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KATRINA TIMELINE

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Friday, August 26

GOV. KATHLEEN BLANCO DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY IN LOUISIANA: [\[Office of the Governor\]](#)

GULF COAST STATES REQUEST TROOP ASSISTANCE FROM PENTAGON: At a 9/1 press conference, Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré, commander, Joint Task Force Katrina, said that the Gulf States began the process of requesting additional forces on Friday, 8/26. [\[DOD\]](#)

Saturday, August 27

5AM — KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 3 HURRICANE [\[CNN\]](#)

GOV. BLANCO ASKS BUSH TO DECLARE FEDERAL STATE OF EMERGENCY IN LOUISIANA: “I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the State and affected local governments, and that supplementary Federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster.” [\[Office of the Governor\]](#)

FEDERAL EMERGENCY DECLARED, DHS AND FEMA GIVEN FULL AUTHORITY TO RESPOND TO KATRINA: “Specifically, FEMA is authorized to identify, mobilize, and provide at its discretion, equipment and resources necessary to alleviate the impacts of the emergency.” [\[White House\]](#)

Sunday, August 28

2AM – KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 4 HURRICANE [\[CNN\]](#)

7AM – KATRINA UPGRADED TO CATEGORY 5 HURRICANE [\[CNN\]](#)

MORNING — LOUISIANA NEWSPAPER SIGNALS LEVEES MAY GIVE: “Forecasters Fear Levees Won’t Hold Katrina”: “Forecasters feared Sunday afternoon that storm driven waters will lap over the New Orleans levees when monster Hurricane Katrina pushes past the Crescent City tomorrow.” [\[Lafayette Daily Advertiser\]](#)

9:30 AM — MAYOR NAGIN ISSUES FIRST EVER MANDATORY EVACUATION OF NEW ORLEANS: “We’re facing the storm most of us have feared,” said Nagin. “This is going to be an unprecedented event.” [\[Times-Picayune\]](#)

4PM – NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE ISSUES SPECIAL HURRICANE WARNING: In the event of a category 4 or 5 hit, “Most of the area will be uninhabitable for weeks, perhaps longer. ... At least one-half of well-constructed homes will have roof and wall failure. All gabled roofs will fail, leaving those homes severely damaged or destroyed. ... Power outages will last for weeks. ... Water shortages will make human suffering incredible by modern standards.” [[National Weather Service](#)]

AFTERNOON — BUSH, BROWN, CHERTOFF WARNED OF LEVEE FAILURE BY NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER DIRECTOR: Dr. Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center: ““We were briefing them way before landfall. ... It’s not like this was a surprise. We had in the advisories that the levee could be topped.”” [[Times-Picayune](#); [St. Petersburg Times](#)]

LATE PM – REPORTS OF WATER TOPPLING OVER LEVEE: “Waves crashed atop the exercise path on the Lake Pontchartrain levee in Kenner early Monday as Katrina churned closer.” [[Times-Picayune](#)]

APPROXIMATELY 30,000 EVACUEES GATHER AT SUPERDOME WITH ROUGHLY 36 HOURS WORTH OF FOOD [[Times-Picayune](#)]

Monday, August 29

7AM – KATRINA MAKES LANDFALL AS A CATEGORY 4 HURRICANE [[CNN](#)]

8AM – MAYOR NAGIN REPORTS THAT WATER IS FLOWING OVER LEVEE: “I’ve gotten reports this morning that there is already water coming over some of the levee systems. In the lower ninth ward, we’ve had one of our pumping stations to stop operating, so we will have significant flooding, it is just a matter of how much.” [NBC’s “Today Show”]

MORNING — BUSH CALLS SECRETARY CHERTOFF TO DISCUSS IMMIGRATION: “I spoke to Mike Chertoff today — he’s the head of the Department of Homeland Security. I knew people would want me to discuss this issue [immigration], so we got us an airplane on — a telephone on Air Force One, so I called him. I said, are you working with the governor? He said, you bet we are.” [[White House](#)]

MORNING – BUSH SHARES BIRTHDAY CAKE PHOTO-OP WITH SEN. JOHN MCCAIN [[White House](#)]



10AM — BUSH VISITS ARIZONA RESORT TO PROMOTE MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT: “This new bill I signed says, if you’re a senior and you like the way things are today, you’re in good shape, don’t change. But, by the way, there’s a lot of different options for you. And we’re here to talk about what that means to our seniors.” [[White House](#)]

LATE MORNING – LEVEE BREACHED: “A large section of the vital 17th Street Canal levee, where it connects to the brand new ‘hurricane proof’ Old Hammond Highway bridge, gave way late Monday morning in Bucktown after Katrina’s fiercest winds were well north.” [[Times-Picayune](#)]

11:30AM — MICHAEL BROWN FINALLY REQUESTS THAT DHS DISPATCH 1,000 EMPLOYEES TO REGION, GIVES THEM TWO DAYS TO ARRIVE: “Brown’s memo to Chertoff described Katrina as ‘this near catastrophic event’ but otherwise lacked any urgent language. The memo politely ended, ‘Thank you for your consideration in helping us to meet our responsibilities.’” [[AP](#)]

2PM — BUSH TRAVELS TO CALIFORNIA SENIOR CENTER TO DISCUSS MEDICARE DRUG BENEFIT: “We’ve got some folks up here who are concerned about their Social Security or Medicare. Joan Geist is with us. ... I could tell — she was looking at me when I first walked in the room to meet her, she was wondering whether or not old George W. is going to take away her Social Security check.” [[White House](#)]

9PM — RUMSFELD ATTENDS SAN DIEGO PADRES BASEBALL GAME: Rumsfeld “joined Padres President John Moores in the owner’s box...at Petco Park.” [[Editor & Publisher](#)]

Tuesday, August 30

9AM – BUSH SPEAKS ON IRAQ AT NAVAL BASE CORONADO [[White House](#)]

MIDDAY – CHERTOFF FINALLY BECOMES AWARE THAT LEVEE HAS FAILED: “It was on Tuesday that the levee—may have been overnight Monday to Tuesday—that the levee started to break. And it was midday Tuesday that I became aware of the fact that there was no possibility of plugging the gap and that essentially the lake was going to start to drain into the city.” [[Meet the Press](#), 9/4/05]

PENTAGON CLAIMS THERE ARE ENOUGH NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS IN REGION: “Pentagon spokesman Lawrence Di Rita said the states have adequate National Guard units to handle the hurricane needs.” [[WWL-TV](#)]

MASS LOOTING REPORTED, SECURITY SHORTAGE CITED: “The looting is out of control. The French Quarter has been attacked,” Councilwoman Jackie Clarkson said. “We’re using exhausted, scarce police to control looting when they should be used for search and rescue while we still have people on rooftops.” [[AP](#)]

U.S.S. BATAAN SITS OFF SHORE, VIRTUALLY UNUSED: “The USS Bataan, a 844-foot ship designed to dispatch Marines in amphibious assaults, has helicopters, doctors, hospital beds, food and water. It also can make its own water, up to 100,000 gallons a day. And it just happened to be in the Gulf of Mexico when Katrina came roaring ashore. The Bataan rode out the storm and then followed it toward shore, awaiting relief orders. Helicopter pilots flying from its deck were some of the first to begin plucking stranded New Orleans residents. But now the Bataan’s hospital facilities, including six operating rooms and beds for 600 patients, are empty.” [[Chicago Tribune](#)]

3PM – PRESIDENT BUSH PLAYS GUITAR WITH COUNTRY SINGER MARK WILLIS [[AP](#)]

BUSH RETURNS TO CRAWFORD FOR FINAL NIGHT OF VACATION [[AP](#)]

Wednesday, August 31

TENS OF THOUSANDS TRAPPED IN SUPERDOME; CONDITIONS DETERIORATE: “A 2-year-old girl slept in a pool of urine. Crack vials littered a restroom. Blood stained the walls next to vending machines smashed by teenagers. ‘We pee on the floor. We are like animals,’ said Taffany Smith, 25, as she cradled her 3-week-old son, Terry. ... By Wednesday, it had degenerated into horror. ... At least two people, including a child, have been raped. At least three people have died, including one man who jumped 50 feet to his death, saying he had nothing left to live for. There is no sanitation. The stench is overwhelming.”” [[Los Angeles Times](#), 9/1/05]

PRESIDENT BUSH FINALLY ORGANIZES TASK FORCE TO COORDINATE FEDERAL RESPONSE: Bush says on Tuesday he will “fly to Washington to begin work...with a task force that will coordinate the work of 14 federal agencies involved in the relief effort.” [[New York Times](#), 8/31/05]

JEFFERSON PARISH EMERGENCY DIRECTOR SAYS FOOD AND WATER SUPPLY GONE: “Director Walter Maestri: FEMA and national agencies not delivering the help nearly as fast as it is needed.” [[WWL-TV](#)]

80,000 BELIEVED STRANDED IN NEW ORLEANS: Former Mayor Sidney Barthelemy “estimated 80,000 were trapped in the flooded city and urged President Bush to send more troops.” [[Reuters](#)]

3,000 STRANDED AT CONVENTION CENTER WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER: “With 3,000 or more evacuees stranded at the convention center — and with no apparent contingency plan or authority to deal with them — collecting a body was no one’s priority. ... Some had been at the convention center since Tuesday morning but had received no food, water or instructions.” [[Times-Picayune](#)]

5PM — BUSH GIVES FIRST MAJOR ADDRESS ON KATRINA: “Nothing about the president’s demeanor... — which seemed

casual to the point of carelessness — suggested that he understood the depth of the current crisis.” [\[New York Times\]](#)

8:00PM – CONDOLEEZZA RICE TAKES IN A BROADWAY SHOW: “On Wednesday night, Secretary Rice was booed by some audience members at ‘Spamalot!, the Monty Python musical at the Shubert, when the lights went up after the performance.” [\[New York Post, 9/2/05\]](#)

9PM — FEMA DIRECTOR BROWN CLAIMS SURPRISE OVER SIZE OF STORM: “I must say, this storm is much much bigger than anyone expected.” [\[CNN\]](#)

Thursday, September 1

8AM — BUSH CLAIMS NO ONE EXPECTED LEVEES TO BREAK: “I don’t think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees.” [\[Washington Post\]](#)

CONDOLEEZZA RICE VISITS U.S. OPEN: “Rice, [in New York] on three days’ vacation to shop and see the U.S. Open, hitting some balls with retired champ Monica Seles at the Indoor Tennis Club at Grand Central.” [\[New York Post\]](#)

STILL NO COMMAND AND CONTROL ESTABLISHED: Terry Ebbert, New Orleans Homeland Security Director: “This is a national emergency. This is a national disgrace. FEMA has been here three days, yet there is no command and control. We can send massive amounts of aid to tsunami victims, but we can’t bail out the city of New Orleans.” [\[Fox News\]](#)

2PM — MAYOR NAGIN ISSUES “DESPERATE SOS” TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: “This is a desperate SOS. Right now we are out of resources at the convention centre and don’t anticipate enough buses. We need buses. Currently the convention centre is unsanitary and unsafe and we’re running out of supplies.” [\[Guardian, 9/2/05\]](#)

2PM — MICHAEL BROWN CLAIMS NOT TO HAVE HEARD OF REPORTS OF VIOLENCE: “I’ve had no reports of unrest, if the connotation of the word unrest means that people are beginning to riot, or you know, they’re banging on walls and screaming and hollering or burning tires or whatever. I’ve had no reports of that.” [\[CNN\]](#)

NEW ORLEANS “DESCEND[S] INTO ANARCHY”: “Storm victims were raped and beaten, fights and fires broke out, corpses lay out in the open, and rescue helicopters and law enforcement officers were shot at as flooded-out New Orleans descended into anarchy Thursday. ‘This is a desperate SOS,’ the mayor said.” [\[AP\]](#)

CONDOLEEZZA RICE GOES SHOE SHOPPING: “Just moments ago at the Ferragamo on 5th Avenue, Condoleeza Rice was seen spending several thousands of dollars on some nice, new shoes (we’ve confirmed this, so her new heels will surely get coverage from the WaPo’s Robin Givhan). A fellow shopper, unable to fathom the absurdity of Rice’s timing, went up to the Secretary and reportedly shouted, ‘How dare you shop for shoes while thousands are dying and homeless!’” [\[Gawker\]](#)

MICHAEL BROWN FINALLY LEARNS OF EVACUEES IN CONVENTION CENTER: “We learned about that (Thursday), so I have directed that we have all available resources to get that convention center to make sure that they have the food and water and medical care that they need.” [\[CNN\]](#)

Friday, September 2

ROVE-LED CAMPAIGN TO BLAME LOCAL OFFICIALS BEGINS: “Under the command of President Bush’s two senior political advisers, the White House rolled out a plan...to contain the political damage from the administration’s response to Hurricane Katrina.” President Bush’s comments from the Rose Garden Friday morning formed “the start of this campaign.” [\[New York Times, 9/5/05\]](#)

9:35AM — BUSH PRAISES MICHAEL BROWN: “Brownie, you’re doing a heck of a job.” [\[White House, 9/2/05\]](#)



10 AM — PRESIDENT BUSH STAGES PHOTO-OP “BRIEFING”: Coast Guard helicopters and crew diverted to act as backdrop for President Bush’s photo-op.

BUSH VISIT GROUNDS FOOD AID: “Three tons of food ready for delivery by air to refugees in St. Bernard Parish and on Algiers Point sat on the Crescent City Connection bridge Friday afternoon as air traffic was halted because of President Bush’s visit to New Orleans, officials said.” [[Times-Picayune](#)]

LEVEE REPAIR WORK ORCHESTRATED FOR PRESIDENT’S VISIT: Sen. Mary

Landrieu, 9/3: “Touring this critical site yesterday with the President, I saw what I believed to be a real and significant effort to get a handle on a major cause of this catastrophe. Flying over this critical spot again this morning, less than 24 hours later, it became apparent that yesterday we witnessed a hastily prepared stage set for a Presidential photo opportunity; and the desperately needed resources we saw were this morning reduced to a single, lonely piece of equipment.” [[Sen. Mary Landrieu](#)]

BUSH USES 50 FIREFIGHTERS AS PROPS IN DISASTER AREA PHOTO-OP: A group of 1,000 firefighters convened in Atlanta to volunteer with the Katrina relief efforts. Of those, “a team of 50 Monday morning quickly was ushered onto a flight headed for Louisiana. The crew’s first assignment: to stand beside President Bush as he tours devastated areas.” [[Salt Lake Tribune](#); [Reuters](#)]



3PM — BUSH “SATISFIED WITH THE RESPONSE”: “I am satisfied with the response. I am not satisfied with all the results.” [[AP](#)]

Saturday, September 3

SENIOR BUSH ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL LIES TO WASHINGTON POST, CLAIMS GOV. BLANCO NEVER DECLARED STATE OF EMERGENCY: The Post reported in their Sunday edition “As of Saturday, Blanco still had not declared a state of emergency, the senior Bush official said.” They were forced to issue a correction hours later. [[Washington Post](#), [9/4/05](#)]

9AM — BUSH BLAMES STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS: “[T]he magnitude of responding to a crisis over a disaster area that is larger than the size of Great Britain has created tremendous problems that have strained state and local capabilities. The result is that many of our citizens simply are not getting the help they need.” [[White House](#), [9/3/05](#)]



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