

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE

**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ON

**UPDATE ON THE RESTORATION OF PUERTO RICO'S ELECTRIC
INFRASTRUCTURE**

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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 Ray Alexander, Director of Contingency Operations and Homeland Security, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps).

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 Flood Control and Coastal Emergencies, 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 and Recovery Framework. In this capacity, the Corps is the lead Federal agency for Emergency Support Function 3 (Public Works and Engineering), and Recovery Support Function (RSF) – Infrastructure Systems but works under the Federal Coordinating Officer's (FCO) 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. 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 disasters through planning, coordination, and training with local, state, Federal partners. The Corps can also assist state and local entities in flood fight operations or through implementation of advance measures to prevent/reduce storm incident damages. After the emergency incident, PL 84-99 authorizes the Corps to repair damage to Federal flood infrastructure 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 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 pre-awarded contracts that can be quickly activated for missions such as debris removal, temporary roofing, generator installation, and dredging.

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 a Major Disaster Declaration for Texas. Large amounts of rainfall fell across the greater Houston metropolitan area causing record

flooding. FEMA tasked 27 total mission assignments totaling \$126 million to the Corps to assist in Hurricane Harvey response and recovery efforts. Since August 22, 2017, nearly 1,000 Corps personnel have been deployed to support response and recovery efforts. Currently, 120 Corps employees are deployed supporting 11 active recovery mission assignments. Active mission assignments total \$39 million and are expected to be completed no later than June 30, 2018.

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

Temporary Housing: In the 31 disaster impacted Texas counties, more than 3,100 applicants are approved for FEMA Direct Temporary Housing Assistance to date. The Corps is inspecting approximately 400 haul and install unit installations a day and certifying approximately 150 mobile housing units 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. In addition to installing units on individual home sites, the Corps assessed more than 330 potential group site locations and completed construction of improvements to an existing group site.

Debris Management Oversight: 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.

Critical Public Facilities: The construction of critical public facilities temporary buildings are still ongoing. The Corps was assigned a mission to construct four public facilities - installation of two temporary schools, a city hall and a volunteer fire department. Two of these facilities have been completed and two are ongoing.

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 issued over \$3.6 billion in Mission Assignments for the Corps through ESF-3 to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery (47 Mission Assignments totaling \$355 million for Hurricane Irma and 39 Mission Assignments totaling \$3.64 billion for Hurricane Maria). Currently, the Corps has over 1098 personnel supporting ESF-3 missions deployed in various locations supporting the recovery missions.

Temporary Emergency Power As of April 4, 2018, the Corps and its contractors have executed 2,110 of 2,163 taskings received (for temporary generators) in Puerto Rico and 2,023 generator installations; the Corps is continuing to support this line of effort and 875 generators are currently installed in the field. 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. In Puerto Rico, the Corps and its contractors completed 59,469 blue roof installations and collected over 60,683 rights of entry. The final roof was completed on March 21, 2018. Mission was complete as of April 3, 2018.

Debris Management: As of April 4, 2018, the Corps has removed approximately 3,856,528 cubic yards of debris in Puerto Rico. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Corps removed 822,000 cubic yards of debris. The Corps continues to provide technical assistance to U.S. Virgin Islands authorities conducting local debris removal. The Corps also continues to contract debris disposal solutions. 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 safety risk to a 1,000 residents and severing water supply to 360,000 residents. Corps teams placed over 500 Jersey barriers and over 1,300 super sand bags to decrease erosion and allow for short-term repairs 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 and provide water supply. Under a FEMA mission assignment, the Corps is in the process of contracting for four additional interim risk reduction (short-term) measures including grouting and anchoring spillway slabs, stabilizing dam slopes, and repairing an outlet works gate 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 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was given a FEMA Mission Assignment, within the authority of the Stafford Act, to lead planning, coordination and integration efforts in preparation to execute electrical power grid restoration in Puerto Rico due to impacts caused by Hurricane Maria. Our priority is to safely restore power to the people of Puerto Rico as quickly as possible. As of April 4, 2018, 95.8% (1.41 million of 1.47 million) of customers that are able to receive power are energized. The Corps currently has 1,126 personnel on the ground, including more than 900 contractors, working to restore power to the people of Puerto Rico. (As of April 4). The Unified Command Group—comprised of the Corps, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority and the Island's Restoration Coordinator— along with the electric industry partners,

continually evaluate the ongoing work in order to restore electricity across the island. In support of this line of effort, through the Defense Logistics Agency as its contracting agent, the Corps has executed the procurement of over \$240 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.