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# Press Release

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**Michael Chertoff**  
**Secretary of the Department**  
**of Homeland Security**

**REMARKS \*\*\*AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY\*\*\* BY HOMELAND  
SECURITY SECRETARY MICHAEL CHERTOFF AT THE 112<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE CONFERENCE**

Thank you Chief Estey. This group has been such a valued and tremendous partner to our Department, and it's an honor to join you this morning. I am honored to be in the presence of the men and women who stand on the frontlines – carrying out our shared mission to protect our communities and secure our nation.

When disaster strikes, our law enforcement, our first responders are on point. You are the vanguard of all response and relief efforts. That is a principle that we have seen in action time and time again over the course of the past few weeks.

In the span of one month, nature has dealt two very significant blows to our Gulf Coast. Some have lost loved ones, millions have seen their lives uprooted and their livelihoods destroyed.

Throughout this time of crisis, the entire nation has witnessed the courage and dedication of law enforcement officers and other first responders arriving from all over the country – rushing in to restore order and save lives. I want to thank the law enforcement community for your tireless efforts in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and most recently Hurricane Rita.

Because of your work and that of other federal, state, and local authorities, we were able to safely evacuate a large portion of the population in Rita's path before the storm hit.

Rita has brought additional damage and hardship to an already fragile region, and the federal government is working in lock-step with state and local authorities to get vital assistance to the citizens and areas where it is needed most.

I've traveled through the Gulf Region and witnessed first hand the role the law enforcement community has undertaken to help this region and its citizens survive and overcome this ordeal.

The devastation wreaked -- especially by Katrina -- is indescribable. Hurricane Katrina will go down as one of the worst natural disasters in our nation's history. Impacting an area of 90,000 square miles -- roughly the size of Great Britain -- Katrina left a vital, thriving region in desolation and ruin.

In the days and weeks following Katrina, more than 49,000 people were rescued and hundreds of thousands more were safely evacuated. Law enforcement forces on the ground assisted mightily in these efforts.

And many officers did so even when they themselves had lost homes or were unable to locate loved ones. One such story I'd like to share involves Mike Robinson, a DHS employee who works within TSA as the Federal Security Director for the New Orleans Airport. Many of you may remember Mike from his days as President of IACP.

While his own home flooded, he led a skeleton staff with very little resources as they worked round the clock to evacuate Katrina victims from the airport -- hundreds of whom had to be carried to the planes due to injury and illness. All told they were able to evacuate 22,000 people to safety.

That's just one story...there are countless more. And while twenty minutes is not enough time to recount them all...every first responder who held the line should be commended for all they did...pressing on in the face of great adversity to overcome the difficult challenges of this tragedy and bring others out of the devastation.

Now, we are faced with another critical challenge -- to aid those who have lost so much in reclaiming their lives and livelihoods. As President Bush made clear, "we will do what it takes, we will stay as long as it takes, to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives."

We have a duty to these survivors. As a federal government and as a nation, we must do everything in our power to care for those who have lost everything, to restore their hope, and to provide vital resources such as housing, jobs, education, and health care.

FEMA has already provided more than \$2.2 billion to more than 680,000 affected households. This is in addition to the millions of dollars in generous donations from other organizations and the American people.

Just last week, HUD Secretary Jackson and I announced a new housing program -- designed to get transitional housing benefits in the hands of people quickly, with a minimum of red tape, while preserving accountability. DHS, through FEMA, will provide an initial payment of \$2,358 per household.

That works out to around \$786 per month to cover a three-month time frame for homeowners and renters whose housing was destroyed or is uninhabitable to go and find temporary transitional housing. We estimate that several hundred thousand households will qualify for this assistance under the law.

While the initial payment is for three months, if participants remain eligible, assistance will be available for up to 18 months depending on the circumstances. The initial lump sum payment is designed to reduce the paperwork before the money gets into the hands of those who need it, and to provide enough aid up front to facilitate the relocation process and let people get on with their lives. This help is now on the way, with over a quarter of a million households approved for this rent assistance.

In addition, to help those evacuees who were previously receiving public housing assistance, or who were homeless, HUD will work with FEMA and local authorities to provide housing vouchers that will address their immediate housing needs.

These programs have been designed to give families the maximum amount of flexibility and freedom to decide where they want to relocate and what they want to do over the next few months.

For the thousands of families who have lost their homes and their communities as a result of Hurricane Katrina, we want to do everything we can as a federal government to ease the burdens and the challenges of their ordeal.

In addition to aiding the victims, there is also a full-scale recovery effort underway. Now that Rita has passed we will continue the process of removing the remaining water from New Orleans, repairing the levee system, cleaning up the environment, and rebuilding both the city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast communities.

Our resolve and resources will remain trained on helping those who have lost so much get back on their feet and that will be the mission of this Department for as long as it takes to accomplish what we owe our fellow Americans.

We also owe the American people a full accounting from all levels of government concerning what went right and what went wrong with the initial Katrina response.

With Hurricane Rita, the emergency preparedness and response functioned much more efficiently. Just two weeks out from Hurricane Katrina, improvements in communication and coordination between levels of government were already evident. But that is only one step in ensuring that we identify the lessons learned from Katrina and make the necessary adjustments.

Hurricane Katrina put to the test for the first time the new National Response Plan that many of you here as well as other federal, state, and local partners worked with our Department to create and implement over the past few years.

And it was by any measure an extraordinary test. The one-two combination of a catastrophic hurricane and massive flood stretched the normal disaster relief system. Some things worked well. But there were shortcomings that we must urgently address.

This tragedy has emphasized how critical it is that we ensure our planning and response capabilities perform with seamless integrity and efficiency in any type of disaster situation – even one of cataclysmic nature.

There will be internal and congressional examinations into what happened – and there must be. We have to learn the lessons of what happened, so we can make needed improvements.

And, we will look to the first responder community – to our law enforcement officers – to play an integral role by using your own experiences to weigh in with recommendations and assist in the evaluation process.

And although the images of Katrina and Rita will continue to resonate, we must also be mindful of broader issues. Homeland Security is an “all-hazards” agency.

As we evaluate and adapt our preparedness systems, we need to take an all-hazards approach that will enable us to be broadly prepared to prevent, protect against, and respond to whatever threats are on the horizon – whether they be catastrophic hurricanes or catastrophic acts of terrorism.

Preparedness is a continuum. Some hazards like hurricanes cannot be prevented; the disaster must be mitigated by response.

A nuclear threat is quite different – prevention is critical because for those at ground zero in a nuclear explosion – there is not much to mitigate. And some threats – like biological agents – demand preparedness to prevent, protect, and respond.

Let me also say this. In July, one month before Katrina, I outlined a new structure and strategy to revamp and bolster our preparedness work. This was part of an overall reevaluation of the Department known as the Second Stage Review, which I ordered earlier this year when I arrived at DHS.

In the area of preparedness, we focused on the full range of our capabilities to prevent, protect against, and respond to acts of terror or other disasters. As I said at the time, we were not where we needed to be in this area. I outlined a plan for improvement. Unfortunately, Katrina arrived just one month later.

But the way forward is still clear, and even more urgent. To ensure that our preparedness efforts have focused direction, we intend to integrate the Department’s existing preparedness efforts -- including planning, training, exercising, and funding -- into a single directorate for Preparedness.

Of course, a critical element of addressing all hazards is FEMA – which will be a direct report to the Secretary with enhanced capabilities in its historic and vital mission supporting response and recovery. FEMA must be strengthened and continue to work well with state and local authorities.

But preparedness is not just about response and recovery – it must draw a wide stroke to include everything from robust intelligence sharing to infrastructure protection planning to well-coordinated law enforcement, as well as grants and training that directly support first responders.

That is why a preparedness component must draw on the strengths of all components across the full spectrum – from prevention through protection to response.

Our preparedness directorate will rely on FEMA, Coast Guard, Intelligence entities, Secret Service, ICE, and other operational assets.

Further, as part of our consolidated preparedness team, I've appointed a Chief Medical Officer – Dr. Jeffrey Runge – to be my principal advisor on medical preparedness. The Chief Medical Officer and his team will work closely with HHS, other federal agencies, state and local governments, and first responders to complete comprehensive plans for executing our responsibilities working with other agencies to prevent and mitigate biologically based attacks on human health and on our food supply.

In addition, we are in the process of establishing a preparedness analytic matrix – a tool that will allow us to match all possible types of threats against possible targets. This matrix along with our recently released National Preparedness Goal will help guide our decision-making and resource allocation in a more critical and risk-based manner.

In light of Hurricane Katrina and at the direction of the President, we are also working with federal, state and local officials to review the emergency operations plans of every major American urban area and ensure that those plans are clear, detailed, and up-to-date. This includes specifically a hard, realistic look at evacuation planning ranging from earthquakes to subway bombings.

These steps are just the beginning and in the weeks and months ahead, we will move forward to build our preparedness capability and ensure that the United States is ready to meet any type of threat or disaster with which we are faced.

Our capacity to do so depends on our ability to work collaboratively and seamlessly with our partners across all levels of government and throughout the first responder community. In the end, those of you who are on the ground protecting your communities on a daily basis understand what needs to be done to keep those very communities safe.

Not only is it our responsibility to ensure that you have the necessary equipment, resources, and training to do your job, but also that you are full partners at the table as together we make decisions that impact the state of our emergency preparedness.

In that regard, I'd like to touch on two issues the Department has recently undertaken with the law enforcement community. The first involves our continuing efforts to provide better communications and enhance our information sharing capabilities.

At the request of many here at IACP, we have agreed to provide, through a pilot program, real-time incident information that we receive through our Homeland Security Operations Center.

These "DHS Alerts" will be made available immediately via email or pagers to agency law enforcement heads, and other public safety leaders, in the pilot areas. Through this effort, key state and local officials will get real-time alerts just as we do. Of course, this will not supplant our more in depth information sharing.

In addition, we will explore with FBI how we might jointly work to disseminate more quickly incident awareness information with our state and local law enforcement

colleagues. This should build on the work we are already doing with FBI to issue joint information bulletins.

Second, as you know, under the implementation of the National Incident Management System there has been discussion of requiring the elimination of the 10-code in every day law enforcement communications.

However, there was a strong response from the law enforcement community against this proposal, and we listened to your concerns.

As a result, I have decided that NIMS compliance will not include the abolition of 10-codes in everyday law enforcement communications, but we will work to ensure that we have a common language system for multi-jurisdiction and multi-agency events.

I want to assure you that as a Department we will continue to listen, continue to work with you, and reach out to this vital community so that your valuable insight and first hand experience are brought to bear on the difficult challenges we confront.

One of the great reassurances for all of us at DHS is the knowledge that we do not stand alone in this endeavor...that the responsibility of homeland security formally charged to this Department more than two years ago is a shared trust that is carried out daily by all those who choose service above self, by all those who choose to put on the uniform to protect their fellow citizens and their country.

And so, while we change to meet the challenges of an ever evolving security environment, one thing that will not change is our commitment to our nation's law enforcement officers and our reliance on you to help us uphold our responsibility to secure and preserve our homeland.

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