

THREE THINGS: WAS SLOW RESPONSE TO HURRICANE MARIA DELIBERATE?

NB: First, a call to action at the bottom – come back and read this after you’ve read the call. Don’t let last night’s tragedy swamp effective action; Congress continues its work no matter what tragedies befall the rest of us.

Having worked in both site and systems administration with responsibility for business continuity, I can’t help wonder why the post-hurricane response to Puerto Rico’s devastation was so bad – so bad it looks deliberate.

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As an administrator, I looked ahead a year or more to mitigate both costs and risks to my employer and stakeholders. Budget roof repairs expenses for this year, budget roof replacement capital next year; replace the analog alarm system with digital system, budgeted last year. It’s pretty dull stuff but all it takes is one break-in, or one bad storm, and the losses from damage and business disruption could easily surpass capital and expense budgets combined.

But what of states and territories?
State/territory, local and federal governments do what they can within the plodding framework of legislation, regulation, and budgetary requirements and restraints. Sometimes things just can’t be addressed preemptively, like major storms. Fortunately, there’s adequate monitoring to help predict when they will hit and what the likely impact will be, and there’s the awesome power of the largest military in the world to deploy as needed.

We have monitoring like NASA’s GOES satellite imaging, which visually tracked Hurricane Maria from birth to death as a weakened tropical

storm.

24-hour evolution of Hurricane #Maria (140 MPH sustained) and Tropical Storm #Jose (70 MPH sustained) from #GOES16.
pic.twitter.com/lb5Kmcmvcl

– NASA SPoRT (@NASA_SPoRT) September 20, 2017

And NOAA's Hurricane Center, which makes accurate assessments of timing and strength of a storm's impact.

Hurricane #Maria made landfall near Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, around 6:15am AST with maximum sustained winds of 155 mph (250 km/h) @NWS @NOAA
pic.twitter.com/RmFwVMn6r7

– Natl Hurricane Ctr (@NWSNHC) September 20, 2017

Not to mention whatever additional monitoring and reporting the Defense Department had to offer.

We know with certainty the U.S. government was aware from NASA and NOAA reporting that Maria was a Category 5 storm as it approached Puerto Rico. The National Hurricane Center issued 17 reports over four days warning of the storm's size, strength, and timing of landfall. I can't imagine government agencies offering any less now than they did under the last administration.

And yet the Trump White House did virtually *nothing* to prepare for storm response.

You'd think that a guy with experience managing real estate and businesses for continuity would have utilized these best-on-earth notifications to mitigate and recover injury and damage to Puerto Rican Americans and their property. But for some reason this same guy now occupying the White House spent his time harping about NFL players and golfing instead.

This tweet thread crossed my timeline last week; I wondered who leaked and why there was so little followup, because the claim it makes is quite serious. (Click to expand the thread in Twitter.)

2- This is 5 days after Hurricane Maria hit Puerto Rico. Others on the call:
pic.twitter.com/geJvXDsg4

– Holly O'Reilly (@AynRandPaulRyan)
September 28, 2017

If this claim is accurate, the Trump White House sat on its tiny mittens and did absolutely nothing to approve a response to a major catastrophe which was expected with a very high degree of certainty to devastate an American territory home to ~3.5 million citizens.

If this happened five days AFTER landfall, was nothing done by the White House BEFORE Maria made landfall?

It's not as if taking proactive action was difficult, either. I am certain government agencies and the Defense Department were ready to move with plans they've had prepared for some time, tweaked for this particular event. All it would take is a simple verbal Yes to proceed.

Or an executive order which we all know this White House can produce like so much facial tissue.

All the monitoring and reporting provided to the White House, from NOAA and NASA to Defense Department, was budgeted and authorized by Congress for the purposes of serving American citizens. The public expects a level of performance for the taxes they pay; monitoring and reporting on weather and risks from weather are but part of their expectations.

American citizens expect and pay for their

government to deliver effective and timely response when their domestic tranquility and general welfare are disrupted, whether nation-state or weather- and climate-based threats. They do not expect to be left without clean water, no minimum shelter, no emergency health care, let alone an empty wallet depleted by taxation which paid for common defense they didn't receive.

Why have Puerto Rican Americans not received the same level of government responsiveness and services their fellow citizens have received post-hurricane Harvey and Irma?

Why can't we get a straight answer about the White House's planning in response to Hurricane Maria two to three days after landfall? Is it because the lack of any response is as bad as the lack of preparation – utterly missing, perhaps deliberately so?

We asked WH & FEMA to tell us if Trump was briefed between 9/22-9/25 by anyone directly involved in hurricane response. They refused. <https://t.co/LPRFSxMbjq>

– Abby D. Phillip (@abbydphillip)
September 30, 2017

At some point this isn't about the White House and its executive function. It's about Congress which has failed to ensure the executive knows exactly what is expected of it and what action should be nearly automatic from the executive office.

Oh, but that's too much legislation, conservatives will say. No – it's inadequate existing legislation which has incorrectly assumed for too long a competent manager will execute U.S. laws. It's too many sick, injured, dying, dead Americans in the wake of ineffective governance.

And it's inadequate action on the part of Congress to tolerate an incompetent executive.

To be concise, more than one branch of government failed Americans.

And those branches now have blood on their hands.

"There's a medical center down here, and everyone that was in the Intensive Care Unit, died. Everyone. That's just one detail." 4/

– Nelson M. Rosario (@NelsonMRosario)
September 30, 2017

In one #PuertoRican nursing home, a struggle to get power and keep patients alive after #Maria
<https://t.co/6qQp2SoL6B>
pic.twitter.com/tlrgyJl0PO

– Carolyn Cole (@Carolyn_Cole) October 1, 2017

Do something about this before more Americans die. Do more than hold a hearing.

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By the way, FEMA's Brock Long has proven himself an idiot. He should be given the boot.

On Fox FEMA Administrator Brock Long says hurricane relief for Puerto Rico is "the most logistically challenging event the US has ever seen"

– Chad Pergram (@ChadPergram) October 1, 2017

An under-funded agency could land two rovers successfully on Mars and operate them for years to conduct research, but humanitarian response to a predicted hurricane utilizing the largest standing military on earth is too complicated? Fuck that.

And fuck this guy – I don't even know who this

pasty slack-handed suit is, but he can take his lies and shove them sideways. The storm did NOT cause you and your co-workers to be idiots and liars, boy.

Top Trump aide in memo to staff: "The storm caused these problems, not our response" to Puerto Rico
<https://t.co/f3NuXdOWxy>
pic.twitter.com/hRjLX0mIpj
– The Hill (@thehill) October 1, 2017

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Call to Action: Congress continues to work on bills regardless of the tragedy in Las Vegas or the growing catastrophic death toll in Puerto Rico. Your efforts helped kill the last ACA repeal attempt formerly known as Graham-Cassidy. These are our next challenges.

CHIP expired at midnight Saturday night. Congress left for the weekend allowing health care funding for 9 million American children to expire. Not much better than President Cheeto going golfing while ignoring Puerto Rico. Call your representatives and demand CHIP funding be addressed immediately. Script for the Wyden-Hatch bipartisan CHIP bill here – note also you may need to call your state officials as well.

Net Neutrality is back on the bubble. FCC chair Ajit Pai has consistently attacked it throughout his brief tenure, sucking up to the telecom industry while ignoring the public's best interests. Call your representatives and demand net neutrality be assured by voting NO on another five-year term for Pai as chair. Script for your call here. VOTE IS SCHEDULED TODAY – HURRY. Get a leg on this before AT&T persuades the Supreme Court to wade in.

Guns on schedule this week: a bill to approve the sale of gun silencers. Las Vegas's mass shooting last night should be proof enough that "hearing protection" for shooters is the last thing Congress should worry about. The bill also

allows the sale of armor-piercing ammunition.
Hell, no. Script for your House rep, and script
for your Senators.

A vote to make abortion illegal at 20 weeks on
tap tomorrow. No. No freaking way. You may not
like abortion, but read this piece – imagine the
emotional and physical horror for a woman and
her family as she is forced by law to carry a
non-viable fetus to term. This decision should
be between her, her partner, and her doctor.
Make the call.

Congress' switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.
Don't be like the guy in the White House when
you can see action is needed.