

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

MAJOR GENERAL ED JACKSON
DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL, CIVIL AND EMERGENCY
OPERATIONS

BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE, AND REBUILDING: LESSONS FROM
THE 2017 DISASTERS

MARCH 15, 2018

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee:

I am honored to testify before you today to discuss the authorities and responsibilities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) during disaster response and recovery operations. I am Major General Ed Jackson, Deputy Commanding General, Civil and Emergency Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

The Corps conducts its emergency response activities under two basic authorities: the Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act); and Public Law 84-99, 33 U.S.C. 701n as amended (PL 84-99). Under the Stafford Act, we and other Federal agencies support the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) under the National Response Framework (NRF). In this capacity, the Corps is the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function 3 (Public Works and Engineering), but works under FEMA's direction. ESF-3 provides Temporary Emergency Power, Temporary Roofing, Debris Management, Emergency Infrastructure Assessment, Critical Public Facility Restoration, Temporary Housing, Demolition/Structural Stabilization, and support to FEMA Command and Control Nodes/ESF3. Under PL 84-99, we prepare for disasters through planning, coordination, and training with local, state, Federal partners; and by assisting state and local entities in implementing advance measures to prevent/reduce storm event damages. After the emergency event, PL 84-99 authorizes the Corps to repair damage to authorized Corps projects, and work with states/municipalities to rehabilitate and restore eligible non-Federal flood infrastructure to pre-storm conditions.

When disasters occur, Corps teams and other resources are mobilized from across the country to assist the local Corps districts and offices respond to the event. As part of this mission, the Corps has more than 50 specially-trained response teams, supported by emergency contracts, to perform the wide range of public works and engineering-related support missions I just described. Additionally, the Corps uses pre-awarded contracts that can be quickly activated for missions such as debris removal, temporary roofing, and generator installation.

2017 Hurricane Season – With regard to hurricane activity, 2017 was an unusually active season. The Corps was, and continues to be, involved in the FEMA-led Federal response and recovery operations in support of multiple events, including Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

Hurricane Harvey –On August 25, 2017, Category 4 Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the central Texas coast near Rockport, Texas, between Port Aransas and Port O'Connor and the President approved an Expedited Major Disaster Declaration for Texas. Large amounts of rainfall fell across the greater Houston metropolitan area causing record flooding. FEMA has identified \$126 million in Mission Assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricane Harvey response and recovery. Currently, the Corps has 130 Corps employees deployed to support recovery mission assignments.

Temporary Emergency Power: The Corps completed its temporary emergency power mission assignment in Texas by completing 45 generator installations over the course of the mission.

Temporary Housing: In the 31 disaster impacted Texas counties, an estimated 9,300 applicants are eligible for temporary housing. Corps Technical Monitors (TMs) are inspecting approximately 400 haul and install unit installations a day and certifying approximately 150 Mobile Housing Units (MHUs) as Ready for Occupancy per week. To date, the Corps has assessed over 3,300 private sites (homeowner property) and over 1,200 commercial mobile home parks. Corps Group Site personnel have assessed more than 330 potential group site locations and continue to assess sites as directed by FEMA.

Debris Management: Debris teams led by Corps subject matter experts continue to provide state and county officials with technical assistance in defining requirements and monitoring debris removal and disposal operations in 10 counties.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria – Category 5 Hurricane Irma made landfall over the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 6, 2017, while also impacting Puerto Rico with Category 2 winds, 12 foot storm surge and up to 20 inches of rain. Hurricane Irma made landfall in southern Florida/Florida Keys on September 9, 2017. Soon thereafter, Category 5 Hurricane Maria made landfall over Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017, causing major damage to critical infrastructure and homes. FEMA has identified over \$3 billion in Mission Assignments for the Corps through ESF-3 to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery (46 Mission Assignments totaling \$177 million for Hurricane Irma and 39 Mission Assignments totaling \$2.91 billion for Hurricane Maria). Currently, the Corps has over 840 personnel deployed in various locations supporting the recovery missions.

Temporary Emergency Power: As of March 8, 2018, the Corps and its contractors have executed 1,955 of 2,092 taskings received (for temporary generators) in Puerto Rico and 1,779 generator installations; the Corps is continuing to support this line of effort. The Corps and its contractors concluded its temporary emergency power mission assignment in the U.S. Virgin Islands on February 20, 2018; the Corps installed 180 generators during this mission. Fifteen generators remain installed and are managed under a FEMA contract to provide additional stability to critical facilities in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Temporary Roofing: In order for the Corps and its contractors to install temporary covering (blue roof), the government and its contractors require validated rights of entry. The Corps completed its temporary roofing mission assignment in Florida with 13,370 blue roofs installed. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Corps installed 3,658 blue roofs over the course of the mission. As of March 8, 2018, in Puerto Rico, the Corps and its contractors have completed 59,292 blue roof installations and collected over 60,683 rights of entry.

Debris Management: As of March 8, 2018, the Corps has removed approximately 822,000 cubic yards of the estimated 870,000 cubic yards of debris in the U.S. Virgin Islands and 3.54 million cubic yards of the estimated 3.9 million cubic yards of debris in Puerto Rico. In Florida and Georgia, Corps debris subject matter experts provided technical assistance to counties across Florida and Georgia in response to Hurricane Irma.

Dam and Levee Safety, Assessments, and Response: In Puerto Rico, Corps Dam and Levee teams inspected 17 priority dam locations and Guajataca Dam was the only site deemed in critical condition. Hurricane Maria caused a significant rise in the water level of the dam, and resulted in flow in the spillway. The spillway structure was compromised and the surrounding area began to erode, posing immediate risk to several thousand residents. Corps teams placed over 500 Jersey barriers and over 1,300 super sand bags to cease any further erosion and allow for long-term repair of the spillway. Additionally, the Corps teams cleared existing outflow conduits and placed piping and pumps to further reduce the water level in the dam to safe levels. Under a FEMA mission assignment, the Corps is in the process of contracting for six additional interim risk reduction measures including grouting spillway slabs and stabilizing intake slopes to reduce risk during Puerto Rico's wet season with a completion date for all of this work in July, 2019. The Corps has no authority for permanent repairs at the project.

Power Restoration Mission: On September, 30 2017, the Corps was given a FEMA Mission Assignment, within the authority of the Stafford Act, to assist the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA) in further repairing the power system to its pre-storm condition. Our priority is to safely restore reliable power to the people of Puerto Rico as quickly as possible. As of March 8, 2018, 90.7% (1.34 million of 1.47 million) of customer meters are energized. The Corps has over 1,600 contractors working alongside PREPA and mutual aid utility companies to restore power to Puerto Rico. The Corps of Engineers, alongside PREPA and FEMA will continually evaluate the remaining work in order to achieve our goals of restoring electricity to 95% of customers on the island by March 31, 2018. In support of this line of effort, through the Defense Logistics Agency as its contracting agent, the Corps has executed the procurement of over \$204 million of materials required in the restoration the power grid.

The Corps remains fully committed and capable of executing its other Civil Works activities across the Nation despite our heavy involvement in these ongoing response and recovery operations. We also remain ready and poised to assist in future events as they may occur. This concludes my testimony and I look forward to answering any questions you might have. Thank you.