



Grounded, Louisiana  
U.S. Coast Guard photo

# Government Response: The Role of the White House

A catastrophic event requires decisive leadership at all levels – from the affected locality, to the state government, to federal agencies, and to the White House. Hurricane Katrina was a test in leadership. There were warnings. But there was not enough done to prepare. There was the catastrophe. But on the day it struck, there was uncertainty and a lack of awareness as to the extent of the damage. There was a response. But it was, initially, halting and not up to a disaster of such consequence.

There was leadership, but not the measure Americans expected as they witnessed the devastation and human suffering Katrina left in her wake. Though it was not alone, the White House failed to meet these expectations in at least three respects:

- **Actual or Constructive Knowledge:** The White House knew or should have known that Katrina could turn into the long-feared “New Orleans Scenario,” and could wreak devastation throughout the Gulf Coast region. The White House also may have been aware that FEMA was not prepared for such a catastrophe;
- **Lack of Situational Awareness:** Despite receiving information from multiple sources on the extent of the damage in New Orleans, the White House does not appear to have been aware that levees had broken and the city was flooding on the day of the storm and, indeed, appears to have remained for some time under the misimpression that the levees did not break until the day after Katrina made landfall; and,
- **Inadequate Initial Response:** The initial response to Katrina was halting and inadequate, in part due to poor situational awareness. Ultimately, the President and his team brought the full resources of the federal government to bear on the catastrophe.

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## **Advance Knowledge of a Catastrophic Scenario, FEMA’s Shortcomings, and the Approach of the Storm**

Katrina’s devastation should not have been a surprise to the White House.

In early 2004, the White House Deputy National Security Advisor, General John A. Gordon, went to New Orleans to receive a briefing on catastrophic-hurricane planning efforts for the region. The detailed briefing covered the catastrophic consequences of a Category 3 hurricane hitting New Orleans. General Gordon reported this to the White House, which may have influenced the funding that resulted in the Hurricane Pam exercise.<sup>1</sup> In addition, another White House aide, Janet Benini,<sup>2</sup> attended the Hurricane Pam exercise. Benini also chaired the group that developed the National Planning Scenarios, a set of 15 plausible, high-consequence events used by the federal government to come up with preparedness goals and lists of emergency response capabilities that federal, state, and local responders should have. One event included among the scenarios is modeled on a hurricane hitting New Orleans.

There were also ample warnings specific to Hurricane Katrina. The National Weather Service, FEMA, other Department of Homeland Security components such as the National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center, and state officials warned the White House repeatedly over the weekend before landfall that Katrina was likely to be a catastrophe.<sup>3</sup> The documents the White House provided to this Committee show that prior to and after landfall, the White House Homeland Security Council (HSC)<sup>4</sup> received large amounts of information from DHS's Homeland Security Operations Center (HSOC), as well as other federal agencies and departments, including the National Guard Bureau, the Department of Energy, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration concerning the situation that could develop. The American Red Cross and other organizations were also briefed. Moreover, as Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff said, the President was “acutely aware of Katrina and the risk it posed” during the weekend before landfall.<sup>5</sup> “We went into the weekend before,” Chertoff said, “with an understanding and with warnings that this was potentially the nightmare scenario that I think people have talked about for years in terms of New Orleans.”<sup>6</sup>

On the Saturday before the storm made landfall, FEMA Director Michael Brown relayed to state, local, and federal officials – including the White House – his fears of the devastation Katrina could cause. During FEMA's August 27<sup>7</sup> noon video-conference call, Brown voiced the following concerns:

I know I'm preaching to the choir on this one, but I've learned over the past four and a half, five years, to go with my gut on a lot of things, and I've got to tell you my gut hurts on this one. It hurts. I've got cramps. So, we need to take this one very, very seriously.<sup>8</sup>

Joe Hagin, White House Deputy Chief of Staff, participated on the same conference call while in Crawford, Texas, and listened to the warnings presented by Brown and others. He asked no questions and offered only the following statement: “We're here, and anything we can do, obviously, to support you, but it sounds like the planning, as usual, is in good shape, and good luck to the states and just know that we're watching, and we'll do the right thing as fast as we can.”<sup>9</sup>

The warnings continued through the night: At 11:24 p.m., the White House received a National Hurricane Center report stating: “The bottom line is that Katrina is expected to be an intense and dangerous hurricane heading towards the North Central Gulf Coast and this has to be taken very seriously.”<sup>10</sup>

At noon on Sunday, August 28, President Bush participated from his ranch in Crawford, Texas, with FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, and state officials in a video-conference call in which Max Mayfield, Director of the National Hurricane Center, predicted Katrina would be a “very dangerous hurricane”:

The problem that we're going to have here — remember, the winds go counterclockwise around the center of the hurricane. So if the really strong winds clip Lake Pontchartrain, that's going to pile some of that water from Lake Pontchartrain over on the south side of the lake. I don't think any model can tell you with any confidence right now whether the levies will be topped or not, but that's obviously a very, very grave concern. ... And, quite frankly, for the folks in Louisiana, if you can't get people out, you know, if you're ever going to, you know, talk about vertical refuge [sheltering in the upper stories of tall buildings], this is the time to do it.<sup>11</sup>

During the same call, Brown stated: “My gut tells me — I told you guys my gut was that this (missing) is a bad one and a big one,” and that Katrina could be “a catastrophe within a catastrophe.”<sup>12</sup> The State of Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness’ Chief of Operations, Bill Doran, also informed the President on the same call that the state was doing “catastrophic planning” for Katrina.<sup>13</sup> The President asked no questions, but made the following statement:

I want to assure the folks at the state level that we are fully prepared to not only help you during the storm, but we will move in whatever resources and assets we have at our disposal after the storm to help you deal with the loss of property. And we pray for no loss of life, of course.

Unfortunately, we’ve had experience at this in recent years, and I — the FEMA folks have done great work in the past, and I’m confident, Mike, that you and your team will do all you can to help the good folks in these affected states.

Again, I want to thank Governor Blanco and Governor Riley and Governor [Barbour], Governor Bush of Florida, for heeding these warnings, and doing all you can possibly do with your state folks and local folks to prepare the citizenry for this storm.

In the meantime, I know the nation will be praying for the good folks in the affected areas, and we just hope for the very best.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to the conference call, the White House continued to receive additional warnings of the storm’s projected force and fury throughout the day.

The White House also may have received warnings that FEMA lacked the support and capability to prepare for and respond to a Katrina-like catastrophe. Brown claims to have warned President Bush, White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card, and White House Deputy Chief of Staff Joe Hagin as early as January 2005 that “We [FEMA] weren’t getting the money we needed [and] we weren’t getting the personnel that we needed,” and that, consequently, FEMA was not ready to handle a disaster like a tsunami.<sup>15</sup>

It is not clear what, if anything, the White House did to address these concerns and to help ensure that FEMA was ready when disaster struck. But the concerns appear to have gone unheeded by the White House and DHS in the period prior to Katrina.

On the other hand, the President did take significant steps in preparation for the storm. On Saturday evening, in response to Governor Blanco’s request earlier that day, President Bush took the unusual step of issuing an emergency declaration for the State of Louisiana, which the White House described as being “indicative of the recognition that Katrina had the potential to be particularly devastating.”<sup>16</sup> The declaration effectively assured the state that the federal government would pay for costs associated with evacuating residents prior to the storm.

In addition to authorizing funds to help with the pre-storm evacuation, President Bush urged that an evacuation take place. On Sunday, August 28, President Bush spoke with Governor Blanco to encourage her to order a mandatory evacuation of New Orleans.

While these steps were important and commendable, the White House could have marshaled federal resources more proactively in advance of the storm. Katrina was a hurricane that the White House knew or should have known could cause massive devastation in and around New Orleans. The preparations simply were not proportionate to the likely imminent catastrophe.



President Bush greeting Mayor Nagin, Secretary Chertoff

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### **Lack of Situational Awareness**

The record indicates that as early as 11:13 a.m. ET, on Monday, August 29, the White House Homeland Security Council circulated to, among others, Homeland Security Advisor Frances Townsend, Deputy White House Chief of Staff Joe Hagin, Deputy Homeland Security Advisor Ken Rapuano, and White House Counsel Harriet Miers, a report indicating the following:

- A levee in New Orleans had broken;
- Through a report from the Homeland Security Operations Center, water was rising in the city's Lower Ninth Ward;
- Through a report from the State of Louisiana, water was rising at one foot per hour; and
- Through a report from Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, problems with a pumping station were causing flooding in New Orleans.<sup>17</sup>

Brown claims that, also on Monday, he reported to Deputy Chief of Staff Hagin on the developing catastrophe in New Orleans.<sup>18</sup> Brown told the Committee that, by no later than 6 p.m. CT on the day of landfall, Hagin knew the 17th Street levee in New Orleans had broken, and that the city was flooding.<sup>19</sup>

Still, the White House does not appear to have been cognizant that Katrina was flooding the streets, homes, and hospitals of New Orleans on Monday, the day of the storm's landfall. President Bush later characterized the mindset on Monday, August 29, after learning that

Katrina did not hit New Orleans directly: “a sense of relaxation.”<sup>20</sup> In addition, as late as Friday, September 2, the President expressed the belief that the levees broke on Tuesday, the day after landfall, even though they had broken on Monday.

On Tuesday, August 30, the White House received confirmation that Katrina was an undeniable catastrophe. At 12:02 a.m. ET, the White House received a report from the Homeland Security Operations Center that included the following statement by FEMA’s lone official in New Orleans that day, Marty Bahamonde: “There is a quarter-mile [breach] in the levee near the 17th Street Canal about 200 yards from Lake Pontchartrain allowing water to flow into the City – an estimated 2/3 to 75% of the city is under water.”<sup>21</sup>

At 6:33 a.m. ET, Tuesday morning, the White House received a Department of Homeland Security situation report confirming the extent of damage and flooding in New Orleans:

Widespread and significant flooding has occurred throughout the city of New Orleans, extending eastward, across the Mississippi gulf coast into coastal Alabama. The following flood reports have been received for the city of New Orleans:

- Industrial Canal at Tennessee St.: levee has been breached with water to a depth of 5 feet at Jackson Barracks;
- 17th St. 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.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates are in progress and project that it could take months to dewater the City of New Orleans.<sup>22</sup>

A report at 10:23 a.m. ET on Tuesday, from the Homeland Security Operations Center detailed the location of the breached levees and noted specific concerns about the 17th Street Canal and Tennessee Street levees.<sup>23</sup>

Brown also told the Committee of a secure telephone call he said was held on Tuesday afternoon with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, Secretary Chertoff, and Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove. Brown claims to have told them that at least 90 percent of the city’s population had been displaced and he “needed military assets [because] this was the big one.”<sup>24</sup> Brown also told them that he “needed the help of the entire cabinet ... DOD and HHS and everybody else,” and that there was a “discussion about convening the cabinet.”<sup>25</sup> Brown opined that, up until that conversation took place, he believed that the White House had failed to comprehend fully the catastrophic nature of Hurricane Katrina.<sup>26</sup>

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## A Hesitant Response

Despite these reports of a catastrophe, the White House failed to grasp the gravity of the situation as it unfolded. As a result, the White House’s initial response appeared halting and inadequate. Throughout Monday, the day of the storm, the President maintained his regular schedule. In the morning, he celebrated Senator John McCain’s birthday at Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix, Arizona.<sup>27</sup> Later that morning, the President had a “Conversation on Medicare” at the Pueblo El Mirage RV Resort and Country Club in nearby El Mirage, Arizona.<sup>28</sup> He also spoke to the people in the Gulf Coast region, offering that, “When the

storm passes, the federal government has got assets and resources that we'll be deploying to help you."<sup>29</sup>

Likewise, on Monday afternoon, the President flew to California and gave a speech in Rancho Cucamonga on Medicare and the new prescription-drug benefit. There, he reassured his audience that the government was prepared to respond to Katrina.<sup>30</sup> But this did not turn out to be the case.

The hesitancy continued into the following day. Despite mounting reports on the extent of the catastrophe, no one from the White House participated in FEMA's intergovernmental conference call on Tuesday at noon.

At noon ET that day, the President stood at a naval base in San Diego and offered a picture of a fully prepared federal government that was ready to respond to Katrina: "Our teams and equipment are in place and we're beginning to move in the help that people need."<sup>31</sup>

On the same day, White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan announced the President would return to Washington, D.C., the following day in order to "oversee the response efforts from there."<sup>32</sup>

Thereafter, the White House began to chart a more aggressive course of response to Katrina. At a 5:11 p.m. briefing Wednesday evening, President Bush, surrounded by his Cabinet, addressed the nation from the Rose Garden and announced that he had called the Cabinet together, and had "directed Secretary of Homeland Security Mike Chertoff to chair a Cabinet-level task force to coordinate all our assistance from Washington."<sup>33</sup>

The task force demanded a list of available resources from each federal agency assigned responsibility under the National Response Plan.<sup>34</sup> For example, the White House asked FEMA on Wednesday for "the inventory of all department agency operations/activity ... are there any Federal powers or other processes that could be implemented to expedite the response or make it more efficient ... [w]hat are the plans for providing housing to ... displaced people?"<sup>35</sup> Had these questions been asked and this sense of urgency imparted earlier, vital federal help might have arrived sooner.

The more vigorous response continued throughout the week. For example, despite reports of lawlessness in New Orleans and the need for federal assistance, there were only a handful of FBI and other Department of Justice law-enforcement officers in the New Orleans area as of Thursday morning. As DOJ continued to formulate a response plan, President Bush discussed with the Attorney General the situation in New Orleans, and DOJ officers began to deploy that day. Likewise, on Saturday, the President ordered thousands of active-duty military forces to deploy to the region to assist in what he saw was an unacceptable response to the suffering of thousands of Katrina victims in various locations around the city.

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1 Committee staff interview of Gary Jones, Acting Regional Director, Region VI, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), conducted on Jan. 11, 2006, transcript pp. 48-49, 149-152; Committee staff interview of Wayne Fairley, Response Operations Branch Chief, Region VI, FEMA, conducted on Jan. 18, 2006, pp. 2, 57-58; Ron Castleman, e-mail to Patricia English, May 17, 2004, 10:11 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. DHS-FEMA 0058-0000097.

2 Janet Benini was Director of Response and Planning for the White House Homeland Security Council prior to Hurricane Katrina's landfall. She did not work at the White House during the Katrina response.

3 The White House does not dispute that the President received these warnings and communications before landfall: "The President received regular briefings, had countless conversations with Federal, State, and local officials, and took extraordinary steps prior to landfall." U.S. Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, *The*

*Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina: Lessons Learned*. Washington: Government Printing Office, Feb. 2006, pp. 28-29 [hereinafter *The White House, Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned*]. But the White House did not detail in either its report, *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned*, Frances Fragos Townsend's February 13, 2006 speech at the NEMA's mid-year conference, or elsewhere, any specific details about the briefings or conversations. *The White House, Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned*, pp. 28-29, 174.

4 The White House, Homeland Security President Directive-1: Organization and Operation of the Homeland Security Council, October 29, 2001. HSPD-1 states that the White House Homeland Security Council (HSC), is a unit within the White House responsible for coordination of homeland security activities between all federal departments and agencies. The HSC also is responsible for circulating information throughout the White House during a catastrophe. As stated during a Committee briefing conducted by the White House on February 3, 2006, the HSC handles preparedness issues and immediate response issues. It also serves as a gate-keeper to mitigate duplicative information requests to other agencies.

5 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.

6 Testimony of Sec. Michael Chertoff, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, before the U.S. House, Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina, hearing on *Hurricane Katrina: The Role of the Department of Homeland Security*, Oct. 19, 2005.

7 White House Briefing given to Committee, conducted by Kenneth Rapuano, Deputy Assistant to the President for Homeland Security, Dec. 13, 2005.

8 Michael Brown, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 27, 2005, transcript p. 22. Provided to Committee.

9 Joseph Hagin, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 27, 2005, transcript p. 24. Provided to Committee.

10 Andrew Akers, e-mail to Homeland Security Operations Center Senior Watch Officer and others, Aug. 27, 2005, 11:24 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 0005865 through 0005867. The other addressees for the e-mail are DC-NSC-WHSR, Bethany Nichols, Elliot Langer, Kirstjen Nielsen, Joel Bagnal, Elizabeth Farrell, Julie Bentz, Daniel Kaniewski and copied to Matthew Broderick, Frank DiFalco, Bob Stephan, John Chase, Tom Dinanno, Edward McDonald, Gail Kulish, Tom Paar, Michael Jackson, John Wood, National Interagency Coordination Center, Secretary Briefing Staff, HSOC.HSIN.

11 Max Mayfield, Ph.D., FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 28, 2005, transcript pp. 6, 10. Provided to Committee.

12 Michael Brown, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 28, 2005, transcript p. 37. Provided to the Committee. During his staff interview on February 23, 2006, Brown discussed a telephone call with Joe Hagin after the Noon VTC. He described the conversation as follows: "And Hagin and I were having a conversation just about how bad this one was going to be and, you know, dad-gamut all the – I mean, I was really bitching at Hagin about all of the planning I'd been asking for and you know, the catastrophic planning we'd been wanting to do, you know, now – and now here we are, and, you know, saying to him, you know, dad-gamut, why didn't I quit earlier – then, you know, you guys knew I wanted to quit. I mean, we're having this sparring match about all of this stuff that I was really mad about because I knew I was walking into this hornets' nest, I'm really ticked off, because I know how bad this thing's going to be." Brown further described the conversation: "I'm just adamant that they understand my concern about New Orleans. I mean, I don't know how to get this across to people that I have pushed and pushed for catastrophic disaster planning; we had chosen New Orleans as the first place to do catastrophic disaster planning; and now, damn it, here was a, you know, a Cat 5 bearing down on – on New Orleans." Committee staff interview of Michael Brown, former Director, FEMA, conducted on Feb. 23, 2006, transcript pp. 34, 36-37.

13 Bill Doran, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 28, 2005, transcript pp. 16-17. Provided to Committee.

14 President George Bush, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 28, 2005, transcript pp. 14-15. Provided to Committee. *The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned* describes the President as actively engaged the weekend prior to landfall, communicating with state and local officials and offering federal resources.

15 Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, pp. 137-139, 141. Brown testified that he had put the White House on notice of FEMA's lack of capabilities to respond adequately to a catastrophe before Katrina approached the Gulf. Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, p. 143. In addition, Brown suggested that he spoke with the White House earlier than January, 2005 regarding his concerns for FEMA. Specifically, when Brown was asked whether it was fair to say he was communicating with the White House during his tenure as Undersecretary and "expressing to them that FEMA was not ready; FEMA needed more resources." Brown replied and discussed a letter sent to Sec. Tom Ridge in Sept. 2003, regarding FEMA's integration in the Department of Homeland Sec. Although he said he raised this letter with Clay Johnson and Joe Hagin, and the fact that FEMA would fail if many of the proposed changes occurred, he also suggested that he spoke to Clay Johnson generally about the problems with FEMA. When asked what he expressed to Johnson, and whether they were the same kinds of concerns previously described, Brown stated: "The same kind of concerns but probably in more detail with Clay at times because Clay was heading up the transition team for DHS, and so he really understood kind of what we should be doing and shouldn't be doing. And I would have a lot of conversations with Clay about it." Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, pp. 139-141. Brown did not address these concerns publicly or in writing with Congress. However, during his appearance before the U.S. House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina hearing on Sept. 27, 2005, Brown alluded to having had some conversations with members of Congress, though not with any members of this Committee regarding the state of FEMA. When asked about the emaciation of FEMA, Brown suggested that for several years, he privately discussed how FEMA would become extremely limited in both personnel and financial resources hindering its capacity to handle a disaster. In response to a question



about Brown expressing his concerns about FEMA privately, but not publicly, Brown stated: “I can go to bed at night and sleep because I know I fought that battle.” In addition, later in the hearing when asked why he expressed his views about FEMA’s problems privately versus publicly, Brown testified that he wanted to work within the system to make the needed changes. Brown, House Select Committee hearing, Sept. 27, 2005. Apparently, those efforts failed.

16 The White House, *Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned*, p. 27.

17 Daniel Kaniewski, e-mail to Dan Bartlett and others, Aug. 29, 2005, 11:13 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. OVP 004795. The other addressees are Todd Beyer, Bill Burck, Trent Duffy, Joseph Hagin, Brian Hook, Brett Kavanaugh, Emily Kropp, William McGurn, Stephen McMillin, Harriet Miers, Bruce Miller, Susan Ralston, Kenneth Rapuano, Scott Sforza, Kristen Silverberg, Heidi Smith, Frances Townsend, and copied to Steven Atkiss, Jessica Bennett, Stephen Black, Jamie Brown, John Burke, Shannon Burkhardt, John Currin, Robert DeServi, DL-HSC-BTS, DL-HSC-CHEM-BIO, DL-HSC-EXECSEC, DL-HSC-Front, DL-HSC-PPR, DL-NSC-WHSR, Lindsey Drouin, Debbie Fiddelke, Erin Healy, Taylor Hughes, Lauren Kane, Karyn Richman Kendall, Matthew Kirk, Ross Kyle, Jeannie Mamo, Christopher Michel, Alexander Mistri, John Mitnick, Derrick Morgan, Erin Nagle, Neil Patel, Dana Perino, Douglas Pitkin, Heather Roebke, Daniel Wilmot, Candace Wysocki, DeWitt Zemp (“Flooding significant throughout the region and a levee in New Orleans has reportedly been breached sending 6 to 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. HSOC reports that due to the rising water in the 9th Ward, residents are in their attics and on their roofs.”). The President’s knowledge of when New Orleans’ levees breached has been the subject of much media attention. In the week after landfall, the President himself made statements regarding the levee breaches. For instance, on Friday, September 2, 2005, during a press conference in Biloxi, Mississippi, the President stated: “The levees broke on Tuesday in New Orleans. On Wednesday, we – and Thursday we started evacuating people. A lot of people have left that city. A lot of people have been pulled out on buses. It’s – I am satisfied with the response. I’m not satisfied with all the results. They started pulling people off roofs immediately. They started rallying – we started rallying choppers to get people off rooftops, started saving lives. I mean, thousands of peoples’ lives have been saved immediately, and that’s good news. This is one of the worst storms in our nation’s history. New Orleans got hit by two storms, one the hurricane, and then the flood. And it’s going to take a monumental effort to continue moving forward, but we will.” The White House, “President Tours Biloxi, Mississippi Hurricane Damaged Neighborhoods,” press release, Sept. 2, 2005. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 01656, 01658. As set forth herein, several pieces of evidence show the levees breached on Monday.

18 On the noon video teleconference, Brown said he spoke with President Bush at least twice on the day of landfall, likely prior to noon. Brown stated: “I talked to the President twice today, once in Crawford and then again on Air Force One.” Michael Brown, FEMA Daily Video Teleconference, Aug. 29, 2005, p. 14. Provided to Committee. Brown also testified that he spoke to Hagin on at least two occasions on the day of landfall. Testimony of Brown, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 10, 2005. *See also*: Andy Card, e-mail to Michael Brown, Aug. 29, 2005, 9:51 p.m. Provided to Committee (showing that Brown spoke with Hagin on August 29 to provide updates of the situation in New Orleans). When asked whether he spoke directly to the President on the night of landfall concerning Bahamonde’s over flight, Brown said he could not recall if he spoke to the President then. Brown stated: “I really don’t recall if the President got – normally during my conversations with Deputy Chief of Staff [Hagin], sometimes the President would get on the phone for a few minutes, sometimes he wouldn’t, and I don’t recall specifically that night whether he did or not.” Brown, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 10, 2006.

19 Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, pp. 24-25 (“Question: Is there any reason for us to doubt that after you talked to Joe Hagin 5 or 6 o’clock on Monday evening, August 29, that he then knew from you that the 17th Street Canal levee had broke and the city was flooding? Answer: I don’t think there is any reason for any of us to doubt that they knew that. Question: Okay. And that they knew that at least in part from your phone conversation with Joe Hagin, correct? Answer: That’s correct.”). Brown said he spoke with Hagin on Monday evening to discuss Bahamonde’s report of his New Orleans flyover over New Orleans, but could not recall whether he specifically told Hagin in that call that the levees had broken. *Source*: Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, p. 21 (“I think I used the phrase to Joe that, you know, our – the worst nightmare is occurring. I can’t recall all of the words I used other than, this is, you know, our worst – this is the worst scenario; this is, you know my worst fears are coming true. You know, I used the phrase, you know we have breaches of the canals”); Brown, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 10, 2006, (“I think I told him that we were realizing our worst nightmare, that everything we had planned about, worried about, that FEMA, frankly, had worried about for 10 years, was coming true.”) Brown said he told Hagin or White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card about the levee breaches late in the afternoon on Monday because he recalled they were “debating” at the state Emergency Operations Center whether the levees were breached or overtopped. *Source*: Brown, Senate Committee hearing, Feb. 10, 2006; Deposition of Michael Brown, before the House Katrina Select Committee staff, Feb. 11, 2006, pp. 113-114. Brown also received an e-mail from Card at 9:51 p.m., Monday, in which Card acknowledged Brown’s continued contact with Hagin and said: “Joe Hagin has kept me well-informed of your reports.” *Source*: Andy Card, e-mail to Michael Brown, Aug. 29, 2005, 9:51 p.m. Provided to Committee. Brown responded and stated: “Thanks for writing, Andy. This is a bad one.” *Source*: Michael Brown, e-mail to Andy Card, Aug. 29, 2005, 10 p.m. Provided to Committee.

20 The White House, “President, Lieutenant General Honoré Discuss Hurricane Relief in Louisiana,” press release, Sept. 12, 2005. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 01723, 01725.

21 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, HSOC Spot Report #13, Aug. 29, 2005, 10:30 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. WHK-07159. The Report further stated: “Only one of the main pumps is reported to still be working but cannot keep up with the demand and its longevity is doubtful.” The White House received this report at 12:02 a.m., Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005. Michael Izner, e-mail to HSOC.HSIN and others, Aug. 30, 2005, 12:02 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 07158 through WHK 07160. The other addressees for the e-mail are DL-NSC-WHSR, the National Interagency Coordination Center, as well as the following officials, Bethany Nichol, Elliott Langer, Kirstjen

Nielsen, Joel Bagnal, Elizabeth Farrell, Julie Bentz, Daniel Kaniewski, Richard Davis, Michael Barton and copied to Matthew Broderick, Frank DiFalco, Bob Stephan, John Chase, Tom Dinanno, Edward McDonald, Gail Kulish, Tom Parr, Michael Jackson, and John Wood.

22 Michael Izner, e-mail to DL-NSC-WHSR, Aug. 30, 2005, 6:33 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates no. WHK 06264. The other addressees of the e-mail are Bethany Nichols, Elliott Langer, Kirstjen Nielsen, Joel Bagnal, Elizabeth Farrell, Julie Bentz, Daniel Kaniewski, Richard Davis, Michael Barton, and copied to Matthew Broderick, Frank DiFalco, Bob Stephan, John Chase, Tom Dinanno, Edward McDonald,

Gail Kulisch, Tom Paar, Michael Jackson, (DepSec), John Wood, (COS), National Interagency Coordination Center Secretary Briefing Staff, HSOC.HSIN, HSOC.SWO.

23 Insung Lee, e-mail to DL-NSC-WHSR and others, Aug. 30, 2005, 10:23 a.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 07910 through WHK 07913. The other addressees of the e-mail are Bethany Nichols, Elliott Langer, Kirstjen Nielsen, Joel Bagnal, Elizabeth Farrell, Julie Bentz, Daniel Kaniewski, Richard Davis, Michael Barton, Matthew Broderick, Frank DiFalco, Bob Stephan, John Chase, Tom Dinanno, Edward McDonald, Gail Kulisch, Tom Paar, Michael Jackson, John Wood, (COS), National Interagency Coordination Center, Secretary Briefing Staff; HSOC.HSIN, HSOC.SWO, HSOC.FEMA, HSOC.DOD, HSOC.State&Local

24 Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, pp. 89-90. Brown also testified about this conversation before a closed-session with the House. On pages 111-112, when asked what he said in the secure call, he responds: "That probably 90 percent of the population of New Orleans had been displaced, that we had a true catastrophic disaster on our hands, that this was probably one of the most serious things that the country had faced; that it was. We needed to be doing everything possible." Deposition of Michael Brown before the House Katrina Select Committee, Feb. 11, 2006, pp. 111-112.

25 Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, p. 90.

26 Brown interview, Feb. 23, 2006, pp. 97-98.

27 The White House, Photo Gallery, Aug. 29, 2005. [http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/images/20050829-5\\_p082905pm-0125-515h.html](http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/images/20050829-5_p082905pm-0125-515h.html). Accessed on Mar. 2, 2006.

28 The White House, "President Participates in Conversation on Medicare," press release, Aug. 29, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050829-5.html>. Accessed on Mar. 7, 2006.

29 The White House, "President Participates in Conversation on Medicare," press release, Aug. 29, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050829-5.html>. Accessed on Mar. 7, 2006.

30 The White House, "President Discusses Medicare, New Prescription Drug Benefits," press release, Aug. 29, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050829-11.html>. Accessed on Mar. 7, 2006.

31 The White House, "President Commemorates 60th Anniversary of V-J Day," press release, Aug. 30, 2005. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/08/20050830-1.html>. Accessed on Mar. 11, 2006.

32 The White House, "Press Gaggle by Scott McClellan, Naval Air Station North Island, San Diego, California," Aug. 30, 2005. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 01632 through 01633 (QUESTION: This is more - this is more symbolic. Cutting short his vacation is more symbolic because he can do all this from the ranch, right? McCLELLAN: No, I think - no, I disagree. Like I said, this is one of the most devastating storms in our nation's history, and the President, after receiving a further update this morning, made the decision that he wanted to get back to D.C. and oversee the response efforts from there.").

33 The White House, "President Outlines Hurricane Katrina Relief Efforts," press release, Aug. 31, 2005. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 01636 through 01637.

34 Committee staff interview of Laurence Broun, Departmental Emergency Coordinator, U.S. Department of Interior, conducted on Mar. 21, 2006, transcript pp. 15-16.

35 Insung Lee, e-mail to Homeland Security Operations Center, Senior Watch Officer and others, Aug. 31, 2005, 12:41 p.m. Provided to Committee; filed as Bates nos. WHK 12588 through 12598. The other addressees of the e-mail are DL-NSC-WHSR, Bethany Nichols, Elliott Langer, Kirstjen Nielsen, Joel Bagnal, Elizabeth Farrell, Julie Bentz, Daniel Kaniewski, Richard Davis, Michael Barton, Matthew Broderick, Frank DiFalco, Bob Stephan, John Chase, Tom Dinanno, Edward McDonald, Gail Kulisch, Tom Paar, Michael Jackson, (DepSec), John Wood, (COS); National Interagency Coordination Center; Secretary Briefing Staff; HSOC.HSIN; IMD.