioner Program (MEPP), in order to improve the Coast Guard's ability to manage exercise programs and administer emergency management exercises. Prior to the formulation of DHS, the Coast Guard did not participate in MEPP.

Conclusion

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita drastically demonstrated the need for a robust, comprehensive and nationally integrated response capability; it is imperative that we continue to address this need. However, in doing so, we need to focus on the entire response architecture, not just FEMA. Having the Coast Guard and FEMA in the same department is one step toward meeting that need. Our two agencies form a solid marriage that has already improved our combined preparedness and response efforts and promises greater efficiencies and effectiveness in the future. We must capitalize on the synergies created by having FEMA within DHS, and continue to develop a united front against all hazards, all threats, at all times.