

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

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

BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ON

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RECOVERY: CENTRAL TAKEAWAYS
FROM THE UNPRECEDENTED 2017 HURRICANE SEASON

NOVEMBER 2, 2017

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee:

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 for Civil and Emergency Operations, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

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, commodities distribution, and generator installation.

2017 Hurricane Season – With regard to hurricane activity, 2017 has been an unusually active season. The Corps has been 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 \$93.7 million in Mission Assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricane Harvey response and recovery. Currently, the Corps has 201 Corps employees deployed at key response nodes.

Temporary Emergency Power: As of September 11, 2017, the Corps completed 68 pre-installation inspections and 45 generator installations at identified critical public facilities fulfilling the temporary emergency power mission in Texas.

Temporary Housing: Corps teams, in conjunction with FEMA, continue to assist the State of Texas with the development and implementation of a temporary housing Project Management Plan. The plan includes establishing 20,000 travel trailers and 4,000 mobile housing units. The Corps continues to conduct reconnaissance and assessments, identifying sites to fulfil the scope of this plan, and establishing conceptual layouts for the assessed sites. The Direct Housing Assessment Team is providing technical monitors that continue to prepare Site Inspections Reports in 26 counties.

Debris Management: Debris Teams led by Corps subject matter experts continue to provide locals with technical assistance in defining requirements and monitoring debris removal and disposal operations in 15 counties. 461,000 cubic yards of debris have been removed to date and that number continues to rise.

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 \$1.7 billion in Mission Assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery (45 Mission Assignments totaling \$176.3 million for Hurricane Irma and 34 Mission Assignments totaling \$1.5 billion for Hurricane Maria). Currently, the Corps has over 1,243 personnel deployed in various locations supporting the recovery missions.

Temporary Emergency Power: As of October 31, 2017, the Corps and its contractors have completed 740 of 827 requested pre-installation inspections (for temporary generators) and 392 generator installations in Puerto Rico. The Corps and its contractors have completed 249 of 277 pre-installation inspections (for temporary generators) and 140 general installations 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. As of October 31, 2017, the Corps and its contractors have completed 13,127 blue roof installations and collected 14,822 validated rights of entry in Florida. At this time, requests for temporary roofing have begun to decrease in Florida. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Corps and its contractors have completed 2,255 blue roof installations and collected 4,120 rights of entry. An additional contractor began blue roof installations on October 24, 2017. In Puerto Rico, the Corps and its contractors have completed 3,986 blue roof installations and collected over 17,000 rights of entry.

Debris Management: As of October 31, 2017, the Corps has removed approximately 141,000 cubic yards of the estimated over 1 million cubic yards of debris in the U.S. Virgin Islands and 62,500 cubic yards of the estimated over 6 million cubic yards of debris in Puerto Rico. Corps debris subject matter experts provided technical assistance to counties across Florida and Georgia in response to Hurricane Irma and continue to provide oversight to five regions within the Florida Department of Emergency Management.

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 overflow of the spillway. The spillway structure was compromised and the surrounding area began to erode, posing immediate risk to 70,000 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 are conditioning to place piping and pumps to further reduce the water level in the dam. When the water level reaches 25 feet below the spillway, more substantial repairs will begin.

Power 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. The Corps is conducting this mission.

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.