



DEPARTMENTS OF THE ARMY AND AIR FORCE

JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS-LOUISIANA
OFFICE OF THE ADJUTANT GENERAL
CAMP BEAUREGARD
PINEVILLE, LA 71360

October 24, 2005

Re: Written Testimony of Major General Bennett C. Landreneau
The Adjutant General
Before the House Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate
The Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina
On October 27, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.

Good morning, on behalf of the soldiers and airmen of the Louisiana National Guard that make up Task Force Pelican, I am pleased to be with you today to highlight the Louisiana National Guard's role in Hurricane Katrina preparedness and response.

Since 1636 our nation's National Guard has answered the call to service, whether on foreign soil or here at home. The National Guard's unique state and federal mission make it the most versatile tool in our nation's defense.

The Louisiana National Guard has a long history of service to state and country. When training, preparing and deploying for federal service or responding to our Governor's call, the professional citizen soldiers and airmen of the Louisiana National Guard have served with honor and distinction.

The scope of the Guard's response to this catastrophe was of such magnitude, that to try to capture every aspect is beyond the limitations of this paper. Let me give you the highlights--- In the early hours of Hurricane Katrina, and without regard for their own safety, and in many cases, knowing their own homes were probably destroyed, these great citizens of Louisiana began to go out, by helicopter and boat to begin the massive search and rescue operations. Pulling residents from rooftops, out of attics and directly from the water, the men and women of the Louisiana National Guard were there, saving thousands of lives and bringing hope and compassion to every person they rescued.

These rescues were part of the Guard's original mission, when 2000 guardsmen were alerted on Friday, August 26, 2005 in preparation for hurricane response. Guardsmen were deployed to pre-designated locations throughout southeast Louisiana. At the Louisiana Superdome, in accordance with the Emergency Operations Plan, the Guard provided medical care and security for this special needs and shelter of last resort. As part of the security mission, Guardsmen established controlled access points and screened each person who entered for contraband and weapons. In

addition, the Guard had prepositioned high water vehicles, engineering equipment, aviation assets and other security forces throughout Southeast Louisiana.

The storm hit landfall at 6 a.m. on Monday morning. Within hours of the eye of the storm passing over New Orleans, National Guard boats and helicopters were deployed to carry out the Governor's priority mission to save lives.

The Louisiana National Guard ran air traffic control from the Superdome, with over 100 aircraft operating twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week, within the crowded airspace over the 9th Ward, St. Bernard, New Orleans East, and metropolitan New Orleans. The air operations were a joint state and federal operation involving Louisiana National Guard, Coast Guard, Army and other state guard units, which were later joined by Navy, Air Force, and Marine aviation assets..

A common misconception is that there was no food and water at the Dome, when in fact the Louisiana National Guard provided food and water to the evacuees at the Dome.

Within twelve hours of being called by the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD) to assist at the Convention Center, the Louisiana National Guard and other state guardsmen were welcomed by the crowds. Food and water were served within 3 hours. By Saturday, 19,000 people were evacuated from the Convention Center. Three thousand (3,000) of these evacuees were critical care medical patients who were airtransported to safety. Over thirty thousand (30,000) people had been evacuated from the Superdome the previous day. By early Saturday, all evacuees had been taken from New Orleans to safe shelter.

The success of the Guard's response to the Governor's mission to save lives is a direct result of years of planning, training, exercises, and the Guard's actual response to the numerous storms that hit Louisiana on a recurring basis.

As every citizen of Louisiana knows, hurricanes are a way of life from June to November. This is very evident to every soldier and airman of the Louisiana National Guard.

Each year, the guard, as every other state agency, reviews its individual response plan to hurricanes. In conjunction with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, plans are adjusted to meet the ever changing dynamics of hurricane preparedness.

As part of The Louisiana National Guard's planning, we involve all of the partners that play a vital role in preparedness and response.

Our ongoing relationship with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and FEMA continues to be strong and we continue to work to improve through planning and exercises.

Our relationship with the Northern Command (NORTHCOM) is one of working partners. Through workshops, exercises and on-going analysis and improvement, we continue to refine our state's homeland security posture. Our participation with NORTHCOM in the planning and execution of the Joint Task Force concept was instrumental in the integration of Active Component and National Guard Forces during Katrina and Rita.

The support received from the Department of Defense (DOD) was excellent. Immediately, we knew the local and state resources would quickly be overwhelmed and exhausted. Due to the coordinated efforts of Governor Blanco, DOD leadership, the National Guard Bureau and the Louisiana National Guard, other states' National Guard forces arrived quickly to perform critical missions in the effected area.

Active duty forces were committed to the effort, as well. It should be noted that while Active component forces were moving into and conducting missions in the area of operations, there was never a question as to who was in charge of the forces. The legal authority of the Governor was clear and the Active Component and National Guard forces clearly understood the command relationships, and were very successful in their joint mission. We achieved the unity of effort required by the National Response Plan, and we did this to save lives.

One of the most successful outcomes of Katrina was the execution of the Emergency Management Assistance Compact. This was the largest and most rapid EMAC activation in our nation's history. 48 states and 4 territories participated, enabling thousands of National Guard forces to come into Louisiana and immediately save lives. To this date, other states and territories are continuing to provide resources to Louisiana through EMAC.

In recent years the Louisiana National Guard has been on the provider side of these compacts. In 2003 we provided equipment for ice storms in Arkansas. For Hurricane Ivan, Louisiana sent 200 soldiers and airmen to Florida to assist in recovery. Prior to this 2005 hurricane season, Louisiana

participated in a South East EMAC conference, which was designed to identify possible shortfalls for the upcoming season. Without this working Emergency Management Assistance Compact, there would be no state to state vehicle for resources to be identified and missioned.

The Louisiana National Guard uses EMAC in support of the National Response Plan. Within Louisiana, the National Guard is a state agency working with the Louisiana Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and as such the guard submits requests for federal assistance through LOHSEP. LOHSEP is also the agency that funnels requests to the National Guard from state and local officials or emergency managers. Overall, the NRP assisted our efforts in the Katrina response. However, due to the sheer scope and magnitude of these events of catastrophic proportions, a review of the NRP is suggested. In fact, the plan calls for self-review. In addition, emergency response plans at every level, local, state and federal should be evaluated and refined to identify opportunities for improvement.

The Louisiana National Guard's communication system, although degraded by the effects of the storm, allowed us to coordinate our response throughout the response and recovery process. Through our Air Support Operation Squadron's mobile satellite systems and Civil Support Team unified command suite, we were able to communicate with our guard forces as they began search and rescue operations in and around the greater New Orleans area.

Although Louisiana's communication system already has 5 levels of redundancy, this storm reinforced the nation's need for an interoperable communication system for a unified local, state and federal response. The volume of transmissions after Katrina highlighted the need for additional progress in this area. Although some progress has been made, clearly we are not where we need to be to meet our nation's requirements for interoperable communications.

Hurricane Katrina was truly a catastrophic incident. Its effects rapidly overwhelmed the local and state resources. As you know much of the Area of Operations was inaccessible by all but aviation and marine assets and most public communications capabilities were significantly degraded. Facing this challenge, local, state and federal officials, through innovative measures, mobilized, deployed, staged and integrated an effective response, and saved thousands of lives and protected property.

In conclusion, I am extremely honored to serve along side the finest soldiers and airmen in the United States. When the

call came, we were prepared, trained and equipped. Our response was timely, decisive and effective. The efforts of these soldiers and airmen reflect great credit on the citizens of Louisiana and their sacrifices will never be forgotten. Thank You.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Bennett L. Lawrence". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.