



One Hundred Ninth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2006

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Department of Homeland Security
Mail Stop MS 0150
Office of Legislative Affairs
Attn: Secretary
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

I want to thank you for making the time in your schedule to testify before our Committee today, and I hope to see you back soon.

I appreciate your commitment to provide me with details concerning the development of the Catastrophic Incident Supplement (CIS) to the National Response Plan. As you know, on September 6, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a report concerning the federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina. In that report, GAO found that the Department "has not yet released the [CIS], more than a year after Katrina and its original target date." This continuing failure is crucial, because, in GAO's words, "[u]ntil the supplement is final and distributed, agencies that have responsibilities under the supplement cannot complete the implementation plans and agreements needed to make the annex and supplement fully operational."

Today you testified that the GAO was wrong, and that you had signed the CIS at some point in the past few months. But as the quotes above reflect, the real issue is not when you signed the CIS but rather when it is to be formally issued and distributed across the government so that those agencies with responsibilities under it can begin to plan for them. In fact, when GAO met with my staff just prior to the issuance of its report, GAO made clear that it knew that you had signed the CIS but that it could not determine when it would be issued. I am sure you would agree that all the planning in the world is useless if those charged with carrying out a plan do not know their roles and responsibilities.

As I said during my testimony, and as other members indicated with their questions, we are very concerned that the Department has slipped back into a pre-Katrina mindset. This long delay in issuing the CIS heightens these concerns. Indeed, the fact that you may have signed the CIS months ago yet it *still* has not been released is deeply troubling.

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I ask that you provide me a copy of the CIS, a detailed chronology of the development of the CIS, and that you answer the following questions in writing, no later than October 3, 2006.

1. When did you sign the CIS?
2. Has the CIS been distributed within the Department, and if so when and to whom?
3. If the CIS has distributed only partially within the Department, why has it not been fully distributed and when will this happen?
4. Has the CIS been distributed outside the Department, and if so when and to whom?
5. Has the CIS been distributed to all the federal departments and agencies that have responsibilities under it, and if so when and to whom?
6. If the CIS has not been distributed to all the federal departments and agencies that have responsibilities under it, why has this not happened and when will it happen?
7. Why, one year and one month after Hurricane Katrina, has the CIS not been fully distributed and implemented?
8. Has the Department developed and signed off on any agreements with other federal departments or agencies that are necessary for implementing its role under the CIS? If not, why not, and when do you expect this to happen?
9. Have all the other federal departments and agencies that have responsibilities under the CIS developed and signed off any agreements that are necessary for implementing it? If not, why not, and when do you expect this to happen?

Where the CIS has been distributed (whether within the Department or beyond), please provide details regarding the specific date it was distributed to each entity. I appreciate your assistance, and look forward to your written response. Please direct your response and any questions regarding this request to Jessica Herrera-Flanigan, Democratic Staff Director and General Counsel, at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security