

TIMELINE OF A CATASTROPHE

Friday, August 26, 2005

BUSH

Bush Activities At His Ranch In Crawford Unknown While National Emergency Brewed. “No public events are scheduled.” [[Washington Times](#), 8/26/05]

GULF COAST

Gov. Blanco Declares A State Of Emergency. “Hurricane Katrina gained strength and took aim at the Gulf Coast on Friday night, with a path forecast to hit southeast Louisiana on Monday as a Category 4 storm with top winds of 132 mph....Gov. Kathleen Blanco declared a state of emergency late Friday, making it easier to implement emergency procedures, including evacuations, if necessary.” [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/27/05]

Saturday, August 27, 2005

BUSH

Bush Radio Address Mentioned Iraq Eight Times Without a Single Mention of Hurricane Katrina. In his weekly radio address, President Bush said, “Our efforts in Iraq and the broader Middle East will require more time, more sacrifice and continued resolve. Yet people across the Middle East are choosing a future of freedom and prosperity and hope. And as they take these brave steps, Americans will continue to stand with them because we know that free and democratic nations are peaceful nations.” [[Whitehouse.gov](#), 8/27/05]

Bush Declared A State Of Emergency For Louisiana From Crawford. President Bush declared a state of emergency in Louisiana, authorizing federal emergency management officials to release federal aid and coordinate disaster relief efforts. [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/28/05]

GULF COAST

National Hurricane Center Issues Hurricane Warning, Katrina Would Approach The Area As A Category 4 or 5 Hurricane. “Katrina was expected to approach the area as a Category 4 storm, with winds of 145 mph, and it could build to a top-of-the-chart Category 5 storm, with winds of 155 mph or higher, National Hurricane Center Director Max Mayfield said Saturday afternoon.... The forecast projected the storm sweeping directly over the city. The Hurricane Center posted a hurricane warning from Morgan City to the Alabama-Florida line.” [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/28/05]

Gulf Coast Oil Rigs Evacuated. “In anticipation of Hurricane Katrina's arrival, Energy companies continued Saturday to shut down rigs and evacuate workers from the Gulf of Mexico.” [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/28/05]

Gov. Blanco Implemented Contraflow Evacuation Traffic Plan. “As Hurricane Katrina took aim at south Louisiana, Gov. Kathleen Blanco on Saturday ordered State Police to implement the state's latest

“contraflow” traffic plan as scores of New Orleans area residents drove north and west toward higher ground.” [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/28/05]

Mandatory And Voluntary Evacuations Ordered. By mid-afternoon, officials in Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, Lafourche, Terrebonne and Jefferson parishes had called for voluntary or mandatory evacuations. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin followed at 5 p.m., issuing a voluntary evacuation. “Come the first break of light in the morning, you may have the first mandatory evacuation of New Orleans,” Nagin told WWL-TV. St. Tammany officials ordered evacuations of the parish’s low-lying areas by today at noon. [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/28/05]

Sunday, August 28, 2005

BUSH

Bush Touts “Progress” In Iraq While Katrina Becomes a 5 Category Hurricane. Speaking to reporters at his ranch in Crawford, TX, President Bush spoke about Hurricane Katrina quickly, before launching into an update on Iraq that lasted far more than twice as long as Bush’s comments on Hurricane Katrina. “Yesterday, I signed a disaster declaration for the state of Louisiana, and this morning I signed a disaster declaration for the state of Mississippi...On another matter, today Iraqi political leaders completed the process for drafting a permanent constitution. Their example is an inspiration to all who share the universal values of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law... we're making good progress toward making sure this world of ours is more peaceful for generations to come.” [Bush Remarks, 8/28/05]

GULF COAST

Katrina, A Once In A Lifetime Event, On Collision Course For New Orleans. “Hurricane Katrina is a massive, powerful storm, one that has the potential to eclipse Camille as the standard for killer hurricanes, and every map and forecast Sunday afternoon showed it on a collision course for our metro area. ‘This is a once in a lifetime event,’ Mayor Nagin said. ‘The city of New Orleans has never seen a hurricane of this magnitude hit it directly.’” [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/29/05]

Sunday Afternoon Hurricane Center Warns Katrina Will Hit New Orleans As Category 5 Monday Morning, Will Flood New Orleans. “On Sunday at 4 p.m., National Hurricane Center Meteorologist Chris Lauer said Katrina was still on track to hit the New Orleans area as a devastating Category 5 hurricane as its eye comes ashore this morning. A computer model estimate of storm surge conducted by the Louisiana State University Hurricane Center Sunday afternoon indicates that even without waves, a Category 5 storm would flood most of eastern New Orleans, the 9th Ward, Mid-City, much of downtown and areas in St. Tammany close to Lake Pontchartrain. Kenner also will see severe flooding entering from St. Charles Parish. Areas outside the levee protection system are particularly vulnerable. [[New Orleans Times Picayune](#), 8/29/05]

Monday, August 29, 2005

BUSH

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Bush In Arizona Campaigning Hard To “Pre-Sell” A Political Victory at 12pm ET. Bush talked to an invitation only audience of about 400 people at the Pueblo El Mirage RV and Golf Resort. The Arizona Republic said Bush came to campaign hard for his new Medicare plan. “The main focus of Bush's visit was to elaborate on the new Medicare drug benefit...Having high numbers of enrollees also will be a political victory for the president, since he pushed the Medicare reform measure through Congress in 2003. Members of the Bush administration have been on the road, going across the country to talk up the program.... ‘I think Bush would like it (the Medicare drug benefit) to play a role in the elections next year -- he's been touting it as one of the big accomplishments of his first term,’ David Mark, of Campaigns & Elections Magazine, said Monday.... Bush said Monday that he was in El Mirage ‘pre-selling’ the importance of enrolling for the benefit.” [Arizona Republic, 8/30/05]



Bush Stopped To Celebrate McCain’s Birthday At Luke Air Force Base. “Greeting Bush was Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.)... The president paused on the tarmac to help celebrate McCain's 69th birthday, but on a blazing Arizona day, the cake melted before he could taste it.” [Washington Post, 8/30/05]

“Upbeat” Bush Continues Campaigning, Speaking Straight From White House Talking Points In Rancho Cucamonga, CA at 5:45pm ET. “An upbeat and slightly sunburned President George W. Bush chatted with the nation's Medicare chief and several locals in a casual, town hall-type setting Monday, encouraging seniors to find out more about their new prescription drug benefits. Repeatedly telling an audience of 200 invited guests at the James L. Brulte Senior Center that the new program was "a good deal,' the president also assured seniors that he sympathized with their apprehension.... Bush, who spoke for just under a half-hour, pulled talking points directly from a White House fact sheet that states Medicare has not kept up with advances in medicine.... Bush's appearance was part of a \$300 million campaign to promote awareness of the program and boost interest in it.” [Whittier Daily News, 8/30/05]

GULF COAST

Katrina Moves On Shore As Category 4 Hurricane. At 6am, the National Hurricane Center warned that “extremely dangerous category four hurricane Katrina preparing to move onshore newar southern Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana...Hurricane-force wind gusts occurring over most of southeastern Louisiana...and as far east as the Chandeleur Islands.” [Hurricane Center, http://www.nola.com/hurricane/?/hurricane/feed/active_storm2.html]

At Least 55 Reported Deaths By Hurricane Katrina Throughout Gulf Coast. “Hurricane Katrina barreled into the Gulf Coast on Monday morning, its fierce winds cutting a 125-mile swath of destruction stretching from coastal Alabama across Mississippi to the French Quarter and the Superdome. At least 55

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people were killed. The storm's leading edge, wielding winds up to 145 mph across the Gulf of Mexico, made landfall as a fearsome Category 4 hurricane at 7:10 a.m. Eastern time near the Louisiana bayou town of Buras, about 63 miles southeast of New Orleans. Katrina then wheeled into western Mississippi, bringing a 20-foot storm surge along the coast near Biloxi. It headed north later Monday to inundate most of the Mississippi Delta, spun off dozens of tornadoes through the South and promised drenching rains later in the week as far north as the Ohio Valley.” [Washington Post, 8/30/05]

Tuesday August 30, 2005

BUSH

Bush Continues PR Tour To Turn Around Lagging Support For Iraq At 12pm ET In Coronado, CA. “Concluding a monthlong vacation marked by antiwar protests outside his Texas home and a rising death toll in Iraq, President Bush on Tuesday invoked the anniversary of the Japanese surrender in World War II and the postwar rebirth of that country as a parallel to present-day U.S. efforts in the Middle East. Bush spoke against the dramatic backdrop of the Ronald Reagan, a 1,092-foot, nuclear-powered aircraft carrier docked at North Island Naval Air Station... The picturesque setting, enthusiastic crowd and historical references contrasted sharply with the political realities facing Bush as he returns today to Washington, where some lawmakers have begun comparing Iraq to Vietnam, a war with far more negative connotations than the Allied victory over Japan and Nazi Germany.... Bush's speech Tuesday marked the latest of his several recent efforts to turn around public opinion on the war” [Los Angeles Times, 8/31/05; MSNBC, 8/30/05]

Bush Played Guitar With Country Singer After His Remarks In Coronado, 3pm ET.

“President Bush plays a guitar presented to him by Country Singer Mark Wills, right, backstage following his visit to Naval Base Coronado, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2005.” [AP Photo/ABC News; <http://news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/050830/480/capm10208301856>]

GULF COAST

Looting And Chaos Take Over In New Orleans. “Law enforcement efforts to contain the emergency left by Katrina slipped into chaos in parts of New Orleans Tuesday -- with some police officers and firefighters even joining looters in picking stores clean. At the Wal-Mart on Tchoupitoulas Street, an initial effort to hand out provisions to stranded citizens quickly disintegrated into mass looting. Authorities at the scene said bedlam erupted after the giveaway was announced over the radio. ‘We don't have enough cops to stop it,’ an officer said. ‘A mass riot would break out if you tried.’” [New Orleans Times Picayune, 8/31/05]

Mayor Of New Orleans Warned Flood Waters Will Continue To Rise Rapidly. The catastrophic flooding that filled the bowl that is New Orleans on Monday and Tuesday will only get worse over the next few days because rainfall from Hurricane Katrina continues to flow into Lake Pontchartrain from north shore rivers and streams, and east winds and a 17.5-foot storm crest on the Pearl River block the outflow water through the Rigolets and Chef Menteur Pass.... New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin warned Tuesday evening that an attempt to plug the holes in the 17th Street Canal had failed, and the floodwaters were expected to continue to rise rapidly throughout the night. Eventually, Nagin said, the water could reach as high as 3 feet above sea level, meaning it could rise to 12 to 15 feet high in some parts of the city.” [New Orleans Times Picayune, 8/31/05]

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Wednesday August 31, 2005

BUSH

Bush Made His Way Back To Washington DC. Working from his Texas ranch, Bush participated via videoconference in a large meeting of federal, state and local disaster management officials preparing for the storm's onslaught. Separately, he spoke by phone with the governors of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. Bush then flew over the Gulf Coast region as he returned to Washington from his Texas ranch. He saw homes reduced to rubble in Mississippi and flood waters creeping toward downtown New Orleans, submerging homes nearly to their rooftops. At 5:15pm ET, President Bush met with a task force established to coordinate the efforts of 14 federal agencies that will be involved in responding to the disaster. [AP, 8/31/05; KOMO RADIO-TV, 9/1/05]

Bush Addressed Nation From Rose Garden. “After sticking to his vacation plans amid rising bloodshed in Iraq, the president bolted Texas two days early to oversee recovery efforts from Washington. From the Rose Garden, Bush addressed the victims directly, speaking as he did four years ago about a national cause and unity of purpose. ‘I’m confident with time you’ll get your life back in order. New communities will flourish. The great city of New Orleans will be back on its feet and America will be a stronger place for it,’ Bush said. ‘The country stands with you.’” [AP, 8/31/05]

Editorial: Bush Gave One Of His Worst Speeches Of His Life. “George W. Bush gave one of the worst speeches of his life yesterday, especially given the level of national distress and the need for words of consolation and wisdom. In what seems to be a ritual in this administration, the president appeared a day later than he was needed. He then read an address of a quality more appropriate for an Arbor Day celebration: a long laundry list of pounds of ice, generators and blankets delivered to the stricken Gulf Coast. He advised the public that anybody who wanted to help should send cash, grinned, and promised that everything would work out in the end.” [Editorial; New York Times, 9/1/05]

GULF COAST

Rescuers Pushing Bodies Back With Sticks. “The rescuers in the boats that picked us up had to push the bodies back with sticks,” Lucrece Phillips, a resident of the 9th ward, said sobbing. “And there was this little baby. She looked so perfect and so beautiful. I just wanted to scoop her up and breathe life back into her little lungs. She wasn’t bloated or anything, just perfect.” [New Orleans Times Picayune, 9/1/2005]

Superdome Resembled Apocalypse. “The Superdome resembled a scene from the Apocalypse on Wednesday morning, with thousands of refugees trapped in a hellish environment of short tempers, unbearable heat and the overwhelming stench of human waste. Evacuees told horror stories of assaults and the apparent suicide of a man who leapt from a balcony. Although none of the accounts could be confirmed by authorities, many refugees offered remarkably similar accounts.... The Dome situation had deteriorated noticeably from earlier days, as new swarms of refugees and rescuees arrived. On Wednesday morning, running water to the building was lost – as it was throughout the city – making the already overwhelming bathrooms downright noxious.” [New Orleans Times Picayune, 9/1/2005]

Thursday September 1, 2005

BUSH

Bush Said That No One Anticipated The Breach Of The Levees. Bush appeared on Good Morning America and said, "I fully understand people wanting things to have happened yesterday. I mean, I understand that -- anxiety of people on the ground. I can imagine -- I can't imagine what it is like to be waving a sign saying come and get me now. So there's frustration. But I want people to know there is a lot of help coming. I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees." Later in the day Bush appeared in the Oval Office with former Presidents Bush and Clinton, to announce their leadership of a private fundraising effort similar to their effort after the Tsunami earlier this year. [ABC, 9/1/05]

Bush Said He Understood People's Anxiety. "I fully understand people wanting things to have happened yesterday. I mean, I understand the anxiety of people on the ground. I just can't imagine what it's like to be waving a sign that said, 'Come and get me now.'" [The Baltimore Sun, 9/2/2005]

Conservative Manchester Union Leader Criticized Bush's Leadership on Katrina. "The cool, confident, intuitive leadership Bush exhibited in his first term, particularly in the months immediately following Sept. 11, 2001, has vanished," said Wednesday's editorial. "In its place is a diffident detachment unsuitable for the leader of a nation facing war, natural disaster and economic uncertainty." [AP, 9/1/05]

GULF COAST

New Orleans Mayor Blasted Federal Response To Katrina. "A day before President Bush headed to the hurricane-ravaged South, Mayor Ray Nagin lashed out at federal officials, telling a local radio station 'they don't have a clue what's going on down here.' Nagin's interview Thursday night on WWL radio came as President Bush planned to visit Gulf Coast communities battered by Hurricane Katrina, a visit aimed at alleviating criticism that he engineered a too-little, too-late response. 'They flew down here one time two days after the doggone event was over with TV cameras, AP reporters, all kind of goddamn — excuse my French everybody in America, but I am pissed,' Nagin said." [AP 9/2/05]

Local Officials Called Federal Effort Too Little Too Late. "The mounting relief effort did not allay concerns from local officials that it remained too little and mighty late. And Thursday offered continuing evidence that the city's flirtation with sheer chaos was not yet over: a medivac helicopter scared off by gunfire as it attempted to airlift patients from a downtown hospital; the Oakwood Mall reduced to charred rubble after looters broke in and set fires throughout the sprawling complex; corpses floating in flooded streets; scores of police officers simply abandoning their posts to flee a city gone at least temporarily mad." [New Orleans Times-Picayune, 9/2/05]

State Police Resigned Rather Than Accept Assignment To Enter New Orleans. "State Police Cmdr. Henry Whitehorn said some troopers had resigned rather than accept an assignment to go into New Orleans. He was uncertain how many, 'but I have heard that and I know that's a fact,' Whitehorn said, noting that the officers also were coping with the impact of the storm. 'They lost everything and don't feel it's worth going back and taking fire from looters.'" [New Orleans Times-Picayune, 9/2/05]