

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS**

**COMPLETE STATEMENT OF**

**MAJOR GENERAL SCOTT SPELLMON**

**DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL, CIVIL AND EMERGENCY  
OPERATIONS**

**BEFORE**

**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**Evaluating Federal Disaster Response and Recovery Efforts**

**NOVEMBER 29, 2018**

Chairman Gowdy, Ranking Member Cummings 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 and lessons learned during the 2017 disasters. I will also provide an update on the Corps' response to Hurricanes Florence and Michael. I am Major General Scott Spellmon, Deputy Commanding General, Civil and Emergency Operations for the Corps of Engineers.

The Corps conducts its emergency response and recovery activities under two basic authorities: the Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act); and Public Law 84-99, as amended (PL 84-99), 33 U.S.C. § 701n. Under the Stafford Act, we and other Federal agencies work under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). PL 84-99 provides a separate source of 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 disasters.

Under the Stafford Act:

- As provided in the National Response Framework, the Corps serves as the lead Federal coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function 3 (ESF-3) (Public Works and Engineering); and
- As provided in National Disaster Recovery Framework, the Corps serves as the lead Federal coordinating agency for Recovery Support Function (RSF) – Infrastructure Systems.

In both of these capacities, the Corps assists the overall Federal effort, working with other Federal agencies as directed by FEMA.

ESF-3 is responsible for providing temporary emergency power, debris management, and emergency infrastructure assessment. The Corps is also positioned to support other Emergency Support Functions with temporary housing, temporary roofs (Blue Roof program), critical public facility restoration as well as structural specialists to support Urban Search and Rescue missions. The Infrastructure Systems RSF works to efficiently facilitate the restoration of infrastructure systems and services to support a viable, sustainable community and improves resilience to and protection from future hazards.

Under PL 84-99, we prepare for flood, hurricane, and other natural disasters through planning, coordination, and training with local, state, Federal partners. The Corps can also assist state and local entities at their request in flood fight operations or through implementation of advance measures to prevent/reduce storm incident damages. After a major flood, 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 are able to mobilize from across the country to assist the local Corps districts that are responding to the incident. 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 advance contracts that can be quickly activated for missions such as debris removal, temporary roofing, generator installation, and dredging.

**2017 Hurricane Season** - The 2017 Hurricane Season was historic and the Corps continues to identify lessons learned in an effort to sustain and improve its emergency response performance.

**Hurricanes Irma and Maria** – According to the National Hurricane Center, Category 5 Hurricane Irma went through the U.S. Virgin Islands on September 6, 2017. Irma also impacted Puerto Rico with Category 2 winds, 12 foot storm surge and up to 20 inches of rain. Hurricane Irma made landfall in southern Florida and the Florida Keys on September 9, 2017. Within weeks, Category 5 Hurricane Maria went through Puerto Rico on September 20, 2017, causing major damage to critical infrastructure and homes. The historic nature of the impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, in addition to affecting states within the continental U.S., resulted in an unprecedented response by FEMA and the family of Federal responders. FEMA identified 55 mission assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery, totaling \$4.1 billion for Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Corps deployed thousands of dedicated civil servant and military personnel to support the people of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and still has over 200 employees engaged executing recovery operations today. Additionally, the Corps received 32 mission assignments in Florida and in Georgia, for a total of \$131 million.

Debris Management: Across the areas impacted by these two storms, these missions resulted in over 5.03 million cubic yards of debris removed, allowing for the freedom of movement by responders and the people impacted by these storms. In Florida and Georgia, the Corps debris subject matter experts also provided technical assistance to many counties.

Temporary Emergency Power: Our temporary power teams installed over 1,600 generators providing emergency power to critical life preserving services like water, medical, energy, communications, and public safety sectors.

Temporary Roofing: Across U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, Corps teams installed over 63,000 temporary roofing systems “Blue Roofs” allowing the impacted people the opportunity to leave emergency shelters and return to their homes. The Corps completed over 13,000 blue roof installations in Florida.

Power Mission: The Corps assembled a team of Corps employees, who volunteered to assist in the repair of segments of the Puerto Rico power grid. Working with the Department of Energy, FEMA, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority (PREPA), the Edison Electric Institute, and industry utility companies, they were part of a multi-agency team, which has now, based on PREPA's reporting, all pre-storm customers have power restored through either grid power or other long-term solutions.

**Hurricane Harvey** – Hurricane Harvey made landfall along the central Texas gulf coast near Rockport, Texas as a Category-4 hurricane on August 25, 2017. Harvey delivered an unprecedented amount of rain across the greater Houston metropolitan area and southeast Texas, with upwards of 60 inches of rain in some areas resulting in record flooding. During the week of August 25, 2017, the Corps increased the stockpile of flood fight materials in south Texas in anticipation of Tropical Storm Harvey being upgraded to Hurricane Harvey – from 500,000 to 2 million sandbags and 1,500 feet HESCO barriers. The Corps provided over one million of these sandbags to local/state government.

FEMA identified 29 mission assignments totaling \$142 million for the Corps to assist in Hurricane Harvey response and recovery. Nearly 1,000 Corps personnel deployed to support response and recovery efforts. Currently, 28 Corps employees are deployed supporting 12 active recovery mission assignments.

In the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, Congress appropriated over \$17 billion for the Corps to repair and rehabilitate projects across the Nation damaged by natural disasters, to construct flood and storm damage reduction projects, and to complete flood and coastal storm damage reduction studies in multiple states and territories. The Corps has identified specific projects that will receive those supplemental funds and is working to move as quickly as possible to complete the planned work.

**California Wildfires and Other Disasters** – In response to October 2017 wildfires across northern California, FEMA issued seven mission assignments to the Corps totaling \$1.2 billion ESF-3 coordination, debris management and technical assistance missions. Additionally, wildfires in late December 2017 in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties led to an altered and denuded watershed. Rainstorms and flash flooding in the first week of January 2018, precipitated deadly mudslides in Santa Barbara County. In response to those disasters, FEMA issued two additional Corps mission assignments totaling \$110 million for the removal of mudslide debris from 11 debris basins and 11 natural channels.

Debris Management: The Direct Federal Assistance (DFA) Debris Mission was the most costly in California history (\$956,000,000). The Corps engaged contractors to execute Private Property Debris Removal (PPDR) across Sonoma, Napa, Mendocino and Lake Counties. Because of the requirement to remove foundations due to excessive heat and coupled with environmental ash hazards and contaminated soil, the emergency response was complex and incorporated the expertise of several Federal and State

partners, including the Environmental Protection Agency and State of California emergency management and environmental agencies. Debris removal operations began November 2017 and physically ended in early June 2018. Over 1.7 million tons of debris were removed from over 4,500 properties so that homeowners could rebuild safely. In addition, over 900 civilian personnel from the Corps and partnering agencies (such as the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation) performed Quality Assurance of debris removal.

Temporary Housing: The Corps provided access and technical assistance to FEMA and its contractors for the use of the Corps' Kyen Campground in Mendocino County. This was not a typical Temporary Housing mission under the National Response Framework but undertaken in order for FEMA to provide wildfire survivors with temporary housing (Recreational Vehicles).

**Other Disasters** – The Corps responded in total to 32 events in 2017. Events outside of the hurricane and wildfire response include the Central U.S. Blizzard, the Bighorn River Ice Jam, numerous flooding events throughout the Nation as well as Lake Ontario High Water and other severe weather events.

### **The 2018 Hurricane Season**

The Corps continues with 2017 Hurricane Season recovery operations in Texas, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. At the same time, the Corps is postured to provide engineering solutions during the current hurricane season and any other natural disasters. Combining the lessons learned and best practices from 2017, the Corps took immediate actions to prepare for the 2018 hurricane season to include:

- Exercises – the Corps completed hurricane exercises along with its Federal, state, local and territory partners for the gulf and east coasts, Puerto Rico and the USVI.
- Real Life Drills – the Corps planned for and postured teams and resources in preparation for potential impacts from Tropical Storm Beryl and Hurricane Lane.
- National Level Exercise – the Corps participated in FEMA's intergovernmental and private sector National Level Exercise 2018. This exercise focused on a hypothetical major hurricane scenario, making landfall near Hampton Roads, Virginia.
- Plans – the Corps updated its hurricane plans, annexes and standard operating procedures.
- Workshops – the Corps conducted workshops to prepare for its ESF-3 responsibilities for temporary emergency power, debris and infrastructure assessments as well as ESF-6 support responsibilities for temporary housing and temporary roofing.
- Pre-scripted Mission Assignments - the Corps worked with FEMA to update and refine 34 ESF-3 Corps Pre-scripted Mission Assignments from 2017 lessons learned,

including three newly created ones for Logistic Support, Command and Control Integration and Planning Cells.

- Acquisition Center of Expertise - the Corps began developing an Acquisition Center of Expertise to create a robust, rapid and agile contracting capability to support large, complex missions that involve debris, temporary power, and roofing as well as non-standard contingency support requirements.
- Adjustments to Teams and Resources - the Corps refitted and reset teams and personnel (all volunteers) that have deployed extensively over the past 11 months with emphasis on ensuring that it has a ready reserve of personnel ready and trained to respond as necessary.

### **Response to Hurricanes Florence and Michael**

FEMA identified 73 mission assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricanes Florence and Michael response and recovery, totaling \$214.3 million for North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, and Georgia. The three major mission areas are Temporary Housing, Debris Management, and Temporary Roofing.

Temporary Housing: The Corps is employing retired annuitants to assist FEMA's Public Assistance Project Worksheet Writing efforts in both North and South Carolina to augment FEMA's Temporary Housing mission by providing subject matter experts and technical monitors to support housing related mission reporting, review construction, and organize mission execution tasks, and to participate on the FEMA and State teams responsible for installing travel trailers and manufactured housing units.

Debris Management: The Corps is also responsible for removing an estimated 2 million cubic yards of debris from 13 counties in Georgia, of which the Corps has removed 1.38 million cubic yards, as of November 19, 2018. In Florida, Corps experts continue to provide debris removal technical assistance and oversight of State-led debris removal efforts.

Temporary Roofing: Using the lessons learned from Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, the Corps' temporary roofing mission saw significant improvements and increases in both rights of entry collection, damage assessments, and installations completed. As of November 19, 2018, 10,575 Rights of Entry (ROEs) have been collected, 9,846 assessments have been completed and 7,020 roof installations have been completed. All remaining installations are anticipated to be completed by December 1, 2018.

The Corps, under its civil works mission authorities, also closely monitored water levels at Corps reservoirs and dams in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia to inform decisions on how to reduce additional water flows into already flooded streams and rivers.

The Corps also remains fully committed and capable of executing its other Civil Works activities across the Nation – our commercial navigation, flood and coastal storm damage reduction, and aquatic ecosystem restoration missions – in addition to our involvement in these and future response and recovery missions. This concludes my testimony and I look forward to answering any questions you might have. Thank you.