

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

COMPLETE STATEMENT OF

**COLONEL ROBERT CLARK
COMMANDER, FIELD RECOVERY OFFICE
U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**

BEFORE

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ON

**THE HISTORIC 2017 HURRICANE SEASON:
IMPACTS ON THE U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS**

MARCH 12, 2018

Chairman Farenthold, Ranking Member Plaskett 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 and the impacts to the U.S. Virgin Islands during the 2017 Hurricane Season. I am Colonel Robert Clark, Commander for the Corps Field Recovery Office in the U.S. Virgin Islands. My permanent position is Commander of the Corps Wilmington, North Carolina District.

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 was 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.

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, after once again severely impacting the U.S. Virgin Islands, causing major damage to critical

infrastructure and homes. FEMA has identified close to \$3 billion in Mission Assignments for the Corps to assist in Hurricanes Irma and Maria response and recovery (29 Mission Assignments totaling \$2.8 billion in Puerto Rico and 25 Mission Assignments totaling \$254 million in the U.S. Virgin Islands). In the U.S. Virgin Islands, there have been 12 Mission Assignments totaling \$38.5 million for Hurricane Irma and 13 Mission Assignments totaling \$213 million for Hurricane Maria. Currently, the Corps has 41 personnel deployed in the U.S. Virgin Islands supporting the recovery missions.

Temporary Emergency Power: The Corps and its contractors completed 316 pre-installation inspections (for temporary generators) and installed 180 generators in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The Corps has de-installed 165 generators out of the 180 installed generators and the remaining 15 installed generators were turned over to FEMA logistics, which are being maintained by a long-term FEMA contract. The Corps temporary power mission was complete on February 11, 2018.

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. In the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Corps and its contractors completed 3,658 blue roof installations. The blue roof mission was completed on December 15, 2017.

Debris Management: As of March 05, 2018, the Corps has removed approximately 822,000 cubic yards of the estimated 870,000 cubic yards of debris in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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.