

**Oral Statement
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Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
Subcommittee on Emergency Communications, Preparedness, and Response
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Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Dent, and Members of the Subcommittee thank you for inviting me to appear before you today.

As the Administrator of a New FEMA, I am proud of the many reforms that we have implemented in the past year. Today, FEMA is stronger and more nimble than it was in the past. The proof is visible in our response to tornadoes earlier this year, our multi-state efforts across the Northeast during this April's storms, and most recently in our actions in Greensburg, Kansas. In each instance the American people saw a FEMA that is leaning further forward, moving quickly to respond, and working closely with our federal, tribal, state and local partners to insure a response of which we can all be proud. This did not happen overnight. It is the result of a close review of our past practices and the hard work of the men and women at FEMA and across all levels of government.

I will focus my oral remarks today on how we got here and how the New FEMA is working with our partners at the Department of Defense – DOD – and across the armed forces – including how we take these relationships into account when planning for any natural or man-made disaster.

A Changing Structure

Following Hurricane Katrina, the White House issued a report entitled, "The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned," which recommended integrating the use of military capabilities into catastrophic disaster response. The report specifically stated that DOD and the Department of Homeland Security – DHS – should jointly plan for the support of Federal response activities and that DOD should be included in all federal emergency plans.

These changes were included in the Post-Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act of 2006 that Congress passed last fall. This legislation articulated new expectations for FEMA, established new leadership responsibilities, brought an expanded scope of missions, and called for FEMA to undertake a broad range of activities involving preparedness, protection, response, recovery and mitigation both before and after terrorist events, natural and manmade disasters.

DOD has a key role supporting FEMA in many of these areas and in overall planning, coordinating, and integrating Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) with local, State, tribal, and Federal agencies. The DOD focus in domestic disaster response is on providing homeland defense, supporting civil operations, and cooperating in theater security activities designed to protect the American public.

FEMA's partnership with DOD continues to evolve and the disaster response support DOD and its multiple components bring to FEMA is critical to enhancing our comprehensive preparedness, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation capabilities for dealing with all types of natural and man-made hazards.

Specifically, FEMA has taken direct action to improve our coordination with DOD, the National Guard, the Coast Guard and other federal, tribal, state and local governmental partners across the board. Joint participation in training and exercises is a vital element of this improved coordination.

DOD

FEMA and DOD have implemented numerous improvements based on the lessons learned in Katrina and as a result of the changes required by the Post Katrina Emergency Reform Act. Among the changes, DOD assigned liaison officers to FEMA Headquarters to promote the effective coordination of activities and FEMA reciprocated by providing permanent staff to serve at USNORTHCOM.

FEMA is coordinating closely with DOD in many aspects of the development of an improved national logistics system. A key partner in this relationship is the Defense Logistics Agency, or DLA. In the past year, the relationship has evolved from support to disaster response, to proactive logistical and planning support, both before an event occurs and during the response efforts.

Similarly, FEMA has an agreement in place with the Marine Corps Systems Command to support FEMA with emergency response equipment that can be deployed to respond to a major chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosives or natural hazard event.

National Guard

With the National Guard, FEMA coordinates both at the federal level with the National Guard Bureau as well as at the state level with individual Adjutant Generals. FEMA continues to coordinate and cooperate with federal and state leaders of the Guard in a number of disaster response-related areas to include improving situational awareness, communications planning, force package planning, and overall mission and disaster response planning.

US Coast Guard

The creation of DHS brought Coast Guard and FEMA into the same department. This has led to steadily increasing cooperation between the two agencies across a spectrum of preparedness planning, exercise and training, response issues, in identifying lessons learned, and in tracking and implementing remedial actions at the national level. Today, two Coast Guard liaisons are permanently assigned to FEMA Headquarters. In this cross-pollination, both agencies have been able to make a number of improvements to their respective contingency plans.

NRP and Disaster Response

These new relationships are reflected in our revisions of The National Response Plan, or NRP. The NRP provides the structures and mechanism for national-level policy and operational direction for domestic incident management.

DHS and FEMA value the support of the Secretary of Defense and DOD components to facilitate and support Federal, State and local disaster response activities. In addition to direct support for disaster response, DOD possesses specialized testing, evaluation, and education facilities; training and exercise expertise; medical capabilities; and technology programs that provide important support to all levels of government in enhancing the Nation's disaster preparedness and response capabilities.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion I would just like to thank our partners at DOD and across all levels of government for their efforts to make the system work better for all Americans. FEMA has learned a great deal from our friends in the Armed Services. The open lines of communication and the improved coordination will make us stronger and insure a stronger response and recovery effort when our nation calls on us in times of need. We have taken important first steps, both inside FEMA and throughout the federal government, to improve our readiness posture.

This is evident in the government's response to the devastation of Greensburg, Kansas earlier this month. FEMA did not respond alone. The Army Corps of Engineers, National Guard Bureau, DHS, the Small Business Administration, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the US Forest Service, the Social Security Administration, the Veterans Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the US Postal Service, the Government Services Agency and the Economic Development Administration all had people working on the ground with FEMA within 72 hours of the tornado's impact. We will continue to coordinate the federal government's response in conjunction with our federal, tribal, state and local partners in the years to come.