

The government's response to hurricane katrina assignment



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The Government's Response to Hurricane Katrina In this analysis, the role of the government and its response to Hurricane Katrina will be examined. This is a complex subject which raises many questions, such as: (1.) the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina resulting from the layered government administration, (2.) several types of errors in policies causing neglect in decision making, (3.) the political manipulation of disaster declaration and relief aid to win votes, (4.) the problems of acquiring timely and accurate solutions, (5.) Glory seeking by government officials, (6. the short sightedness effect causing a one-sidedness in governmental decision making. In this analysis, the hypothesis of the government's response to Hurricane Katrina were delayed due to: (1.) lack of supplies (i. e. water, food, or shelter, etc), (2.) lack of sanitary conditions, (3.) inadequate evacuation planning, (4.) back-up communication systems at various levels, (5.) lack of mismanagement and leadership, (6.) lack of medical attention, and (7.) lack of money. In this analysis, the role of the local, state, and federal government will be examined.

In addition, my personal experience of Hurricane Katrina will be examined. A hurricane is a type of tropical cyclone, which is a generic term for a low pressure system that generally forms in the tropics. The cyclone is accompanied by thunderstorms and, in the Northern Hemisphere, a counterclockwise circulation of winds nears the earth's surface. Hurricanes are categorized according to the strength of their winds using the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Scale. A Category 1 storm has the lowest wind speeds, while a Category 5 hurricane has the strongest. (nhc. noaa. ov) Hurricanes are natural occurrences that cannot be prevented, only prepared for.

Hurricane Katrina started out as a tropical storm, which turned into a hurricane. Hurricane Katrina developed in the Caribbean's and hit Florida before gaining strength in the warm water of The Gulf of Mexico. On August 24, 2005, the first alert of the tropical storm was given out. On August 26, 2005, a warning from the National Weather Service showed Hurricane Katrina taking a turn for New Orleans. This is when people began to pay attention to the storm. On August 27, 2005, the metro area started to evacuate.

Governor Blanco, governor of Louisiana, sent a " State of Emergency" letter to President Bush. Although, the local government gave mandatory evacuation twenty-two hours before the storm hit, they did not make provisions to evacuate the large numbers of citizens unable to evacuate themselves. The New Orleans Mayor, Ray Nagin was criticized for failing to implement his evacuation plan. Mayor Ray Nagin refused to use school buses that were available. When Mayor Ray Nagin was asked why the school buses were not used to assist with evacuations; He gave the excuse of a lack of insurance liability. wikipedia. org) On August 28, 2005, Hurricane Katrina developed into a massive Category 5. Hurricane Katrina was one of the strongest storms that ever collide with the Coastal United States in the last century. Strong winds sustained during landfall of over 140 mph. Despite monitoring the storm's development, tracking its movement, and issuing early warnings. Hurricane Katrina has proved to be the most destructive and costliest natural disaster in the history of the United State. This catastrophic event nearly destroyed New Orleans, and is responsible for an estimated 80 billion dollars in damages.

Nonetheless, the most severe loss of life and property damage occurred due to flooding. The levee system failed just hours after the storm had moved inland. Nearly every levee in metro New Orleans was breached as Hurricane Katrina passed through New Orleans, Louisiana. Eventually 80% of the city became flooded and also large tracts of neighboring parishes and the floodwaters lingered for weeks. The levee failures prompted investigations of their design and construction which belongs solely to the US Army Corps of Engineers as mandated in the Flood Control Act of 1965. (wikipedia. rg) Soon after the storm ended, public debate arose about the local, state and federal governments' role in the preparations for and response to the storm. Criticism of shaken and frustrated political leaders and residents who remained in New Orleans without water, food or shelter, and the deaths of several citizens by thirst, exhaustion, and violence days after the storm itself had passed. The criticism of the government response to Hurricane Katrina primarily consisted of accusations of mismanagement and lack of leadership in the relief effort in response to Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, specifically in the delayed response to the flooding of New Orleans. Although some people believe that the government was well-prepared for the natural disaster. When Hurricane Katrina swept the coast and destroyed what we know as New Orleans, many of these Americans suffered from the lack of the intervention of the U. S. government. I am originally from New Orleans, Louisiana. I was there when Hurricane Katrina struck. Usually, my family and I evacuate when there is a sign of a hurricane appearing.

Most of the citizens in New Orleans including myself refer to hurricanes at times as a mini vacation (just as many of the citizen in Belleville, Illinois for

snow days) because of possible days off from work and school. However, Hurricane Katrina was like no other hurricane we had ever experienced. Many of my family members as well as many others in the surrounding metro area evacuated with their jobs. They had expectations of making extra money with their jobs. Due to that factor, many of my elderly family members were left behind. Because of those circumstances, it resulted in my husband and me staying to secure their safety.

We had a total of eight people in my three story apartment building (four of them being senior citizens.) Since we had decided to ride out the storm, we made sure we were prepared. Therefore, we had stocked up on plenty supplies because my husband is such a survivor fanatic. With that being said, there was enough food, water, and batteries to last us about a month or more. On August 29, 2005 at 5: 00 a. m. , I was awakening by extremely strong winds. I heard loud rumbling noises on the roof top. I immediately got out of bed and gathered with the rest of my family on the second level of my apartment. My family and I remained on the econd level throughout the course of the storm. At approximately 7: 00 a. m. , my roof top blew completely off (I could literally see the sky) allowing all of the rain water to come through. Therefore, we were afraid because of possible flooding on my third level from the rain. At approximately 9: 00 a. m. , we had lost power and there was no running water. Throughout the storm, my husband and I continued to look outside (through our patio window) to see how the storm was coming along. At approximately 9: 30 a. m. , my husband noticed the water cresting over the lake. He stated how the water was rising fast.

When I saw the expression on his face I immediately became afraid. When I looked outside for myself, the water was up to the second level of my house. I could have literally opened my patio door and touch the water. I remembered my husband saying let's all gather together and pray. We did not know if the water would continue to rise. All of us feared for our lives. However, we were still trapped. We were surrounded by water with no escape. At approximately 11: 00 a. m. , the storm was over. Unfortunately, we were concerned that the ceiling would collapse on the second level due to the moisture from the rain.

Therefore, George began knocking on neighbors doors to use their home as a shelter for my family and I. No one answered their door. Then George decided that we should go to the vacant apartment across mine. When we walked in the apartment it was fully furnished and with no damages. We thought it was almost impossible (what were the odds.) Nevertheless, we decided to settle down. However, I became a little delusional. I was more shock than anything. I couldn't believe the intensity of the storm as well as the damages.) I began asking my husband, “ How am I going to get work?

And how was I going to bring my son to school? George then replied, Come take a walk with me. We walked to a balcony view that leads to the parking lot. George asked, what do see? Can you see your truck? As I began to search for my truck, I saw a little bit of everything floating in the water such as: clothes, shoes, toys, doors, cars, and even house. No joke! I finally notice the rack on the top of my truck; I believe it was propped up on the sidewalk because the rack was so visible. As time prevailed, we decided to cook. We decided to have beans because of the amount of people in the house.

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George continued to servile the premises for security purposes. He would come back and forth giving us updates of what was going outside. Once he came inside telling us that a few of the guys that were outside said that they were going to local grocery store for food. They floated through that nasty water (not sure what was in) on door and using life preservers. After their return from the store they began to barbequing chicken. About an hour later, George comes in with two plates full of chicken. We couldn't believe that looters shared their food with us. We were very grateful.

Later that same day, we began to see helicopters flying across our windows. I almost couldn't believe my eyes. I felt like I was in a movie, it was surreal. We begun see people on roof tops waiting to be rescued by the helicopters. I went to my family and told them that I wanted to be rescued. My mom and my grandmother kept saying they were ready because they didn't want to get on top of the roof. We decided to sleep on it and make a decision the next day. Fortunately, we made it though to the next day. There were big decisions to be made. On August 30, 2005, we all agreed upon being rescued.

George started talking to the neighbor. They told him that there were limitations for being rescued such as: one small bag per person and no heavy items. Eventually, it became a blessing that the roof came off. The roof became our escape out (all the neighbors in our building came together to help each other.) Someone had a large ladder allowing us to get on the roof with no struggles. All the men assisted in getting everyone to the roof. Therefore, one person was holding ladder, someone else was supporting the

person on the ladder, and another pulling the person onto the roof as they made it to the top of the ladder.

There was amazing teamwork! Nonetheless, there were at least thirty-five people on one roof. While we were on the roof top waiting for the first sighting of a helicopter, someone was passing out water to everyone (from a five gallon water bottle) as well as a mosquito repellent spray. However, we were on the roof top for at least ten hours before the first helicopter flew in our area. Once the first helicopter came, everyone pulled out their flash lights, cigarette lights, cell phone, etc. We began flashing our lights and flicking them off and on.

Finally, when the helicopter noticed us they flashed their lights on our roof to let us know they see us. Before the helicopter made their first rescue, we heard a woman shouting, " Tell them we are over here. " After that first voice, we started hearing more and more people letting us know that they were out there. It was so sad. When the helicopter hovered over our roof, there was an Air National Guard that came down on a rope and landed on our roof. All of us became emotional. There wasn't a dry eye on the roof. He asked if everyone was okay. He said that his crew needed gas and that they would come back for us.

He told us that he was going to stay on the roof with us until they come back. That was like music to our ears. It made us feel good because we knew that they were not going to leave one of their own. While we were waiting for them to come back, the Air Guard began to organize the rescue. He said first it will be the senior citizens and the sick, next women and child, and lastly the

men. I told the Air Guard about the people in the surrounding area that needed to be rescued. Once the helicopter arrived, George took over in assisting the Air Guard with the rescues (George is always Mr.

Helpful.) We weren't sure how the rescue would take place. Then, a basket came down from the helicopter. One by one someone got into the basket. Many of the mothers were putting their children in the basket by themselves in hopes to go up with them. However, that was not the case at times because when the helicopter became full they would pull off with no notice. Before long, it was my turn to get into the basket (I was the last female to go up.) Before I got into the basket, I flashed my flashlight into George's face. I told him, " I know that you are Mr.

Helpful, but remember every man is for themselves because it was all men remaining. Then I got into the basket. I made sure my son was in the basket with me (neither one of us were small.) I did not want to take any chances of being separated. As soon as I got into the helicopter; we took off. We were taken to a highway on the other side of town. There were charter buses lined up waiting to bring everyone to a shelter. The buses were taking people to different locations causing people to be separated from their families.

There were plenty of children sitting around waiting for their mothers. However, one of the military men was going around telling everyone (including children) to get on the bus to make way for new arrivals. The minute I got off the helicopter, I searched for my family that was rescued before me and there was no luck. For that reason, I was not getting on any buses until my husband arrived. Every time a new batch of people would

arrive; I would begin searching to find George. Time kept going by and there was no sight of George. I had begun to worry because I know how helpful George could be. Finally, I spotted George.

As soon as George made it across the field (away from the helicopter) I tackled George with a hug. Once I found George, we got on the bus. On August 31, 2005, we were taken to Nicholas State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana. When we arrive to the shelter there was no food, water, electricity, beds, or blankets. We had better back home minus the ten feet of water surrounding us. I could not understand why they would take us out of one bad situation and put us into another. We had to sleep on hard wooden cold floors. However, George is also known as Mr. Survivor. He had blankets, snacks and water for each of us.

Later that day, Red Cross arrived. There were hot meals being served, blankets, toiletries, clothes, etc. At the end of the day, George and I began talking with the custodian. We asked her if she had a car that she could bring up to the airport. We offered her hundred dollars to do so. She said she did not have a car, but offered to ask her brother. Thirty Minutes later, she said here brother was only able to do it the next day. We were happy with that because we just wanted to be out of there.

On September 1, 2005, there were shifts of military men walking around the shelter with rifles (as if we were prisoners.) While we were eating lunch we decided to stand in the door way to get air because of no electricity.

However, when a new bus load of people arrive to the shelter; one of the military men asked us to get inside of the building to eat our food. He said,

because the people getting the bus had not eaten in days and he was not sure how they were going to react. As time went on we became concerned because the custodian's bother had not show up yet. Later that night, he arrived.

He told us that he was one of the city councilmen for the city of Baton Rouge. We gave him one hundred dollars and filled his gas tank up then brought us to the airport in Baton Rouge. I felt embarrassed going into the airport to sleep on the floor. Once we walked into the airport there were at least fifty people sleeping on the floor. Therefore, we just joined them. On the morning of September 2, 2005, we purchased our airline tickets with Delta Airline. We were charged five hundred and forty eight dollars per ticket. Meanwhile, at the airport so many people were coming up to us to see if we were okay.

Many of them were sharing their stories with us. Some of them were offering us money. They gave everyone blankets and sandwiches. Fortunately, George spotted someone he knew. She worked at the airport. She took us to her house. We were able to take fresh baths, eat a hot meal, and a nice comfortable bed. She was a saint. On September 3, 2005, we flew from Baton Rouge, Louisiana to St Louis, Missouri. We were picked up at the airport and stayed on the Air Force Scott Base for two weeks. While we were there we began taking care of business with Red Cross and FEMA.

There was so much drama with both Red Cross and FEMA. First, Red Cross ran out of debit cards because so many imposters. Then there was a delay of fund from FEMA. They continued to say because of so many fraudulent cases

there will be a slow process. However, members of the United States Congress and others believed that the relief efforts were slow because most of the affected areas were poor. There was also concern that many National Guard units were short staffed in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama because some units were deployed overseas.

Due to the slow response by the federal government to the hurricane, New Orleans's top emergency management official called the effort a " national disgrace. " Mayor Ray Nagin expressed his frustration about the insufficient reinforcements provided by the President and federal authorities. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was heavily criticized about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, primarily for its slow response and inability to coordinate its efforts with other federal agencies relief organizations.

FEMA was accused of deliberately slowing things down, in an effort to ensure that all assistance and relief workers were coordinated properly. For example, Michael D. Brown, the head of FEMA, on August 29, urged all fire and emergency services departments not to respond to counties and states affected by Hurricane Katrina without being requested and lawfully dispatched by state and local authorities under mutual aid agreements and the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

In other instances of FEMA asserting its authority to only ultimately make things worse, FEMA officials turned away three Wal-Mart trailer trucks loaded with water, prevented the Coast Guard from delivering 1, 000 gallons of diesel fuel. Additionally, more than 50 civilian aircraft responding to separate

requests for evacuations from hospitals and other agencies swarmed to the area a day after Katrina hit, but FEMA blocked their efforts. Aircraft operators complained that FEMA waved off a number of evacuation attempts, saying the rescuers were not authorized. Many planes and helicopters simply sat idle," said Thomas Judge, president of the Assn. of Air Medical Services. FEMA Director Michael Brown stated that he was not aware there were refugees in the Convention Center until September 1, three days after Hurricane Katrina hit. Later, it was revealed that Michael Brown had virtually no experience in emergency management when he was appointed to the position by President Bush two years prior to Katrina. Despite this, he continued to receive praise from the President even on his first visit to the area, " Brownie, you're doing a heck of a job. The FEMA Director is working 24 ??? they're working 24?? hours a day. " State of Louisiana officials, and state emergency management leaders, have been widely criticized for delaying the ability of the federal government and outside agencies to provide needed relief and necessary security in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Notably, federal troops are generally prohibited from directly enforcing state laws by the Posse Comitatus Act, with some exceptions. However, the Posse Comitatus Act does not apply to National Guard troops under the command of a state governor. The Bush administration sent Governor Blanco a request to take over command of law enforcement under the Insurrection Act, but this request was rejected by Governor Blanco.