

Remarks on Hurricane Milton Preparedness Efforts and an Exchange With Reporters

October 9, 2024

The President. Good evening.

Within a few hours, Hurricane Milton is expected to make landfall on the west coast of Florida—the western coast of Florida. Already, we're seeing impacts from the storm, including significant winds and heavy rain. And there has also been frequent and widespread tornado warnings throughout the day, and they're continuing and expected to expand as Milton moves over land, including a few that have already touched down in southern—in South Florida.

Currently, Milton is a category 3, with wind speeds up to 120 miles per hour. But no one should be confused: It's still expected to be one of the most and worst destructive hurricanes to hit Florida in over a century.

You know, both the heads of the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service made it very clear in conversations I've had with them earlier today: Milton still carries incredible destructiveness. It can wipe out communities. It can cause loss of life. Storm surge is still expected to be up to 13 feet.

So I urge everyone in Hurricane Milton's path to listen to local officials and follow all the safety instructions they give. At this point, evacuation is probably difficult, so I encourage people to look for safer shelter. Sometimes moving just a few miles can mean the difference between life and death.

We've already approved emergency declarations for Florida. We have thousands of Federal personnel on the ground. And we have staged and are ready to go—we have 20 million meals, 40 million liters of water.

At my direction, the Secretary of Defense, Austin, has pre-positioned search-and-rescue teams, helicopters, and high-water—high-water speed vehicles as close to the storm as possible so they're ready to conduct lifesaving missions.

And the administrators of—the Administrator of FEMA will be on site tonight in Florida and the State's—in the State's emergency operations center. Both Administrator Criswell and I will be in constant contact with State and local officials in the hours ahead.

Once the storm hits, we're going to work with State officials to clear debris, restore power, and it—do it as fast as possible. The Army Corps of Engineers will pump out water and decrease flooding.

We've already directed the Department of Defense to be ready to provide Active Duty servicemembers to support Florida after the storm—after the storm surge if Governor DeSantis requests the help, which I expect he might, just like we did in North Carolina.

I have surged over 1,000 U.S. Coast Guard personnel to perform search-and-rescue missions and reopen the Port of Tampa as soon as possible.

Now, I want to reiterate a point. I made clear earlier today to the folks who have been impacted by Helene, this impact—and will be now impacted by Milton: Over the last few weeks, there has been reckless and irresponsible and relentless promotion of disinformation and outright lies about what's going on. It's undermining confidence in the people in Florida and the incredible rescue and recovery work that has been undertaken.

Literally, there are thousands of fellow Americans who are putting their lives at stake and putting it on the line to do the dangerous work that needs to be done now. And it's harmful to those who most need the help.

Quite frankly, these lies are un-American. And there is simply no place for them—not now, not ever.

Former President Trump has led this onslaught of lies.

Assertions have been made that property is being confiscated. That's simply not true. They're saying people impacted by these storms will receive \$750 in cash and no more. That is simply not true either. And they're saying that money needed for these crises are being diverted to migrants. What the hell—heck are they talking about? Stop it. It's outrageous. It's just not true.

Now the claims are getting even more bizarre. Marjorie Taylor Greene, the Congresswoman from Georgia, is now saying the Federal Government is literally controlling the weather—we're controlling the weather. It's beyond ridiculous. It's so stupid. It's got to stop.

Let me close with this. As difficult as these days and weeks have been, we've seen incredible courage by so many of our fellow Americans.

I want to thank all the first responders for running toward danger instead of away from it, for saving lives and making a difference: FEMA personnel risking their lives, climbing on hillsides to reach people who—cut off by Helena [Helene; White House correction]; Army National Guard flying through the gale wind force that—it's amazing what they're doing; firefighters lifting collapsed wood and metal in attempt to get—see if there are survivors—any survivors under the debris, risking their lives; Coast Guard teams rappelling from helicopters to rescue people and risking their own lives.

And there are countless friends and neighbors who have sacrificed for the greater good: volunteers leaving their own families behind to help search for someone else's family, fellow Americans looking out for one another.

That's America at its very best. That's who we are.

So my final message tonight is to the people of Florida and all the impacted States: We've got your back. We've got your back. And Kamala and I will be there for as long as it takes to rescue, recover, and rebuild.

May God bless you all, and may God protect those serving in the eye of this storm on behalf of our Nation.

Thank you.

Former President Donald J. Trump

Q. Why do you think——

Q. Mr. President——

Q. ——Trump is spreading misinformation?

Q. ——the Kremlin has confirmed that——

Q. Why do you think Trump is——

Q. ——former President Trump has sent testing kits——

Q. ——is spreading misinformation?

Q. ——to President Putin during the height of the pandemic. Do you have a comment, sir?

Q. Why do you think Trump is——

The President. Speaking of un-American.

Federal Hurricane Response Efforts

Q. Why do you think Trump is spreading misinformation?

The President. I don't know. I simply don't know. You can speculate, but it—I just find it—I mean, I—and I've use the word—phrase more than I've used it ever in my whole career: un-American. It's un-American. It's not who the hell we are. What are they talking about?

Q. Sir, have you considered calling him and asking him to stop doing that—to stop spreading this?

The President. Oh, come on.

Governor Ronald D. DeSantis of Florida

Q. Mr. President, does Governor DeSantis need to take Vice President Harris's calls?

The President. All I can tell you is, I'm talking to Governor DeSantis. He's been very gracious. He's thanked me for all we've done. He knows what we're doing. And I think that's important.

Q. Can you say that Florida has everything it needs for this storm?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel

Q. How was your call with Netanyahu today?

The President. [Laughter] We didn't talk about the storm.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:34 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to National Hurricane Center Director Michael J. Brennan; and National Weather Service Director Kenneth Graham. A reporter referred to President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 10.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Hurricane Milton, preparedness efforts; Interviews With the News Media : Exchanges with reporters, White House.

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