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## **Introduction**

Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member McCaskill, distinguished Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to address you today on Department of Defense (DoD) support of the national response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

DoD is a fully committed and critical partner in the national response system. DoD has a long tradition of supporting its Federal, State, and local partners in responding to domestic disasters and emergencies, even while DoD defends the United States, its interests, and its allies and partners around the world. DoD plans and is postured to rapidly support disaster and emergency responses. The Secretary of Defense directed DoD to give full support to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for the national response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria in advance of each hurricane. DoD specifically postured capabilities in advance of each hurricane. DoD then provided significant support to the national response Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria to save and sustain lives in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The men and women of DoD – military and civilian – and DoD contractors were ready and acted with a great sense of urgency when they were needed to respond to these hurricanes.

## **The Department of Defense is a Committed and Critical Partner in Responding to Disasters**

DoD is a committed and critical partner in the national response system. The following organizations are key to DoD's support of disaster response:

*U.S. Northern Command.* U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) is the combatant command responsible for conducting Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) missions in its area of responsibility (AOR), which for DSCA includes the continental United States, Alaska, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

*U.S. Transportation Command.* U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) provides full-spectrum global mobility solutions and related enabling capabilities for

supported customers' requirements during peacetime and military contingencies (including war).

*Defense Logistics Agency.* The Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has an interagency agreement with FEMA to provide commodities (e.g., food, water, and fuel) to civil authorities responding to disasters.

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.* Under the National Response Framework, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) serves as the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function #3 – Public Works and Engineering. In this capacity, USACE assists FEMA by coordinating Federal public works and engineering-related support, as well as providing technical assistance, engineering expertise, and construction management to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and/or recover from domestic incidents. In addition, Pub. L. 84-99, as amended, 33 U.S.C. § 701n, provides authority for the Corps to prepare for and respond to floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters, and to support emergency operations in response to such natural disasters.

*Military Departments.* The Military Departments, which are responsible for organizing, training, and equipping Active and Reserve (including the National Guard) Component military forces, also fulfill a key role in disaster responses. These outstanding men and women are the personnel who are called on by DoD – and, in the case of the National Guard, the Governors – to respond to disasters. Under immediate response authority,<sup>1</sup> or based on a mutual aid agreement with a local community, Military Department personnel are typically the first Federal military responders in a disaster. The Military Departments also provide FEMA with access to installations for use as staging and support bases for disaster responders.

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<sup>1</sup> Under immediate response authority, Federal military commanders, Heads of DoD Components, and responsible DoD civilian officials may, in response to a request for assistance from a civil authority, under imminently serious conditions and if time does not permit approval from higher authority, provide an immediate response by temporarily employing the resources under their control, subject to any supplemental direction provided by higher headquarters, to save lives, prevent human suffering, or mitigate great property damage within the United States.

*National Guard.* In the national response system, the National Guard serves as a critical State resource in disaster responses and can provide much-needed capabilities to State governors very quickly. The majority of National Guard support in disaster responses is performed at the direction of a State Governor and in a State Active Duty status as a State militia.

## **The Department of Defense Plans and Is Postured to Respond to Disasters and Emergencies**

DoD plays an important but supporting role in our nation's response system. As provided in the National Response Framework, the national response system and its protocols provide tiered levels of support when additional resources or capabilities are needed. Most incidents begin and end locally and are managed at the local level. Some may require additional support from neighboring jurisdictions, State governments, and, as necessary, the Federal Government. The Federal Government's role is to support State and local emergency assistance efforts to save lives, protect property and public health and safety, and lessen or avert the threat of a catastrophe. DoD's role is to assist the Federal Government's support of the State and local response.

FEMA is responsible for coordinating the Federal Government's response to major disasters. DoD supports this response, providing DSCA in support of FEMA or another lead Federal agency, when directed by the President or when the Secretary of Defense has approved a request for assistance pursuant to the Stafford Act<sup>2</sup> or the Economy Act.<sup>3</sup> This arrangement is absolutely critical when DoD is supporting a Federal multi-state response so that lead Federal agency requirements are appropriately prioritized and personnel and resources are deployed/employed in the affected region effectively.

The Federal Government and many State governments organize their response resources and capabilities under the Emergency Support Function (ESF) construct. The 14 Federal ESFs bring together the capabilities of Federal departments and agencies and

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<sup>2</sup> The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 93-288), as amended.

<sup>3</sup> 31 U.S.C. §1535.

other national-level assets to perform response functions such as transportation, public works and engineering, mass care and temporary housing, logistics, public health and medical services, and search and rescue. DoD is available to support all 14 Federal ESFs when requested.

A fundamental tenet of the national response system is that DoD is always in support of domestic civil authorities. It is also important to note that the Federal military chain of command always runs from the President to the Secretary of Defense to the Combatant Commander concerned (in the case of the 2017 hurricanes, the Commander, USNORTHCOM). DoD fully supports the Incident Command System of the National Incident Management System.

As demonstrated during the recent hurricane responses, DoD is prepared, when directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, to provide, as part of the Federal Government's support of State and local emergency assistance efforts, capabilities and resources to save lives, sustain lives, and protect property and public health and safety, including search and rescue, emergency medical care, emergency mass care, emergency shelter, and provision of food, water, and other essential needs, including movement of supplies or persons. DoD is well-prepared and has capabilities and forces postured to act, with a sense of urgency, when needed, to save and sustain as many lives as possible in the aftermath of a disaster.

DoD maintains this high level of preparedness by continually investing in its preparedness, including through training, integrated planning with its Federal, State, and local partners, and joint exercises with its Federal, State, and local partners.

DoD also continually pursues improvements in its ability to provide support when needed, and to work closely with its domestic agency partners. For example, during a disaster response, FEMA issues mission assignments to request support capabilities and resources. DoD has worked closely with FEMA to develop all-hazard, pre-scripted mission assignments prior to disasters. This helps to expedite the process of requesting assistance. These all-hazards pre-scripted mission assignments include: heavy and

medium rotary-wing lift; strategic and tactical transportation; communications support; emergency route clearance; damage assessment; mobilization centers and operational staging areas; airspace control; deployable temporary medical facilities; and rotary-wing medical evacuation.

The DoD standing DSCA Execute Order (EXORD), which was approved by the Secretary of Defense, delegated authorities and assigned capabilities and resources to the Commanders of USNORTHCOM and U.S. Pacific Command – the two Combatant Commanders responsible for DSCA – so that they can provide critical life-saving and life-sustaining capabilities faster to save and sustain lives. This includes such resources and capabilities as: Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements; DoD installations that could be used for FEMA mobilization centers; medium- and heavy-lift helicopters; search aircraft for disaster area reconnaissance; deployable communications support packages; joint task forces to command and control Federal military responders; Combatant Commander Assessment Elements; aeromedical patient evacuation/transportation; deployable hospitals and Forward Surgical Teams; naval vessels with medical/surgical, and critical care patient capability; and the DLA Deployable Distribution Center.

In addition to integrated planning and other initiatives, DoD has forged strong, direct, day-to-day partnerships with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Health and Human Services, FEMA, and other Federal partners. This includes full-time DoD advisers and liaisons at our Federal partners' headquarters, Defense Coordinating Officers and Defense Coordinating Elements at each of the 10 FEMA regional headquarters, DoD liaisons at the FEMA National Response Coordination Center, and DoD liaisons at FEMA's deployed joint field offices.

These trusted partnerships, as well as regularly planning and exercising together, establish a Federal, State, and local network that increases information sharing and operational collaboration, which enables rapid identification of critical needs in a disaster and the swift sourcing of capabilities and resources to meet these needs.

FEMA issues mission assignments to request support capabilities and resources. In response, DoD provides capabilities and resources to carry out approved FEMA mission assignments, which are performed on a reimbursable basis. To date, FEMA has submitted DoD 311 mission assignments to DoD, at a cost of approximately \$3,931,700,000, for the national response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, requesting: search and rescue operations; port and airfield assessment; aerial port operations; emergency route clearance; air and ground transportation and evacuation; patient transportation and aeromedical evacuation; National Disaster Medical (NDMS) patient movement, reception, and medical care; medical support; strategic airlift to transport personnel, relief supplies, and equipment; imagery; fuel distribution; life-sustaining commodity (e.g., food and water) distribution; power distribution restoration; temporary shelters; water purification; logistics support; maritime freight support; Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-capable radars; installation support bases and responder support camps for FEMA responders; and mortuary affairs support.

The Commander, USNORTHCOM, using her delegated authorities under the DSCA EXORD, postured DoD capabilities in advance of the hurricanes, including pre-staging assets and personnel to perform such response missions as aerial damage assessment, strategic lift (e.g., C-17), helicopters, medical, logistics, and air and sea port opening.

DoD also deployed U.S. Navy ships to the disaster areas, and while maneuvering to avoid the consecutive hurricanes, were able to sail to be on station after the storms departed and begin responding immediately.

### **The Department of Defense Provided Significant Support to the National Response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria**

In support of the national response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, DoD conducted search, rescue, and evacuation operations; provided damage assessment; assessed and made repairs to open airports and sea ports; performed air traffic control; cleared roads; transported life-sustaining commodities such as food and water (including

by helicopter and tactical vehicle in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands); provided power generation and fuel distribution; conducted flood mitigation operations; provided temporary housing support; conducted assessments of civilian hospitals; and provided medical support, including evacuating patients back to the continental United States.

The Total Force – thousands of Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard personnel – supported (and continue to support) the response. The first Federal military responders in Texas and Puerto Rico were U.S. Army Reserve and U.S. Marine Corps Reserve personnel stationed in Texas and U.S. Army Reserve personnel in Puerto Rico, respectively, acting under immediate response authority. Also of note, the Army Expeditionary Support Command distributed life-sustaining commodities in Puerto Rico, while both Army and Air Force units provided substantial medical support in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

DoD rotary-wing, tilt-wing, and fixed-wing aircraft conducted search and rescue, evacuation, aerial damage assessment, transportation, and strategic airlift operations. To date, USTRANSCOM has flown more than 2,800 flights, transporting responders such as FEMA’s Urban Search and Rescue Teams, relief supplies, and equipment, and evacuating hundreds of residents and patients. USTRANSCOM transported an FAA-capable radar and 500,000 pounds of mail. While ports were closed, USTRANSCOM delivered critical relief supplies. USTRANSCOM teams were essential to opening airfields and restoring port access.

U.S. Navy Ships such as USS Abraham Lincoln, USS Kearsarge, USS Oak Hill, USS Wasp, USS San Jacinto, USS Farragut, USS Iwo Jima, USS New York, and USS William McLean, and embarked U.S. Marine Corps expeditionary units, conducted search and rescue, emergency route clearance, life-sustaining commodities distribution, and medical support operations. The hospital ship USNS Comfort continues to assist Puerto Rico by receiving and treating critical care and medical-surgical patients.

DLA has provided fuel, generators, food, water, and other life-sustaining commodities to FEMA for distribution to the civilian population and first responders



Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. To date, DLA has provided 2,726,000 gallons of fuel, 15,000 gallons of propane, 852 generators, 6 electricity transformers, 126,000,000 meals (87,000,000 of these for Puerto Rico), 11,500,000 liters of water (10,000,000 of these for Puerto Rico), and 11 high-water vehicles, including fuel trucks. DLA also ran a deployable depot for FEMA. DLA deployed 125 fuel trucks and drivers to Puerto Rico to fuel emergency generators for critical facilities such as hospitals.

Under the DoD excess property program, DLA has donated essential items such as: generators; vehicles, including a cargo truck; scoop/front-end loaders; refrigerated containers; 50,000 gallon collapsible storage tanks; 20,000 gallon tanks; tents; cots; sleeping bags; and blankets.

USACE conducted flood mitigation operations that held back over 125 billion gallons of water from entering downtown Houston at the peak of the flood, prevented the possible failure of the Guajataca Dam in Puerto Rico, surveyed the Gulf Intercoastal Waterway, returned commercial ports to operation; assessed and installed generators to provide temporary emergency power at critical facilities; assessed and planned restoration of electric power distribution; removed debris; and provided temporary roofing. As the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function #3, USACE continues to provide temporary emergency power to over 394 key facilities and, more significantly, is working to restore power in Puerto Rico to its pre-storm condition, which is a new undertaking for the Corps. Additionally, USACE is conducting debris removal operations and blue roof installations, and is providing modular hospitals for the islands of St. Thomas and St. Croix.

The National Guard continued its commendable record of State disaster response. National Guard personnel of the affected States and Territories, as well as National Guard personnel deployed in accordance with an interstate mutual aid agreement such as the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, supported the response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. National Guard personnel conducted search, rescue, and

evacuation operations; provided damage assessment; cleared routes; transported and distributed life-sustaining commodities such as food and water; supported temporary power restoration and distributed power generators; and provided medical, aviation, and planning support. In Puerto Rico, the National Guard supported USACE's temporary emergent repair of the Guajataca Dam.

The most immediate and highest priority concern in any disaster response is to save and sustain lives. This will drive many of the early operations in a disaster response, such as rapid assessment, search and rescue, patient evacuations, medical support, distribution of food, water, and other life-sustaining commodities, and sheltering. However, to perform these operations, prevent human suffering, and avoid hazardous conditions for responders, other preliminary operations, such as opening ports and airfields, providing emergency power, and strategic military airlift for transportation are necessary. Although there is a sequencing or phasing of overall response operations, all of these different response operations are carried out simultaneously. For example, while the U.S. Coast Guard is working to open a vital port to allow disaster relief supplies to be shipped in, helicopters, operating from airfields (potentially still under repair) or ships, are conducting search and rescue missions, transporting disaster relief supplies, and evacuating patients.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, DoD is a fully committed partner in the national response system. DoD plans and is postured to support disaster and emergency response rapidly. DoD has invested in its preparedness to support the Federal Government's response to disasters. DoD specifically pre-staging forces and resources in advance of this year's hurricanes and employed these capabilities in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to save and protect lives. The men and women of DoD, and DoD contractors, were ready and acted with a sense of urgency when they were needed to respond to the hurricanes. We are proud of their continuing contributions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today. We look forward to your questions.