

*Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2024*

**Remarks Prior to an Interagency Briefing on Hurricane Helene Response and Recovery Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters**

*October 1, 2024*

*Iranian Missile Attack on Israel*

*The President.* Okay. Before I begin, I wanted to say a few words about Iran's missile attack on Israel today.

At my direction, the United States military actively supported the defense of Israel, and we're still assessing the impact. But, based on what we know now, the attack appears to have been defeated and ineffective, and this is testament to Israeli military capability and U.S. military.

I'm also—it's also a testament to intensive planning between the United States and Israel to anticipate and defend against the brazen attack we expected.

Make no mistake, the United States is fully, fully, fully supportive of Israel. And I just—I've been—spent the morning in the—and part of the afternoon in the Situation Room and meeting with my whole national security team and consulting with the Israelis indirectly, because—on—in terms of their impact on us.

And the national security team has been, as I said, in constant contact with Israeli officials and their counterparts. And is—and this is going to continue to be brought to me throughout the day.

We still have to share updates and—when we get them, and we will do that.

*Hurricane Helene Response and Recovery Efforts*

And now I want to turn to what we're going to be talking about today: the damage done by this horrible hurricane.

My top priority—and I mean this sincerely, because we've been through a lot of these—my top priority is to ensure the communities devastated by this hurricane get the help and support they need as quickly as possible—as quickly as possible.

As we watched the storm from the Gulf region form, I also directed FEMA to redeploy a substantial number of assets and resources to ensure we were ready to deal with what we expected and to support all the folks in need.

We had over 1,000 Federal personnel, including search-and-rescue teams, at the ready, on the ground before it hit. Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama became the staging ground for responders throughout the entire region, with 2.7 million meals, nearly 2 million liters of water ready to be distributed before the hurricane hit. I immediately approved emergency declarations as soon as I received the requests from the Governors or the State officials.

Still, with all this preparation, this was a hurricane of unprecedented and historic proportions.

Over the past several days, I've been in regular contact with the Governors, the mayors, the county officials on—in all the affected areas. That includes Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, and Virginia.

Now, in the storm's wake, I've directed my team, including the leadership in key departments and agencies all across the Government, to send every—and I mean this seriously—every

available resource that we have at our disposal to the affected region. And that's why we're here today with the Cabinet and those acting in Cabinet but—because some are deployed already—the Department of Defense, Agriculture, HHS, Transportation, Energy, Homeland Security, EPA, Commerce, Small Business Association, and the U.S. Army [Army; White House correction], the Corps of Engineers. We need to be all working together, and that's what we're going to talk about—that continued coordination we have going on.

I've been in frequent contact with the Governors and other leaders in the impacted areas, and we have to jump-start this recovery process. People are scared to death. People wonder whether they're going to make it.

We still haven't heard from a whole lot of people. This is urgent. People have to know how to know how to get the information they need.

So we'll be there until this work is done. I'm—it's going to cost—I predict to you; I don't have a number—I think it's going to cost billions of dollars to restore these areas to where they were before. Until the work is done, we're going to stay.

I'm going to—as I said, Congress needs to make sure that States have every available resource. And we have an obligation.

This is a storm of historic proportion. Nothing like this has happened in the region since the turn of the 20th century. I think the last was, what, 1914, 1916, in that range.

So that's what we're here to discuss: the detail of how we get all that's needed. And it's going to take a long time. It's going to take a long haul to restore these communities.

And I'm going to be heading down—anyway. I'll be in the region on Wednesday. And we've had people down there already. It's just going to be real—this is really consequential. Homes—come home and they're just washed away; entire roads washed up; cliffs—I mean, it's just devastating.

And so we're going to—it's going to take a lot of work, a lot of coordination. And if this were the middle of the term, I'd be asking Congress for—to prepare to—they haven't given me the money we need now for—for this—materials that we need for dealing with these devastating storms. It's going to cost——

*[At this point, a cell phone rang.]*

That's okay. It's probably—is that the Speaker calling me? *[Laughter]* He said he's in, right? *[Laughter]* Anyway.

So we're going to—we're going to now have our Cabinet meeting. And thank you all for being here.

#### *Situation in the Middle East/Iranian Missile Attack on Israel*

*Q.* Mr. President, on—on the Middle East, how are you advising Israel to respond?

*Q.* How would—how would you like Israel to respond to Iran?

*The President.* That's an active discussion right now. We've got to get all the data straight. We've been in constant contact with the Israeli Government and our counterparts, and that's—remains to be seen.

*Q.* Thank you.

*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel*

*Q.* What is your message to Prime Minister Netanyahu, and have you spoken with him today?

*The President.* I haven't spoken with him. We've spoken—we have spoken with all his people, and I'll be talking to him. And my message will depend on what we find—finally conclude is needed.

*Iranian Missile Attack on Israel*

*Q.* What do you believe the consequences for Iran should be?

*The President.* That remains to be seen.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:01 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Speaker of the House of Representatives J. Michael Johnson.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : Hurricane Helene response and recovery efforts, interagency briefing; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

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