



**DEPUTY SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1010 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1010**

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR ACQUISITION AND  
SUSTAINMENT  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (COMPTROLLER)/CHIEF  
FINANCIAL OFFICER  
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS  
CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU  
COMMANDER, U.S. PACIFIC COMMAND  
COMMANDER, U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND  
COMMANDER, U.S. SOUTHERN COMMAND  
COMMANDER, U.S. TRANSPORTATION COMMAND  
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR LEGISLATIVE  
AFFAIRS  
ASSISTANT TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR PUBLIC  
AFFAIRS

**SUBJECT: Improvements to DoD's Response to Future Catastrophic Disasters**

The Federal military response to the 2017 hurricane season was the largest, most complex, domestic deployment of responders in recent history. We deployed more personnel, flew more sorties, engaged the largest flotilla of ships, and procured and delivered more relief supplies than ever before in a domestic mission.

As a result of this unprecedented level of effort, I directed DoD Components to conduct a review of their actions to identify areas for improvement and sustainment in preparation for the 2018 hurricane season. After a review of the Components' observations, I am directing action on strategic cross-cutting issues.

The attached 2017 Hurricane Season After Action Review outlines five actions to sustain efforts, eight actions for internal improvements, and two actions to address with external partners. Completion of these actions will make DoD's future disaster response more effective and efficient and improve the Nation's resilience for future catastrophic disasters.

I have also directed the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in coordination with other DoD components, to provide a report and recommendations within 45 days on the appropriate use of DoD training that enables disaster



response activities.

Components should review the enclosed findings and take all necessary actions to improve in the identified areas prior to the 2018 hurricane season.

My point of contact is Tom LaCrosse, [thomas.l.lacrosse.civ@mail.mil](mailto:thomas.l.lacrosse.civ@mail.mil), (571) 256-8353.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter M. Shank". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Attachment:  
As stated

## 2017 Hurricane Season After-Action Review

*Based on a cross-cutting review of DoD support during the 2017 hurricane season, implementation of the following actions will improve the Department's support to civilian authorities in responding to disasters, including catastrophic events. Driving toward these outcomes is fully consistent with the Secretary's strategic approach to build a more lethal force, strengthen alliances, and reform practices to enable greater performance and affordability.*

### Areas for Sustainment of Effort.

1. **Observation:** The Secretary's written guidance to pre-approve life-saving and life-sustaining support and authorize the transfer of forces to the Commander, U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), allowed DoD capabilities to be provided as swiftly as possible.

**Action:** The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD(P)), in coordination with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), will seek the Secretary's pre-approval for life-saving and life-sustaining support, authorization for the transfer of forces, and guidance on force sourcing for future storms or disasters.

2. **Observation:** The Department's recognition of Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) as a key DoD mission resulted in improvements in planning, training, and exercising, and created a system under which DoD anticipates support requirements by pre-identifying critical capabilities for rapid deployment to meet Federal partners' requirements.

**Action:** The CJCS; in coordination with the USD(P); Commander, USNORTHCOM; Commander, U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM); Director, Defense Logistics Agency (DLA); and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), will update the DSCA Execute Order and Pre-Scripted Mission Assignments to incorporate DLA's capabilities and use on-going Federal-State threat planning efforts to update DoD and interagency plans for catastrophic disasters.

3. **Observation:** The Department's response time to requests for assistance was reduced because of an extensive network of embedded liaison officers who provided early notifications of requirements, ensured that requirements were well-defined, and enabled quick clarification when necessary.

**Action:** The Secretaries of the Military Departments; CJCS; USD(P); Chief, National Guard Bureau (NGB); Commander, USNORTHCOM; Commander, USPACOM; and Commander USSOUTHCOM, will identify ways to enhance the liaison network and augment it as required during response operations.

4. **Observation:** DoD's commitment to supporting the response was enhanced by well-established professional relationships that enabled candid senior leader discussions

among DoD stakeholders and with external partners. These discussions enhanced unity of effort and set realistic expectations for mission accomplishment. General Robinson, General McDew, General Lengyel, Lieutenant General Semonite, Lieutenant General Williams, other senior commanders, and various dual-status commanders, engaged candidly and often with senior leaders from OSD, the Joint Staff, the National Security Council (NSC) staff, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and Governors and their State emergency managers. These interactions reinforced the Department's commitment to supporting the response.

**Action:** The CJCS; USD(P); Chief, NGB; Commander, USNORTHCOM; Commander, USPACOM; Director, DLA; and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, USACE, will maintain contact with external mission partner senior leaders to ensure unity of effort across Federal and State governments.

5. **Observation:** DoD's ability to save and sustain lives, especially in the immediate aftermath of a catastrophic disaster, requires the capabilities of the Total Force.

**Action:** The Secretaries of the Military Departments; CJCS; Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)); USD(P); Commander, USNORTHCOM; Commander, USPACOM; Director, DLA; and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, USACE, will ensure the continued use of the Total Force for the DSCA mission and will update procedures for the voluntary mobilization of Reserve Component (RC) forces to address RC mobilization problems encountered during the response.

## Areas for Improvement Internal to DoD

### *Requirements Generation – Common Asking Picture*

6. **Observation:** The departure from the established requirements-generation processes and the deployment of units/personnel to the affected State to conduct training (at DoD expense) without consultation with State civilian response officials in some instances complicated States' and FEMA's capability-gap assessments and, at times, led to parallel efforts in response to requests for assistance.

**Action:** The Secretaries of the Military Departments; USD(P); CJCS; Chief, NGB; Commander, USNORTHCOM; and Commander, USPACOM, will adhere to the existing requirements-generation process, and not use DoD funds, including training funds, to preposition assets for disaster relief operations, unless specifically authorized by the Secretary of Defense. Military personnel or units will only be employed for disaster relief operations through an approved mission assignment from FEMA or a State request through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact.

*Tasks and Capabilities Identification - Common Tasking Picture*

7. **Observation:** Coordination of strategic lift during the disaster response is essential to ensure that air movements are aligned with FEMA's national priorities and the affected State's priorities, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development's validated transportation requirements for DoD's support to Foreign Disaster Relief. The multitude of stakeholders, physical constraints for the response, and the volume of requirements challenged the ability to coordinate, prioritize, and de-conflict FEMA, State, and USAID airlift and other movement requirements.

**Action:** The Secretary of the Air Force and Commander, USTRANSCOM, in coordination with the USD(P); CJCS; Chief, NGB; Commander, USNORTHCOM; Commander, USPACOM; and Commander, USSOUTHCOM, will identify a) the methods to improve the coordination of airlift requirements and efficient use of DoD aircraft, b) conditions when all strategic airlift operations for disaster response should be consolidated, and c) what decisions are necessary to consolidate strategic airlift operations.

8. **Observation:** DoD should be prepared to respond to more complex, simultaneously occurring events, including, for example, responding to a catastrophic domestic disaster while in the midst of employing forces in a large-scale overseas contingency. Competing global force requirements, as between USNORTHCOM's domestic hurricane response and USSOUTHCOM's humanitarian assistance, including repatriation of U.S. citizens stranded on foreign Caribbean islands, significantly stressed limited DoD strategic lift.

**Actions:** The USD(P), in coordination with the CJCS, will provide policy guidance to the Department based upon the Secretary's direction for prioritization of actions during a disaster response when DoD projects it cannot meet all requests for assistance.

Based on that policy guidance, CJCS, in coordination with the Secretaries of the Military Departments and USD(P), will develop an expedited process to reconcile competing force requirements and allocations and for notifying supported officials of the effects of those decisions.

The USD(P) and the CJCS will update guidance for contingency and strategic planning for Combatant Commands to develop branches and sequels to current and future force-level plans to account for homeland defense and DSCA missions.

9. **Observation:** The Global Force Management (GFM) process should minimize DoD response time to civilian requests for military capability. Employing DoD response capabilities located nearest to the affected area mitigates risks of being late-to-need and provides immediate life-saving capability.

**Action:** The CJCS, in coordination with the Secretaries of the Military Departments and USD(P), will ensure that speed of response and geographic proximity to the incident location will be a primary consideration in force sourcing decisions.

*Common Operating Picture*

10. **Observation:** The absence of a common operating picture impeded the efficient employment of DoD and National Guard capabilities. Incomplete senior leader situational awareness hampered unity of effort and may have resulted in the commitment of unnecessary or redundant capabilities and delayed responses.

**Actions:** Commander, USNORTHCOM, and Commander, USPACOM, will be responsible for fusing DoD data and information and for creating and disseminating a common operating picture of DoD support in their respective areas of responsibility during a domestic emergency or disaster response.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments; Commander, USTRANSCOM; Director, DLA; Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, USACE; and Heads of other DoD Components providing response elements will provide data and information to the supported Combatant Commander in a pre-determined format and timeframe established by the supported Combatant Commander.

The Chief, NGB, will compile information on State and territorial National Guard response activities under State/territorial control, to report to the supported Combatant Commander in a pre-determined format and timeframe.

*Enabling Functions*

11. **Observation:** Proactive, organized, and interagency coordinated and approved public affairs guidance is needed to ensure that the Department is aligned with the whole-of-government strategy and communicates a unified message to the public during a disaster.

**Actions:** The Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs (ATSD(PA)) in coordination with Secretaries of the Military Departments; USD(P); CJCS; Chief, NGB; Commander, USNORTHCOM; and Commander, USPACOM, will develop, use, and disseminate interagency approved public affairs guidance, in support of DHS and FEMA lead efforts, as early as possible during the response to a disaster.

Commander, USNORTHCOM, and Commander, USPACOM, in coordination with the CJCS, will ensure that their DSCA contingency plans incorporate the practice of embedding civilian media personnel with response forces, as well as the early identification of the on-scene commander at the affected area who will regularly engage local, national, and international media.

12. **Observation:** Increased **DoD senior leadership engagement and participation** with Members of Congress and their staffs early in a response would highlight the scope and magnitude of the DoD response and demonstrate the Department's commitment.

**Action:** The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs (ASD(LA)), in coordination with the USD(P), USD(C), CJCS, Commander, USNORTHCOM, and Commander, USPACOM, will develop a strategy to engage proactively and early with Members of Congress and professional staffs during a significant domestic response. These engagements should be fully coordinated with FEMA and other response partners.

13. **Observation:** DoD provides support to other Federal departments and agencies on a reimbursable basis; **Components must file for reimbursement from FEMA for support provided during the hurricane season response.** In past events, Components have not always requested reimbursement for support provided.

**Actions:** The Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/Chief Financial Officer, Department of Defense (USD(C)/CFO), in coordination with USD(P), CJCS, Commander, USNORTHCOM, Commander, USPACOM, Director, DLA, and FEMA, **will review and update existing guidance**, as appropriate, requiring DoD Components to seek reimbursement for domestic response operations and provide detailed instructions on the reimbursement process.

The Secretaries of the Military Departments **will conduct audits** to confirm units have obtained appropriate reimbursement for civil support activities and to determine the extent to which DoD funds were used to support the response.

#### Areas for Improvement External to DoD

14. **Observation:** FEMA does not have current policy or procedures in place to **reimburse Service Reserve Components for pay and allowances** when RC personnel are ordered to active duty on a short-term basis to support FEMA mission assignments.

**Action:** The USD(P) will, in coordination with the USD(C)/CFO, CJCS, and DoD GC, propose to FEMA a memorandum of understanding or other arrangement that identifies the circumstances under which FEMA will reimburse DoD for RC pay and allowances costs when ordered to active duty to fulfill FEMA mission assignments.

15. **Observation:** Under the National Response Framework, specific Federal departments and agencies serve as primary operational-level leads for Emergency Support Functions (ESFs), which cover areas such as transportation, logistics, public health and medical, and energy. Some of these departments and **agencies are largely administrative and/or regulatory in nature and lack operational capability** and capacity.

These departments and agencies quickly exceed their limited capacity in large-scale disaster scenarios and then typically turn to DoD for assistance in executing their mission

responsibilities. DoD should find ways to encourage our Federal partners to become more self-reliant. This could include, for example, providing information on establishing contingency contracting vehicles to engage the private sector early in response operations.

**Actions:** Commander, USNORTHCOM, and Commander, USPACOM, in coordination with the USD(P), CJCS, Commander, USTRANSCOM, Director, DLA, and Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, USACE, will engage with FEMA and ESF Coordinators to provide advice and information that supports the development of their plans, which should include specific capabilities required to support response operations and should identify gaps that could be addressed by the private sector.

The Director, DLA, and the Commanding General and Chief of Engineers, USACE, will share information and best practices with Federal ESF partners on developing contingency contract capabilities (particularly pre-negotiated Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity contracts) in order to leverage private sector capacity to cover capability gaps.