

I will not be traveling to Louisiana tomorrow because I do not want my visit to impede in any way the response of our emergency personnel. I've been talking to the Governors, yesterday and today; I also spoke with Mayor Nagin of New Orleans to make sure that they're getting everything they need from the Federal Government to prepare for what all anticipate will be a difficult situation. I hope to be able to go to Louisiana as soon as conditions permit.

This Nation has come to know the strong and resilient spirit of the people of the gulf coast. They've made it through great challenges in the past, and they're going to make it through this one as well. In the meantime, all those preparing for this storm are in our thoughts and our prayers, from me and Laura and our whole Nation.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. at the FEMA Operations Center. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Briefing at the Emergency Operations Center in Austin, Texas

September 1, 2008

Governor, thank you; Senator, thank you for coming; Members of Congress.

The coordination on this storm is a lot better than on—than during Katrina. A lot of it had to do with the Governors. Yesterday I was on the video conference with the Governors of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. There was clearly a spirit of sharing assets, of listening to somebody's problems and saying, how can we best address them? The Federal Government is very much involved in helping the States. Our job is to assist. That's why Secretary Paulson is with me today; he heads FEMA.

I do want to thank the State of Texas and other States for welcoming citizens from

Louisiana. It's been a huge evacuation. It's hard for a citizen to pull up stakes and move out of their home and face the uncertainty that comes when you're not at home. And I want to thank those citizens who listened carefully to the local authorities and evacuated. And I want to thank my fellow citizens in Texas and in other States for welcoming these folks in open arms. The State of Texas is a generous State. And, Governor, I wanted to thank you and your team for being so kind to the people.

And it's very important for those who have been evacuated to listen very carefully to the officials in their respective States before they decide to return. This storm is yet to pass. It's a serious event. And as the Governor mentioned, the people of east Texas got to be prepared for a possible flooding event.

All in all, what I look for is to determine whether or not assets are in place to help, whether or not there's coordination, and whether or not there's preparation for recovery. And to that end, I feel good about this event.

And I do want to thank Gail McGovern of the American Red Cross for joining us, and thank a lot of the other organizations that are preparing to go help people in need. These organizations such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army require the support of our citizens.

And if you're interested in how you can help once the storm passes, please call up the different web sites of these organizations, and donate your time or your money so that the recovery effort is as compassionate and complete as possible.

Governor, thanks for having me. I want to thank your team for all the hard work they're doing. I'm looking forward to going in with you in the room next door to say thanks to the people that are working the long hours. And we're going to go down to San Antonio and see a staging area there and thank the people there for working so hard, not only on behalf of the citizens of Texas but on behalf of the people of the region.

Appreciate it. It's good to be home.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Rick Perry and Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas; Gov. Bob Riley of Alabama; Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana; Gov. Haley Barbour of Mississippi; and Gail J. McGovern, president and chief executive officer, American Red Cross.

Remarks at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas

September 1, 2008

The President. You know, one of the great things about our country is the number of people who volunteer during one of these incidents. Here are some Red Cross volunteers. They are—they symbolize the thousands that will help.

And my call to our fellow citizens is that—find out how you can help. You can help by volunteering. You can help by contributing to the Red Cross or the Salvation Army. Somebody is going to say, “Well, I don’t know how to.” Well, it’s pretty easy. You can get on the web page. If you’re interested in the Red Cross, just call up Red Cross on your—and they’ll steer you to the way to help anyway.

America is a great country. It’s great because we’ve got great people. Nobody is happy about these storms; everybody is praying for everybody’s safety. But I’m confident that after the storm passes and there’s a human need, it will be met because of the generosity of the American people.

And I want to thank you all for setting such a good example.

Volunteer. You’re very welcome, very welcome.

The President. Appreciate you.

Volunteer. Thank you.

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:46 p.m. at the Alamo Regional Command Reception Center.

Statement on the War on Terror in Iraq

September 1, 2008

Today in Iraq, responsibility for security in Anbar Province was transferred to Iraqi civilian authorities. Iraqi forces will now take the lead in security operations in Anbar, with American troops moving into an overwatch role. Not long ago, Anbar was one of the most dangerous Provinces in Iraq. Al Qaida was in control of almost every major population center, and its leaders intended to turn Anbar Province into a safe haven from which to plan and launch further attacks against Iraqis and others in the region as well as here at home.

Today, Anbar is no longer lost to Al Qaida; it is Al Qaida that lost Anbar. Iraqis, like countless other Muslims across the world, witnessed Al Qaida’s brutality firsthand and rejected it. As a result, Anbar has been transformed and reclaimed by the Iraqi people. This achievement is a credit to the courage of our troops, the Iraqi Security Forces, and the brave tribes and other civilians from Anbar who worked alongside them.

Today’s ceremony returns the 11th of 18 Provinces to Provincial Iraqi control. Al Qaida and Iranian-backed special groups remain a threat, but the United States and the nations of Multi-National Forces—Iraq continue to stand with the Iraqis as they work to defeat these enemies and build a democracy in the heart of the Middle East. The success of Iraq will make the American people more secure and help yield the peace we all desire.

NOTE: The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language version of this statement.