

Wrecked marina,
Ocean Springs, MS
Sun Herald photo



Lack of Situational Awareness

Federal Situational Awareness

Having an ability to “connect the dots” was a main goal during the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC) is a key element, designed to be “the nation’s nerve center for information sharing and domestic incident management.”¹ Hurricane Katrina was the HSOC’s first major, public test, and it failed. At the federal level, there was a startling lack of situational awareness as Katrina came ashore. On the day of landfall, DHS ignored, disregarded, or simply failed to obtain readily available reports that would have – and should have – led to an understanding of the increasingly dire situation in New Orleans and the remainder of the Gulf Coast.

DHS witnesses have offered essentially two explanations for the lack of situational awareness on Monday, August 29. First, they fault Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) former Director Michael Brown and his agency for failing to provide the HSOC with crucial information. Second, they invoke the “fog of war” metaphor and assert that conflicting reports rendered the HSOC unable to develop any sense of the “ground truth.”

These are at best only partial explanations for the HSOC’s failure to understand the scope of the unfolding disaster. Brown did fail to forward critical information in his possession, which is inexcusable. However, the HSOC’s failure to obtain reports of breaches and massive flooding issued by the National Weather Service (NWS), the Army Corps of Engineers, and the media, was unrelated to anything Brown or FEMA did or did not do. Indeed, throughout the day of landfall the HSOC received reports – including from two DHS Protective Security Advisors (PSAs)² stationed in the region – that uniformly reflected a growing catastrophe. To the extent these reports “conflicted,” it was only about the scope of the catastrophe described, not the existence of the catastrophe itself.

The failure to “connect the dots” is best captured by the situation report (“sitrep”) issued by the HSOC at 5 p.m. Central Time (all subsequent times Central) on Monday, August 29. During hurricanes and other significant incidents, the HSOC issues sitreps at 5 a.m. and 5 p.m. to many customers, including DHS leadership and the White House.³ In crucial areas this sitrep was both incorrect and incomplete. It was incorrect in stating that “preliminary reports indicate the levees in New Orleans have not been breached; however, an assessment is still pending.”⁴ In fact, most preliminary reports stated just the opposite. It was incomplete in stating generically that “flooding is reported in New Orleans,”⁵ but failing to provide any detail about the widely reported scope of the flooding or the devastating results – for example, that residents were seeking refuge from rising water in their attics and on rooftops.

In a dynamic situation such as Katrina, time was of the essence, as people were in desperate circumstances. It may never be known for certain how the lack of awareness contributed to the overall failure of the federal government to respond adequately in a timely manner. It is known, however, that the 5 p.m. sitrep was the last report DHS Secretary Michael Chertoff received on the day of landfall,⁶ and he went to bed Monday night with the incorrect belief that the levees had not been breached and that Katrina had not done the worst that had been predicted.⁷ This incorrect sitrep was also forwarded to the White House. Several days later President Bush later remarked that “I myself, thought we had dodged a bullet.”⁸

Analysis of the Failure

The HSOC's failure to maintain situational awareness during Katrina grew out of a lack of planning and flawed analysis. Though plans for obtaining situational awareness are developed for events like the Superbowl and national political conventions, HSOC Director Matthew Broderick acknowledged that "there was no plan developed" for maintaining situational awareness during Katrina.⁹

This lack of planning led to numerous failings. Neither HSOC Director Broderick nor HSOC Deputy Director Frank DiFalco knew that DHS had a representative in New Orleans and another in the Louisiana State Police Emergency Operations Center in Baton Rouge sending reports to the HSOC. Indeed, on the day of landfall, the HSOC failed to recognize, or disregarded as unconfirmed, many of the reports that it did receive. The HSOC similarly failed to obtain reports and information that it should have obtained. As the week progressed, situational awareness improved little if at all, evidenced most pointedly by DHS's belated awareness of the thousands of people gathering at the Convention Center.

There were also structural flaws in the way the HSOC obtained information from other federal agencies and other sources. The twice-a-day HSOC sitreps contained information that, in most cases, was at least three and, often, five or more hours old. During Katrina, FEMA input to the HSOC sitrep was due three hours before a sitrep was issued.¹⁰ FEMA's internal deadline for submissions to the HSOC was, in turn, two hours earlier.¹¹ Thus, by design a 5 p.m. sitrep reflected information that was at least five hours old.

Between sitreps, HSOC issued "Spot Reports" on breaking news. Starting at approximately 6:35 p.m., the HSOC generated numerous Spot Reports accurately detailing the devastation in New Orleans. However, many of those who were on the e-mail distribution list for these Spot Reports, issued late into the night on Monday, appear not to have read them when they were received. Witnesses also explained that, as a general matter, they viewed the sitreps as more authoritative than the Spot Reports. They testified almost universally that they were not aware of the inundation of New Orleans until after the 5 a.m. sitrep Tuesday morning – 12 or more hours after the HSOC began issuing the grave Spot Reports detailed below.

During the Day of Landfall, a Litany of Reports Stated that Levees Had Failed, and Detailed the Increasingly Severe Flooding

Prior to issuing the flawed 5 p.m. sitrep, the HSOC issued two Spot Reports during the morning of landfall. One, at 8:25 a.m., was based on a press conference by New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and stated in part that water was coming over the levees in the Ninth Ward. Almost two hours later, at 10:22 a.m., the HSOC issued another Spot Report, including reports that water was rising at the National Guard's Jackson Barracks in the Ninth Ward, adding that it was unknown whether this was the result of breaching or overtopping. It also stated that the 911 call centers in St. Bernard and Orleans Parishes had been shut down and evacuated. Ten minutes later, the information in this second Spot Report was also distributed in an e-mail to, among others, DHS Chief of Staff John Wood and Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson.

The Committee has discovered no other communications out of the HSOC prior to the 5 p.m. sitrep. Both before and after the two morning Spot Reports, however, the HSOC received reports of levee breaches, levee overtopping, flooding, and people trapped on roofs. Equally troubling are the reports the HSOC apparently never received. As discussed below, some of this information was received by FEMA, but not forwarded in a timely way to the HSOC. However, the majority of this information was available from other sources, includ-

ing government agencies that have desks within the HSOC, and major media outlets. These reports are described below, with the ones that the HSOC received highlighted in **bold**:¹²

- At 8:14 a.m., the New Orleans National Weather Service office reported a levee breach along the Industrial Canal.¹³
- **At 9 a.m. on the morning of landfall, the HSOC received an e-mail from Louis Dabdoub, the PSA on the ground in New Orleans. Dabdoub’s report stated in part: “It is getting bad. Major flooding in some parts of the city. People are calling in for rescue saying they are trapped in attics, etc. That means water is 10 feet high there already. Trees are blowing down. Flooding is worsening every minute. ... The bad part has not hit here yet.”**¹⁴
- At 9 a.m., the New Orleans NWS office reported overtopping in Orleans and St. Bernard Parishes and “Extensive and life threatening storm surge flooding occurring along the Louisiana and Mississippi coast.”¹⁵
- **At 9:36 a.m., Dabdoub sent another e-mail to the HSOC, reporting that “The lower parishes of La [Louisiana], Pla[ue]mines] and St Bernard parish’s [sic] are under water.”**¹⁶
- At 10:13 a.m., the White House Homeland Security Council issued a spot report – which appears not to have been sent to the HSOC – reporting that “flooding is significant throughout the region and a levee in New Orleans has reportedly been breached sending 6-8 feet of water throughout the 9th Ward area of the city. Per the Governor, water is rising at 1 foot per hour and the New Orleans Mayor reports problems with a pumping station, causing flooding.”¹⁷
- **At 10:17 a.m., PSA David Hunter, who was in the Louisiana State Police Emergency Operations Center (EOC), reported “continued heavy flooding in area of New Orleans just east of the Industrial Canal (9th Ward). ... Calls coming into state EOC from citizens trapped in their houses, some in the attics or on the roof. State National Guard HQs at Jackson Barracks has 5 feet of water in some of its buildings.”**¹⁸
- **At 10:41 a.m., the HSOC received a copy of an 8 a.m. “Katrina Brief” created by the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), which stated, in part, that “the National Weather Service has reported that a levee broke on the Industrial Canal near the St. Bernard-Orleans Parish line, and 3 to 8 feet of flooding was possible. ... In the uptown area of New Orleans on the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain, floodwaters by [sic] have already intruded on the first stories of some houses and some roads are impassable. ... There is heavy street flooding throughout Orleans, St. Bernard, and Jefferson parishes.”**¹⁹
- At 11 a.m., the Louisiana State Police Emergency Operations Center issued a situation report which reported a breach of the levee on 17th Street Canal.²⁰
- At 11:40 a.m., the New Orleans NWS office issued one of the most stark warnings of the day: “Widespread flooding will continue across the parishes along the south shore of Lake Pontchartrain in the greater New Orleans area. ... This continues to be an extremely life threatening situation. ... Those seeking refuge in attics and roof-tops are strongly urged to take the necessary tools for survival. For example ... *those going into attics should try to take an axe or hatchet with them so they can cut their way onto the roof to avoid drowning should rising flood waters continue to rise into the attic.*” (emphasis added).²¹

- At 12:51 p.m., the HSOC received a Coast Guard “Status Update” which reported a “levee in New Orleans has been breached sending 3 to 8 feet of water into the 9th Ward area of the city.”²²
- At 1:14 p.m., a PSA reported a “levee breach on the 17th St. Canal (the border between Orleans and Jefferson Parishes) reported by the New Orleans Fire Dept.”²³
- At 3:05 p.m., and then again at 3:10, 4:20, and 8:13, the New Orleans NWS office issued a report stating that “extensive and life threatening storm surge flooding remains in progress at this time ... especially in the New Orleans area. ... Widespread flooding has occurred and storm water runoff will exacerbate the problem.”²⁴
- A 4 p.m. Situation Report issued by the NWS Southern Region Headquarters stating that “Very widespread and significant flooding has occurred throughout the city of New Orleans ... Industrial Canal at Tennessee Street: levee has been breached ... 17th Street at Canal Blvd: levee has been breached – breach extends several 100 meters in length[;] Much of downtown and east New Orleans is underwater; depth unknown at this time.”²⁵
- At 4 p.m., LOHSEP issued a situation report detailing three levee breaches: “St. Bernard & 9th Ward Levee breach (reported by Sewage & Water Board). ... Haynes Blvd Pump Station Levee Breach (reported by Jackson Barracks) ... 17th Street Canal levee breach, flooding Lakeview area.”²⁶
- During the 4 p.m. hour, Fox News interviewed Ivor van Heerden, Director, Louisiana State University’s Center For the Study of Public Health Impacts of Hurricanes, who said that “the National Weather Service [is] reporting that one of the levees was breached, and obviously, as the reporters have said, there’s very, very significant areas of New Orleans that did flood from the levee overtopping. In some areas we have about 11 feet of standing water. People have been forced out onto the roofs of their homes.”²⁷

In addition to these reports, at 11 a.m., Brown, FEMA’s Acting Deputy Director Patrick Rhode, Secretary Chertoff, Deputy Secretary Jackson, White House Deputy Chief of Staff Joe Hagin, representatives of the affected states, and individuals from numerous federal agencies attended the video teleconference (VTC) that FEMA hosted daily during Katrina. During this call, which was monitored by a Senior Watch Officer at the HSOC, a National Hurricane Center hydrologist said “We have significant flooding occurring right now, beyond the storm surge flooding.”²⁸ “We are truly experiencing some devastation here,” Colonel Jeff Smith, Acting Deputy Director of the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, said. William Lokey, FEMA’s Federal Coordinating Officer (FCO), then the lead federal official in Louisiana, echoed this:

To give you an idea of what’s going on down there, there is eight to ten feet of water in St. Bernard Parish. In New Orleans Parish, we have got water in the eastern part. And down in the Ninth Ward that borders St. Bernard Parish, we’re going to have serious search and rescue efforts that are going to need to take place once we can get back in. ... We are pretty much inundated right now, and our next priorities are going to be search and rescue and saving lives.²⁹

During the call, Hagin asked about the status of the levees. Louisiana Governor Kathleen Blanco responded:



We keep getting reports in some places that maybe water is coming over the levees. We heard a report unconfirmed. I think we have not breached the levee. We have not breached the levee at this point in time. That could change, but in some places we have floodwaters coming in New Orleans East and the line St. Bernard parish where we have waters that are eight to ten feet deep, and we have people swimming in there, that's got a considerable amount of water itself.³⁰

Caught in rising waters,
New Orleans

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Governor Blanco also reported “maybe as many as 30 or more calls from people who are trapped.”³¹ It appears that neither Mayor Nagin nor anyone else in New Orleans was on this call.

It is difficult to understand why the 5 p.m. sitrep reflected few of the facts – and none of the urgency – conveyed by these reports. It is inexcusable that it included no mention of the reports of levee breaches that the HSOC received. On the contrary, the sitrep conveyed a false impression that there were multiple and uncontradicted reports that the levees had held. In fact, extensive investigation has uncovered nothing beyond Governor Blanco’s qualified statement on the noon VTC stating that the levees had held. All other reports received by the HSOC pointed to the contrary.

The HSOC Failed Either to Obtain or to Recognize Crucial Reports

The apparent failure to obtain the NWS reports issued by the local offices is a particularly troubling example of how the HSOC’s failure to plan for Katrina manifested itself. These reports contained some of the earliest indications of levee breaches and catastrophic flooding and were readily available – NWS’s parent agency, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), maintains a desk in the HSOC.³² When asked about these reports, Broderick suggested that they may not have been obtained because they were issued by local

NWS stations. He did not know whether anyone at the HSOC was responsible for monitoring local weather stations during a major weather event. Common-sense steps such as identifying and monitoring local sources of information – particularly ones run by the federal government – would seem an obvious course of action for the HSOC in the days before landfall. And yet, no one within the HSOC appears to have given this any thought.

It is equally troubling that both Broderick and the HSOC Deputy Director DiFalco did not know of the reports of breaches and massive flooding that did come in during the day. Neither knew that two PSAs were on the ground submitting reports, nor were they aware of the Transportation Security Administration and the Coast Guard reports received. The 4 p.m. sitrep issued by the NWS Southern Region Headquarters, which included details of two major breaches, is similarly noteworthy. Though it was received in the HSOC – and forwarded from the Department of Defense desk in HSOC to senior Pentagon officials at 5:25 p.m. on the day of landfall³³ – it apparently went unnoticed by HSOC leadership that night. Both the importance and the perceived reliability of this report are underscored by the fact that the HSOC's Tuesday morning (5 a.m.) sitrep included verbatim reports of levee breaches and flooding from this then-13-hour-old 4 p.m. report. This NWS sitrep makes all the more inexplicable the HSOC's inaccurate 5 p.m. sitrep.

The attitude of the HSOC and DHS leadership toward media reports was, at best, contradictory. On one hand, HSOC witnesses expressed an understandable reluctance to rely on media reports, which often carry outdated or preliminary information during an evolving event.³⁴ On the other hand, Broderick relied on media reports in concluding that the situation in New Orleans was not catastrophic on Monday night: “The only one data point that I really had, personally, visually, was the celebration in the streets of New Orleans of people drinking beer and partying.”³⁵ It is difficult to understand why DHS officials would find the credibility of alarming news reports suspect, but have no such hesitation taking comfort in media stories that, superficially at least, suggested that the situation was stable.

After the 5 p.m. Sitrep, the HSOC Issued Three Reports Reflecting the Growing Catastrophe, But DHS Leadership Did Not Read or Did Not Understand Them

After the 5 p.m. sitrep, reports of the increasingly dire situation in New Orleans continued. Many were received by the HSOC, and, indeed, the HSOC issued three Spot Reports that detailed levee breaches and extensive flooding. These reports included:

- At 5:08 p.m., an American Red Cross Situation Report received by the HSOC stated in part, “Reports of flooding vary based on region with some levees in new Orleans reportedly breeched [sic]. Extensive flooding in the Lower 9th Board [sic] and St. Bernard Parish may be a result of water going over the tops of the levees.”³⁶
- At 6 p.m., CNN's Jeanne Meserve reported “a scene of utter devastation. In an entire neighborhood, water has come up to the eaves of the houses and [I] am told this is not the worst of it. That beyond this, part of the upper Ninth Ward, I'm told the main part of the ward further down is even worse. The water is over the houses. This is a life and death situation. I think by the end of the night we're going to find a lot more death than we ever imagined.”³⁷
- A 6:35 p.m. Spot Report issued by the HSOC was based on information received at some earlier time from the Corps of Engineers. It stated, in part, “A small breach reported at 17 Street Canal by local firemen. ... Report that Dun-

can Pumping Station and Bonneville Pumping Station suffered roof damage, inundation of pumps, and are not operating at this time. Reported overtoppings of levee near Arabi and Inner Harbor Navigation Canal. Some level of widespread flooding has occurred. Report there has been a breach of the levee in the east of Harvey Canal, west bank area.”³⁸

- A Situation Report issued at 7:34 p.m. by the Corps of Engineers described major flooding in New Orleans and stated, “All Jefferson and Orleans Parish Pumping Stations are inoperable as of 29 Aug.”³⁹
- At 8 p.m. on CNN’s *Larry King Live*, Brown said, “This is a catastrophic disaster. I’ve just started getting reconnaissance reports from my folks in the field and I’m anticipating now that I’m going to have to prepare for housing at least tens of thousands of victims that are going to be without homes for literally months on end. ... FEMA folks who have been with the agency for, you know, 15 or 20 years, ... call in and talk about how this is the worst flooding they’ve ever seen in their entire lives and talking about just neighborhoods after neighborhoods gone.”⁴⁰
- At 8:30 p.m., PSA Hunter reported “widespread flooding, and some suspected fatalities (bodies spotted floating in water) in an area of town near the Industrial Canal. The flooding cannot be alleviated due to the large water pumps which normally keep the city dry being out of service.”⁴¹
- A 9:30 p.m. Spot Report based on two overflights of New Orleans by Marty Bahamonde, the only FEMA official in the city, said in part, “There is a quarter-mile breach [sic] in the levee near the 17th Street Canal about 200 yards from Lake Pontchartrain allowing water to flow into the City. ... Only one of the main pumps is reported to still be working but cannot keep up with the demand and its longevity is doubtful ... an estimated 2/3 to 75% of the city is under water. ... Hundreds of people were observed on the balconies and roofs of a major apartment complex in the city. ... A few bodies were seen floating in the water and Coast Guard pilots also reported seeing bodies but there are no details on locations or numbers.”⁴²
- At 10 p.m., MSNBC interviewed Lieutenant Kevin Cowan, Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness, who said, “There’s a lot of heavy rain. There was some breaching of the levee system that pushed the water into St. Bernard Parish and into New Orleans proper itself, flooding neighborhoods. Streets are completely flooded. ... There were some breaches where water was pushed over the top. I am sure there were areas that the levee did fail. We haven’t gotten complete reports.”⁴³
- At 10:47 p.m., a Spot Report reporting that “According to Remote Sensing Imagery and available Census data, approximately 136,000 housing units in New Orleans have been impacted by flooding.”⁴⁴

Though the three Spot Reports listed above were widely distributed by e-mail,⁴⁵ few DHS witnesses recalled seeing them. Despite the fact that it was late at night and that Secretary Chertoff did not use e-mail, the HSOC made no effort to ensure that DHS leadership or the White House actually reviewed and understood the messages, or that they received this critical information in another form.⁴⁶



The Superdome, cut off
AP/Wide World photo

Nearly all DHS witnesses, including those who were on the distribution list for the Spot Reports, testified that they did not know that the levees failed or that New Orleans was suffering catastrophic flooding until Tuesday morning. Many still did not know that the levees had breached and the city flooded on Monday as Katrina came ashore.⁴⁷ When shown these three Spot Reports, DHS witnesses consistently attempted to minimize their import, claiming that they were unconfirmed, conflicting, or unreliable.⁴⁸

The attitude of DHS witnesses toward reports of flooding was also surprising. From the time Friday afternoon when forecasts put New Orleans in the bull's-eye of the storm, every indication was that Katrina could cause horrific devastation.⁴⁹ Yet time and again, DHS witnesses suggested that the reports of flooding received during the day were “typical,” “expected,” “standard,” and the “normal, typical hurricane background stuff.”⁵⁰ While such a reaction might be understandable in a “typical” hurricane, in light of all that was known about Katrina’s power and the risks peculiar to New Orleans, these reports warranted a greater level of concern.

Moreover, in addition to these widely distributed reports, on Monday evening, FEMA Acting Deputy Director Patrick Rhode spoke with Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson to update

him on the deteriorating situation.⁵¹ Later that night, both Wood and Jackson received e-mails about Bahamonde's overflight of New Orleans. At 8:29 p.m., Wood received an e-mail from a DHS public-affairs official, which related that "the first (unconfirmed) reports they are getting from aerial surveys in New Orleans are far more serious than media reports are currently reflecting. Finding extensive flooding and more stranded people than they had originally thought – also a number of fires."⁵²

At 10:05 p.m., Jackson received an e-mail from Rhode summarizing many of the same observations from Bahamonde's overflight that had already been reported to the HSOC, including that there was a 200-yard-long failure of one levee and that most of the city was flooded. Neither recalled seeing the e-mails that night. In sum, there is no evidence that overnight Monday into Tuesday any senior DHS official saw the reports that would have informed them that Katrina was a catastrophe of unprecedented dimensions.

Continued Failure of Situational Awareness – the Convention Center

In many regards, DHS's situational awareness did not improve as the week went on. The situation at the Convention Center in New Orleans provided the most striking illustration of this. Despite media reports on Wednesday night and video Thursday morning of thousands of people at the Convention Center⁵³ – and no later than shortly after noon, images of two dead bodies⁵⁴ – HSOC reports do not even mention the situation until *Friday* morning. Secretary Chertoff himself learned about the Convention Center from an NPR reporter at 1 p.m. on Thursday.⁵⁵ During that interview, the Secretary initially tried to dismiss the reporter's questions about the Convention Center as "a rumor or you get someone's anecdotal version of something."⁵⁶

Witnesses have offered no satisfactory explanation of how this breakdown occurred. Broderick testified first hearing reports of thousands at the Convention Center on Wednesday evening. However, "We actually and initially were confusing the Superdome with the Convention Center. We didn't realize that it was a separate entity. Even on Thursday, we were sorting it out."⁵⁷ On Thursday, he dispatched Wendell Shingler, the Director of the Federal Protective Services (FPS), to investigate. Broderick testified that Shingler arrived that evening and reported that there were approximately a thousand people gathered at the Convention Center, that food and water was available, and that New Orleans police were present. Broderick believes that Shingler failed to appreciate the true size of the Convention Center. Because media reports persisted, Broderick sent Shingler back Friday morning, at which point the accurate report of thousands stranded came back.⁵⁸

The failure of DHS, and the HSOC in particular, to take note of ubiquitous media reports of the situation at the Convention Center is disturbing. Skepticism toward media reports in a crisis situation makes sense, but these were backed up by video, and media-based reports to DHS leadership and the White House could have included appropriate caveats. Instead, DHS and the HSOC did not forward media reports, which left the country's leadership woefully uninformed.

FEMA Failed to Forward Information to the HSOC on a Timely Basis

DHS witnesses were uniform in their criticism of FEMA, and Brown in particular, for failing to provide crucial information to DHS and the HSOC on a timely basis. This criticism, while warranted, does not completely account for HSOC's inadequate situational awareness. While Brown and FEMA should have kept the HSOC better informed of develop-

ments on the ground, the HSOC never should have depended exclusively on FEMA for information. Moreover, as detailed above, it did not. Reports were actually arriving, and others were available, from plenty of other credible sources.

Nevertheless, the FEMA leadership appears to have failed to send critical information to DHS and the HSOC. Though Brown testified that he provided reports to the White House at several points during the day of landfall, he did not call Secretary Chertoff because in his view, “It would have wasted my time.”⁵⁹ He appears not to have communicated with the HSOC at all about conditions on the ground. It appears also that several significant e-mails were not forwarded to the HSOC.⁶⁰ These included a series of e-mails between 8:36 and 9:19 a.m. containing reports: from a member of FEMA’s liaison team at the National Hurricane Center, that the Industrial Canal levee had failed; a summary of a report from Marty Bahamonde, the FEMA official, that detailed severe flooding, people trapped in attics, and failing pumps;⁶¹ and a 10:51 a.m. e-mail to FEMA’s Deputy Director of Response with Bahamonde’s news that the New Orleans Fire Department was reporting a 20-foot-wide breach in the 17th Street levee.⁶²

Brown’s testimony made clear that he purposely refused to provide updates to the HSOC and to Secretary Chertoff. Though Broderick testified that he believed that FEMA intentionally limited its reports,⁶³ investigation found no independent evidence to support this, and it does not appear that Lokey, Rhode, or others in FEMA did so. To the contrary, Lokey testified that “Michael Brown did not tell me to [in] any way, shape, or form stop any flow of information” and that he was not aware of any other limitation on the transmission of information to the HSOC.⁶⁴ Rhode sent several e-mails to, and had at least one phone conversation with, Jackson on Monday. Finally, nine of the Spot Reports issued by the HSOC on Monday were ascribed to FEMA, a clear indication that there was a steady information flow from FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center into the HSOC.

Conclusion

The HSOC did not devise and implement a system to ensure access to all significant, relevant information that became available as Katrina neared and then landed on the Gulf Coast. Compounding the problem, even though the HSOC had enough information by late Monday afternoon to conclude that the levees had failed, it issued a key situation report that reflected and propagated incorrectly optimistic information about conditions in New Orleans.

Situational Awareness of Louisiana State Officials

Louisiana should have had a much easier time maintaining situational awareness than the federal government. In contrast to DHS, which was operating out of Washington, D.C., Louisiana’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was in Baton Rouge, close to the primary hurricane impact area, and there were thousands of National Guard troops and other state and local officials on the ground in southeast Louisiana before, during, and after landfall to feed information. Nonetheless, while Louisiana avoided some of the obvious failures of the federal government, its record of maintaining situational awareness was mixed, at best.

The Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP) addressed situational awareness in its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). The SOP identified guiding principles for information handling, including, “The prompt capture, assessment and rapid dissemination of information within the EOC contributes markedly to quick response and effective decision making during an emergency.”⁶⁵ It also required

“all personnel involved in the emergency” to “aggressively seek the status of these items as quickly as possible ... before, during and after an event” and to report it to the EOC.⁶⁶

In fact, first responders and others in the area affected by Katrina needed little encouragement to pass on information to the state EOC, since they relied heavily on the EOC to process their requests for assistance. But information came from numerous other sources as well, including National Guard on-the ground and fly-over reports,⁶⁷ Louisiana State Police reports,⁶⁸ and media coverage.⁶⁹ Some information even came from callers in other states.

LOHSEP compiled the data flow into situation reports that were updated several times a day.⁷⁰ Topics included weather, status and staffing of the emergency operations center, data on injuries and fatalities, shelter populations, status of nursing homes and hospitals, road closures, utility and communications outages, and status of response missions. Naturally, the length of these sitreps grew dramatically as the response progressed. For example, a LOHSEP sitrep at 10 a.m. on Sunday, the day before landfall, ran just nine pages; by Wednesday evening, the report was 75 pages.⁷¹ Senior officials at LOHSEP did not have to rely solely on sitreps, as they also received a steady stream of information from emergency-management officials on the ground.⁷²

LOHSEP was not alone in having an information-gathering strategy in the state. The Louisiana National Guard, which supplied information to LOHSEP, also had an information network to meet its own needs. The senior Guard official in Louisiana, Major General Bennett Landreneau, was stationed with the Governor in the LOHSEP command room.⁷³ As the hurricane approached, the command staff directed 10 air-squadron operations-support teams and troops on the ground to report to the Joint Operations Command at the Superdome every two hours.⁷⁴ In addition, they stationed liaison officers with radio equipment at local parish offices, and held their own series of conference calls with parish emergency-support officials throughout the night before landfall to monitor the hurricane's effects.⁷⁵

However, these elaborate information-gathering systems did not prevent serious breakdowns in the state's situational awareness. One notable example was Governor Blanco herself, who evidently was unaware of earlier reports of levee breaches when she made her statement to state and federal officials in the noon video teleconference on the day before landfall that “We have not breached the levee at this point in time.”⁷⁶ This was a particularly unfortunate misstatement, as it may have contributed to the federal government's confusion about the status of the levees. The record does not indicate when she learned her statement was inaccurate, or whether she made any attempt to inform the state and federal officials on the video teleconference, including the White House deputy chief of staff, of her mistake.

The state's response was also hampered by a lack of information about the locations of people in distress. For example, the state was slow to learn about people brought by search-and-rescue teams to the major highway intersection in west New Orleans known as the Cloverleaf.⁷⁷ Similarly, LOHSEP did not learn about people assembling at the Convention Center until well after crowds amassed there. Mayor Nagin bears some of the blame for the delay, as he apparently failed to inform other officials when he decided, on Tuesday, August 30, to open the Convention Center as a shelter when the Superdome became overcrowded.⁷⁸ Just the same, it was striking to hear the LOHSEP operations manager, Colonel William Doran, testify that his information on that situation was limited to what he saw on TV and occasional reports from security officers.⁷⁹

The National Guard, which took charge of the Convention Center on Friday, September 2, learned about the situation there inadvertently. Brigadier General Gary Jones of Louisiana, Joint Force Commander of all National Guard troops involved in the Katrina operation, said, “We had no knowledge of [the people there] until we sent out reconnaissance patrols

[on August 31], and those reconnaissance patrols came back and said, ‘Oh, by the way, it looks like you’ve got another group of about 15,000 sitting over there.’”⁸⁰

Lack of situational awareness contributed to problems in Louisiana in distributing food, water, and other commodities. In particular, logistics managers expressed frustration at not knowing when commodities were shipped or when they arrived.⁸¹ (See Chapter 23, Logistics.)

While lack of incoming information left LOHSEP unaware of important developments, in some cases the fault lay with LOHSEP’s inability to process the information it did receive. As Lt. Col. Doran testified, LOHSEP was simply not equipped for the volume of information it needed to assess:

It may have been just for the fact that we were, again, rapidly overwhelmed to be able to target what information is good, what is not, the amount of information coming in. It’s just like in intelligence, you get an amount of information and then you have to sift through to find out what’s good information, what’s bad, and what is factual, what’s not. Then you have to prioritize.⁸²

The state also lacked systems to organize incoming information in a manner that was useful for emergency response, making it necessary in some cases to improvise those systems on the fly. A notable example was information about the location of the large numbers of people calling in on 911 lines. Assuming the many 911 calls it received were requests for rescue, LOHSEP, with no plans for managing the callers’ information, transferred them to the Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries (W&F) representative on staff. With help from the Louisiana Geological Survey, a research institution within Louisiana State University, a W&F representative named Robbie Duthu developed a system to plot incoming calls on a map that was forwarded to search-and-rescue personnel daily.⁸³

1 On its Web site, DHS says the HSOC “serves as the nation’s nerve center for information sharing and domestic incident management. . . . The HSOC is in constant communication with the White House, acting as the situational awareness conduit for the White House Situation Room by providing information needed to make decisions and define courses of action.” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Fact Sheet: Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC),” press release, July 8, 2004. http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/press_release/press_release_0456.xml. Accessed on Mar. 8, 2006.

2 PSAs are within the Infrastructure Protection Office at DHS, and there are approximately 68 spread around the country. DHS’s Web site describes PSAs as “Homeland security experts identified in major metropolitan communities across the country to serve as liaisons between the Department and other partners on issues of critical infrastructure protection.” U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “Fact Sheet: Key Priorities Update March 1, 2004 – March 1, 2005,” press release, Mar. 2004. <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/display?theme=43&content=4279&pring=true>. Accessed on Apr. 12, 2006.

3 The morning sitreps are included in the DHS Secretary’s briefing book.

4 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Situation Report, Aug. 29, 2005, 6 p.m., p. 1. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS 0001181.

5 FEMA, National Situation Report, Aug. 29, 2005, 6 p.m., p. 13. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS 0001193.

6 In his answer to one of Senator Lieberman’s Questions for the Record submitted after Secretary Chertoff’s appearance before the Committee on Feb. 15, 2006, the Secretary wrote, “The last report I received on Monday evening from the HSOC stated that preliminary reports had indicated the levees had not been breached, and that the situation was still being assessed.” This is almost a direct quote from the 6 p.m. sitrep. Questions for the Record of Sec. Michael Chertoff, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for the U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, hearing on *Hurricane Katrina: The Homeland Security Department’s Preparation and Response*, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 51.

7 Testimony of Sec. Michael Chertoff, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, hearing on *Hurricane Katrina: The Homeland Security Department’s Preparation and Response*, Feb. 15, 2006.

8 President George W. Bush, “President, Lieutenant General Honoré Discuss Hurricane Relief in Louisiana,” press

- release, Sept. 12, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050912.html>. Accessed on Mar. 8, 2006.
- 9 Committee staff interview of Brig. Gen. Matthew Broderick, Director, Homeland Security Operations Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted on Jan. 19, 2006, transcript pp. 81-82.
- 10 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 37.
- 11 Committee staff interview of Richard Gray, Team Leader, Information and Assessment Team and Team Leader, National Response Coordination Center, FEMA, conducted on Jan. 20, 2006, transcript p. 85.
- 12 DHS produced to the Committee documents from the Senior Watch Officer (SWO) at the HSOC on the day of landfall but did not produce documents from the individual desk officers at the HSOC. Because of this refusal – and because all but one of the bolded reports listed below was found somewhere other than in the SWO e-mails – the Committee does not, and cannot, represent that these bolded reports are the entirety of those received by the HSOC on the day of landfall. There are numerous other reports that the Committee believes may have reached the HSOC, but absent complete production, there was no way to determine if in fact they were received.
- 13 National Weather Service, New Orleans-Baton Rouge, LA Office, Flash Flood Warning, Aug. 29, 2005, 8:14 a.m. CT. Provided to Committee.
- 14 Louis Dabdoub, e-mail to Michael Waters and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 9 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-INFP-0003-0001768.
- 15 National Weather Service, New Orleans-Baton Rouge, LA Office, Hurricane Katrina Local Statement, Aug. 29, 2005, 9 a.m. CT. Provided to Committee.
- 16 Louis Dabdoub, e-mail to Michael Waters and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 9:36 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-INFP-0003-0001768.
- 17 Daniel Kaniewski, e-mail to Dan Bartlett and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:13 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. 004795. Elsewhere this document cites the HSOC as reporting that “due to the rising water in the 9th Ward, residents are in their attics and on their roofs.”
- 18 Francis Patno, e-mail to Ira Stern and others, Sept. 1, 2005, 9:54 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-INFP-0003-0001497, 0001499.
- 19 Darryl Mahoney, e-mail to HSOC.HSIN and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:41 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-HSOC-0002-0000186.
- 20 Louisiana State Police, Emergency Operations Center, Hurricane Katrina Situation Report, Aug. 29, 2005, 11 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. 000001 through 000004.
- 21 National Weather Service, New Orleans-Baton Rouge, LA Office, issued by Mobile, AL Office, Flash Flood Warning, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:40 a.m. CT. Provided to Committee.
- 22 Lt. Robert Walls, e-mail to LANTHMHL Watch and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 1:51 p.m. Provided to Committee.
- 23 Francis Patno, e-mail to Ira Stern and others, Sept. 1, 2005, 9:54 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-INFP-0003-0001497, 0001500.
- 24 National Weather Service, New Orleans-Baton Rouge, LA Office, Hurricane Katrina Local Statement, Aug. 29, 2005, 3:05 p.m. CT. Provided to Committee; National Weather Service, New Orleans – Baton Rouge, LA Office, Hurricane Katrina Local Statement, Aug. 29, 2005, 3:10 p.m. CT. Provided to Committee; National Weather Service, New Orleans – Baton Rouge, LA Office, issued by Mobile, AL Office, Hurricane Katrina Local Statement, Aug. 29, 2005, 4:20 p.m. CT. Provided to Committee; National Weather Service, New Orleans – Baton Rouge, LA Office, issued by Mobile, AL Office, Hurricane Katrina Local Statement, Aug. 29, 2005, 8:13 p.m. CT. Provided to Committee.
- 25 Anthony Capra, e-mail to DoD.DomesticIncidentManagement, Aug. 29, 2005, 5:25 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as MMTF 00418-05. The receiver of this e-mail was redacted. In an e-mail to investigators, Col. Dave Rhodes states that the prior e-mail was sent to the above e-mail distribution list. Col. Dave Rhodes, e-mail to Tom Eldridge, Dan Berkovitz, and Eric Andersen, Senate Committee staff members, Apr. 19, 2006, 10:36 a.m.
- 26 Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (LOHSEP), Sitrep, Executive Summary, Hurricane Katrina, Aug. 29, 2005, 4 p.m. CT. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-FEMA-0028-0001109, 0001138
- 27 Ivor van Heerden, Live Event, Fox News Network, “Special Coverage: Hurricane Katrina Pounds New Orleans,” Aug. 29, 2005, 5 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.
- 28 John Schmidt, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, transcript pp. 9-10. Provided to Committee.
- 29 William Lokey, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, transcript pp. 17-18. Provided to Committee.
- 30 Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2006, transcript pp. 20-21. Provided to Committee. In his responses to the Committee’s Questions for the Record, Secretary Chertoff repeatedly references Governor Blanco’s statement regarding the levees. Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, pp. 9, 15, 47, 48, 51, 81. As we now know, this statement was incorrect when it was made – reports coming into both the Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center and the HSOC detailed that the levees had breached. Moreover, this noon statement does not somehow contradict the many later reports of breaches that came in from varied sources.
- 31 Robert Latham, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, transcript. 22. Provided to Committee. Reports from Mississippi during the VTC were no less ominous. Max Mayfield accurately stated that the storm surge in the

Biloxi area would be “very, very devastating.” *Source:* Mayfield, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, transcript p. 5. Latham, Director of the Mississippi Emergency Management Agency, stated “It certainly looks like it is a catastrophic event that we all expected” and reported that the Hancock County Emergency Operations Center collapsed while the Jackson County Emergency Operations Center was flooded. *Source:* Latham, VTC, Aug. 29, 2005, pp. 22-23. He also reported calls from “citizens who are trapped in the second floor of their homes, in the attics of their homes and roofs, and we cannot get to them.” *Source:* Latham, VTC, Aug. 29, 2005, pp. 22-23. The historic scope of the unfolding disaster was clear to him: “I suspect that the history books, that this event will replace Camille as far as Mississippi is concerned.” *Source:* Latham, VTC, Aug. 29, 2005, p. 24.

32 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 84. Though this investigation uncovered no evidence of anyone at the HSOC or DHS being aware of these NWS reports, it is possible that these reports were received or reviewed by the NOAA desk at the HSOC. However, because DHS refused to produce e-mails from this desk we were unable to determine if in fact this happened. Thus, we consider these to be reports that HSOC failed to obtain. However, if in fact the HSOC did obtain these reports, they would simply be added to the long list of reports that the HSOC received but failed to understand or appreciate.

33 Anthony Capra, e-mail to DoD.DomesticIncidentManagement distribution list, Aug. 29, 2005, 5:25 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as MMTF00418-05. The receiver of this e-mail was redacted. In an e-mail to investigators, Col. Dave Rhodes states that the prior e-mail was sent to the above e-mail distribution list. *Source:* Col. Dave Rhodes, e-mail to Tom Eldridge, Senate Committee staff member, and others, Apr. 19, 2006, 10:36 a.m.; Anthony Capra, e-mail to Paul McHale, Aug. 29, 2005, 5:25 p.m. ET. Provided to Committee.

34 While media reports are often not the most reliable, during interviews some witnesses went to illogical lengths in trying to explain why the media was not to be trusted. For instance, when shown the front page of the August 30, 2005, New Orleans *Times-Picayune* (posted online at 2:43 a.m. CT) – which showed an elderly man being rescued from his home in chest-deep water – Broderick said, “You know, this could be one house flooded, and the houses around it aren’t even touched.” Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 166-167.

35 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 130-131.

36 Eric Jones, e-mail to Eric Jones and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 6:08 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK-06494 through 06499.

37 Jean Meserve, *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees*, CNN, “Hurricane Katrina Slams Gulf Coast,” Aug. 29, 2005, 7 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

38 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HSOC Spot Report #7, Aug. 29, 2005, 7:35 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-FEMA-0055-0007575.

39 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Situation Report #3, Aug. 30, 2006, 0034 Z. Provided to Committee.

40 Michael Brown, *Larry King Live*, CNN, “Tracking Hurricane Katrina,” Aug. 29, 2005, 9 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

41 Francis Patno, e-mail to Ira Stern and others, Sept. 1, 2005, 9:54 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-INFP-0003-0001497, 0001502.

42 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HSOC Spot Report #13, Aug. 29, 2005, 10:30 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-HSOC-0004-0005521 through 0005522.

43 Lt. Kevin Cowen, *The Situation with Tucker Carlson*, MSNBC, “The Situation for August 29, 2005,” Aug. 29, 2005, 11 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

44 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HSOC Spot Report #12, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:47 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-FEMA-0055-0007581.

45 All reports appear to have gone to multiple desks in the HSOC as well as to Secretary Chertoff’s briefing staff. Beyond this group, distribution lists for reports added different officials. For example, the Spot Report detailing Marty Bahamonde’s overflight went to, among others, Deputy Secretary Jackson, Chief of Staff Wood, Secretary Chertoff’s military aide, Broderick, Stephan, and the White House Situation Room and individuals within the White House Homeland Security Council.

46 In response to one of Senator Collins’ Questions for the Record submitted after Secretary Chertoff’s appearance before the Committee on February 15, 2006, the Secretary was critical of just such a reliance on e-mails to communicate important information. Specifically, he criticized FEMA Acting Deputy Director Patrick Rhode for using e-mail to provide a report of the Bahamonde overflight to Deputy Secretary Jackson: “E-mails are not the most appropriate way of conveying urgent or important information, especially late at night. Instead, the right course would have been to notify the HSOC, which reaches both the Deputy Secretary and me by telephone at any time of day or night.” *Source:* Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 10; *See also:* Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 50 (“The best means of communicating important information with high-ranking officials was by telephone call to the HSOC, who could reach me any time of the day or night, not via e-mail.”). In fact, in the case of the Rhode e-mail, the HSOC had already been informed of the Bahamonde overflight, evidenced by the HSOC Spot Report detailing the report that is time-stamped 10:30 p.m., 35 minutes before the Rhode e-mail. *Source:* U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HSOC Spot Report #13, Aug. 29, 2005, 10:30 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-HSOC-0004-0005521 through 0005522. However, the same is not true of the three Spot Reports (Spot Report numbers 7, 13, and 12 issued at 6:35, 9:30, and 10:47 CT respectively.) – no efforts were made by HSOC officials to call or otherwise ensure that senior officials received these critical reports. *Source:* Brig. Gen. Brod-

erick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 168-169.

47 Committee staff interview of Robert Stephan, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for Infrastructure Protection, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted on Jan. 13, 2006, transcript pp. 115-116 (“I still am not convinced that it was a known fact that there were widespread levee breaches or gaps or massive flooding happening some time on Monday.”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 129-130 (“But the doomsday scenario of New Orleans, the levees breaking and tons of water going in and washing people away did not happen, and the people of New Orleans and the State and everyone else kind of breathed a sigh of relief. That later on, those failures started occurring at greater lengths on that levee system, and that’s when the preponderance of water, as I understand it, started coming in was in the middle of the night.”); Committee staff interview of Frank DiFalco, then-Deputy Director, Homeland Security Operations Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted on Jan. 13, 2006, transcript p. 121 (“Q: Do you know now that the levees breached on Monday? A: I don’t know if they breached Monday.”).

48 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 163 (Describing the spot report of the Bahamonde overflight as “not an excitable report to me. It’s of interest, and if I had received it, I’d go back and drill down and ask for some more clarity.”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 159-160 (stating that because the 6 p.m. sitrep reported no breaches, the 7:35 p.m. Spot Report “wouldn’t have gotten me excited”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 165-166 (questioning the 11:47 spot report which stated that 136,000 homes had been affected by flooding: “I mean, who says 136,000 houses. Did someone count all of them, or is that someone’s wild guess?”); Stephan interview, Jan. 13, 2006, p. 35 (stating, after reviewing the spot report of the Bahamonde overflight, “[I did] not know what a breach on this particular section of New Orleans means to the overall, you know, picture”); Stephan interview, Jan. 13, 2006, p. 39 (even after the spot report of the Bahamonde overflight was issued, there was still no “confirmed information that we had massive breaching and flooding occurring”); DiFalco interview, Jan. 13, 2006, p. 107 (saying that the Bahamonde overflight did not merit a call to the Secretary or other senior staff to ensure that it was received, and stating “It says it’s from Public Affairs. So, again, we’re back to the issue of, okay, that’s fine, Public Affairs is saying this is what’s going on, what’s the engineers saying?”); Question for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 51 (the Secretary dismissed the 7:35 p.m. spot report as “uncontrovertibly tentative, and giv[ing] no indication that the ‘small breach’ could not be repaired.”). It is difficult to understand how the report of a breach of the crucial levee on the 17th Street Canal could be minimized because it did not state that the breach could *not* be repaired. Indeed, in the face of the dire predictions before landfall and the myriad reports of flooding after landfall, the presumption should have been to take the report any breach seriously absent some statement to contrary. Finally, this spot report, which reflected an earlier Army Corps of Engineers report, also described a second levee breach, failing pumps, widespread flooding, and overtopping.

49 In response to one of Senator Collins’ Questions for the Record submitted after Secretary Chertoff’s appearance before the Committee on February 15, 2006, the Secretary said, “We knew that this storm had the potential to wreak havoc on the Gulf Coast and could cause enormous damage to entire region.” Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 6.

50 Stephan interview, Jan. 13, 2006, p. 59 (“typical” and “expected”); Committee staff interview of John Wood, Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted on Jan. 27, 2006, transcript p. 64 (“expected”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 164 (“standard”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 105 (“normal, typical hurricane background stuff”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 131 (“There’s always flooding after a hurricane”); Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, p. 146 (“Every time there’s a hurricane, there’s a flood. So, you know, to say there is flooding in a particular part of town is a normal expectation of what’s happening in a hurricane.”). In addition, in response to one of Senator Akaka’s Questions for the Record submitted after Secretary Chertoff’s appearance before the Committee on February 15, 2006, the Secretary said, “Flooding is an incident of almost all hurricanes.” Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 74.

51 Committee staff interview of Patrick Rhode, Acting Deputy Director, FEMA, conducted on Jan. 4, 2006, transcript p. 50.

52 When shown this e-mail during a staff interview, Wood minimized its importance: “I do not equate extensive flooding necessarily with the type of flooding that we had due to the levee breach.” *Source*: Wood interview, Jan. 27, 2006, p. 74. In response to one of Senator Akaka’s Questions for the Record submitted after Secretary Chertoff’s appearance before the Committee on February 15, 2006, the Secretary said “The e-mail to my chief of staff does not mention levee breaches. There is a critical distinction between flooding and breach of a levee. Flooding is an incident of almost all hurricanes. Levee breach is extraordinary.” *Source*: Questions for the Record of Sec. Chertoff, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 15, 2006, p. 74.

53 During the 8 o’clock hour on Wednesday, August 31, reporter Chris Lawrence told Paula Zahn on CNN that “There are literally thousands of people lined up at this convention center wandering aimlessly, I mean, mothers with their babies, little kids, walking through this putrid water. And there’s this dead body that is just sitting there. And I asked one of police officers and he said, we can’t – we can barely control the situation as it is. We can’t even worry about dead right now.” *Source*: Chris Lawrence, *Paula Zahn Show*, CNN, “President Bush Promises Massive Hurricane Relief Effort; Thousands Feared Dead in New Orleans,” Aug. 31, 2005, 8 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis. During the 10 p.m. broadcast of *Scarborough Country* on MSNBC, Michelle Hofland reported that “We are hearing some really frightening stories tonight down at the convention center. ... Well, we are told that down there, at that convention center, it is absolute chaos. We haven’t been down there, Joe, because we are told that it’s just not a safe place to be. So, you have families with children and everything down at that convention center. Cars are being carjacked. And there’s no one there, we are told, to take care of the thousands of people who are there.” *Source*: Michelle Hofland, *Scarborough Country*, MSNBC, “Scarborough Country For August 31, 2005,” Aug. 31, 2005, 10 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on

LexisNexis. The next morning, in the 7 a.m. ET hour, Chris Lawrence reported “I mean right here at the convention center, which is just a couple of blocks away from us, as we were driving in, there were thousands, thousands of people just sleeping on the streets of New Orleans. I mean mothers with their children, entire families have nowhere to go. You walk by and people don’t have water. They’re running out of food.” *Source*: Chris Lawrence, *American Morning*, CNN, “Massive Evacuation from New Orleans to Houston Coming to Sudden Halt; Looting and Lawlessness Continue to Escalate,” Sept. 1, 2005, 7 a.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis. In the 10 a.m. hour, CNN Producer Jim Spellman reported that “The convention center was the secondary place where people were to go. The first being the Superdome. And thousands of people are there. They slept outside. The inside of the convention center is just crammed.” *Source*: Jim Spellman, *CNN Live Today*, CNN, “Chaos and Catastrophe in New Orleans; FEMA Briefing,” Sept. 1, 2005, 10 a.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

54 Video shown on CNN’s 1 p.m. ET “Live From ...” broadcast showed at least two bodies next to the convention center. Chris Lawrence, *Live From ...*, CNN, “Rescue Operations Suspended Due to Security Issues; Stranded Hurricane Victims Dying in New Orleans; Officials Face Chaos, Lack of Communication,” Sept. 1, 2005, 1 p.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

55 Evan Thomas, “Michael Chertoff: ‘What the Hell is Going on?’” *Newsweek*, Jan. 2, 2006. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10511927/site/newsweek/>. Accessed on Mar. 10, 2006.

56 Sec. Michael Chertoff, *All Things Considered*, NPR, “Michael Chertoff discusses US aid effort being criticized in New Orleans,” Sept. 1, 2005, 8 a.m. ET. Transcript accessed on LexisNexis.

57 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 171-172.

58 Brig. Gen. Broderick interview, Jan. 19, 2006, pp. 173-174. Committee staff interviewed Federal Protective Service Director Shingler, but his recollection was inconsistent with that of other witnesses and with the documents obtained. Committee staff interview of Wendell Shingler, Director, Office of Federal Protective Service, Border and Transportation Security, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted on Feb. 14, 2006, transcript pp. 15-17.

59 Testimony of Michael Brown, former Director, FEMA, before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, hearing on *Hurricane Katrina, The Roles of DHS and FEMA Leadership*, Feb. 10, 2006. Brown testified that he believed that he could accomplish things more quickly by calling the White House directly.

60 The Committee cannot be certain that these e-mails were not sent to DHS, because DHS never produced e-mails from the FEMA desk in the HSOC that would have been the most likely recipient of these reports.

61 Patrick Rhode, e-mail to Michael Heath, Aug. 29, 2005, 10:19 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS 0005684 through 0005685.

62 Michael Heath, e-mail to Michael Lowder, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:51 a.m., pp. 1-2. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. DHS-FEMA-0029-0002959 through 0002960.

63 Testimony of Brig. Gen. Matthew Broderick, former Director, Homeland Security Operations Center, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the U.S. Senate, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, hearing on *Hurricane Katrina: The Roles of DHS and FEMA Leadership*, Feb. 10, 2006.

64 Committee staff interview of William Lokey, Federal Coordinating Officer for Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, FEMA, conducted on Jan. 20, 2006, transcript p. 175.

65 LOHSEP, Standard Operation Procedures, Section 5.a.(1). Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. 000008 through 000009.

66 LOHSEP, SOP Level I Activation, Sec. KK. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. 000055.

67 Committee staff interview of Col. David Aycock, Operations Officer, Louisiana National Guard, conducted on Jan. 4, 2006, transcript p. 212; Committee staff interview of Col. Jeff Smith, Jr., Louisiana National Guard (Ret.), Acting Deputy Director, Emergency Management, Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, conducted on Jan. 13, 2005, transcript p. 141; Committee staff interview of Brig. Gen. Gary Jones, Commander, Joint Force Pelican, Louisiana Army National Guard, conducted on Dec. 7, 2005, transcript p. 96.

68 Committee staff interview of Lt. Col. William Doran, Louisiana Air National Guard, Chief, Operations Division, Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, conducted on Dec. 2, 2005, transcript p. 73.

69 Lt. Col. Doran interview, Dec. 2, 2005, p. 115.

70 Col. Smith interview, Jan. 13, 2006, pp. 144-145.

71 Compare LOHSEP, Sitrep, Aug. 28, 2005, 11 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. 000001 through 000009, with LOHSEP, Sitrep, Aug. 31, 2005, 10 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. 000001 through 0000075.

72 Col. Smith interview, Jan. 13, 2006, pp. 232-233.

73 Col. Aycock interview, Jan. 4, 2006, p. 212.

74 Committee staff interview of Lt. Col. Thibodeaux, Joint Director of Military Support to Civilian Authorities, Louisiana National Guard, conducted on Dec. 6, 2005, transcript pp. 146-147.

75 Lt. Col. Thibodeaux interview, Dec. 6, 2005, p. 149.

76 Gov. Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, transcript pp. 20-21. Provided to Committee.

77 Lt. Col. Doran interview, Dec. 2, 2005, p. 146; Committee staff interview of Brig. Gen. Brod Veillon, Assistant Adjutant General, Louisiana National Guard, conducted on Nov. 29, 2005, transcript p. 45.

78 See Chapter 23, p. 11.

79 Lt. Col. Doran interview, Dec. 2, 2005, pp. 133-134.

80 Brig. Gen. Jones interview, Dec. 7, 2005, p. 96.

81 Committee staff interview of Col. Jadwin Mayeaux, Deputy Director, Homeland Security, Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, conducted on Nov. 29, 2005, transcript pp. 34-35.

82 Lt. Col. Doran interview, Dec. 2, 2005, p. 160.

83 Committee staff interview of Robert Duthu, Liaison to Louisiana State Emergency Operations Center, Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, conducted on Dec. 8, 2005, transcript pp. 271-276.