

'I need reinforcements'

This is a partial transcript of an interview between WWL Radio's Garland Robinette and New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin.

Garland Robinette (GR): What do you need, right now, to get control of this situation?

Ray Nagin (RN): I need reinforcements, I need troops. I need 500 buses. One of the briefings we had they were talking about getting the public-school bus drivers to come down here to bus people out of here. You've got to be kidding me -- this is a national disaster, get every dog-gone Greyhound Bus Line in the country and get their [behinds] moving to New Orleans!

They're thinking small, man, and this is a major, major, major deal! And I can't emphasize it enough man, this is crazy! I've got 15-20,000 people over at the convention center, it's bursting at the seams, the poor people in Plaquemines parish, they're AirEvac'ing people over here in New Orleans. We don't have anything, and we're sharing with our brothers in Plaquemines parish. It is awful down here, man!

GR: Do you believe the President is seeing this, holding news conferences on it, but can't do anything until [Louisiana Governor] Kathleen Blanco requests him to do it, and do you know whether or not she has made that request?

RN: I have no idea what they're doing, but I will tell you this: God is looking down on all this, and if they are not doing everything in their

power to save people, they are going to pay the price, because every day that we delay, people are dying, and they are dying by the hundreds I'm willing to bet you.

We are getting reports and calls that are breaking my heart, from people saying: "I've been in my attic, I can't take it anymore. The water is up to my neck, I don't think

I can hold out." And that's happening as we speak. You know what really upsets me, Garland? We told everybody the importance of the 17th Street Canal issue. We

said: "Please, please take care of this. We don't care what you do, figure it out."

GR: Who'd you say that to?

RN: Everybody, the governor, Homeland Security, FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency], you name it we said it. And they allowed that pumping station next to it, Pumping Station 6, to go under water. Our sewage and water board people stayed there and endangered their lives. And what happened what that pumping station went down the water started flowing again into the city, and it started getting to levels that probably killed more people. In addition to that, we had water flowing through the pipes in the city, that's a power station over there. So there's no water flowing anywhere on the east bank of Orleans parish. A critical water supply was destroyed because of lack of action.

In a state of emergency, you are creative, you figure out ways to get stuff done. They told me they went overnight and they built 17 concrete structures and they the pulleys on them and were going to drop them, I flew over that thing yesterday and it's in the same shape that it was after the storm hit. There is nothing happening, and they're feeding the public a line of bull, and they're spinning, and people are dying down here.



Katrina comes home to roost

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL

BILICALI in its uncontrolled rage and scope, Hurricane Katrina has left millions of Americans to scavenge for food and shelter and hundreds to thousands reportedly dead. With its main levee broken, the evacuated city of New Orleans has become part of the Gulf of Mexico. But the damage wrought by the hurricane may not entirely be the result of an act of nature.

A year ago the US Army Corps of Engineers proposed to study how New Orleans could be protected from a catastrophic hurricane, but the Bush administration ordered that the research not be undertaken. After a flood killed six people in 1995, Congress created the Southeast Louisiana Urban Flood Control Project, in which the Corps of Engineers strengthened and renovated levees and pumping stations.

In early 2001, the Federal Emergency Management Agency issued a report stating that a hurricane striking New Orleans was one of the three most likely disasters in the US, including a terrorist attack on New York City. But by 2003 the federal funding for the flood control project essentially dried up as it was drained into the Iraq war.

In 2004, the Bush administration cut funding requested by the New Orleans district of the US Army Corps of Engineers for holding back the waters of Lake Pontchartrain by more than 80 percent. Additional cuts at the beginning of this year (for a total reduction in funding of 44.2 percent since 2001) forced the New Orleans district of the Corps to impose a hiring

freeze. The Senate had debated adding funds for fixing New Orleans' levees, but it was too late.

The New Orleans Times-Picayune, which before the hurricane published a series on the federal funding problem, and whose presses are now underwater, reported online: "No one can say they didn't see it coming. Now in the wake of one of the worst storms ever, serious questions are being asked about the lack of preparation."

The Bush administration's policy of turning over wetlands to

conducted a joint expert study, concluding in 2004 that without wetlands protection New Orleans could be devastated by an ordinary, much less a Category 4 or 5, hurricane. "There's no way to describe how mindless a policy that is when it comes to wetlands protection," said one of the report's authors. The chairman of the White House's Council on Environmental Quality dismissed the study as "highly questionable," and boasted, "Everybody loves what we're doing."

"My administration's climate

meanwhile, have continued to accumulate impressive data on the rising temperature of the oceans, which has produced more severe hurricanes.

In February 2004, 60 of the nation's leading scientists, including 20 Nobel laureates, warned in a statement, "Restoring Scientific Integrity in Policymaking": "Successful application of science has played a large part in the policies that have made the United States of America the world's most powerful nation and its citizens increasingly

advisory board. The United Nations special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa accused the Bush administration of responsibility for a condom shortage in Uganda -- the result of the administration's evangelical Christian agenda of "abstinence." When the chief of the Bureau of Justice Statistics in the Justice Department was ordered by the White House to delete its study that African-Americans and other minorities are subject to racial profiling in police traffic stops and he refused to buckle under, he was forced out of his job. When the Army Corps of Engineers' chief contracting oversight analyst objected to a \$7 billion no-bid contract awarded for work in Iraq to Halliburton (the firm at which Vice President Cheney was formerly CEO), she was demoted despite her superior professional ratings. At the National Park Service, a former Cheney aide, a political appointee lacking professional background, drew up a plan to overturn past environmental practices and prohibit any mention of evolution while allowing sale of religious materials through the Park Service.

On the day the levees burst in New Orleans, Bush delivered a speech in California comparing the Iraq war to World War II and himself to Franklin D. Roosevelt: "And he knew that the best way to bring peace and stability to the region was by bringing freedom to Japan." Bush had boarded his very own "Streetcar Named Desire."

Courtesy: The Guardian.

Sidney Blumenthal, a former assistant and senior advisor to President Clinton is the author of 'The Clinton Wars.'

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developers almost certainly also contributed to the heightened level of the storm surge. In 1990, a federal task force began restoring lost wetlands surrounding New Orleans. Every two miles of wetland between the Crescent City and the Gulf reduces a surge by half a foot. Bush had promised "no net loss" of wetlands, a policy launched by his father's administration and bolstered by President Clinton. But he reversed his approach in 2003, unleashing the developers. The Army Corps of Engineers and the Environmental Protection Agency then announced they could no longer protect wetlands unless they were somehow related to interstate commerce.

In response to this potential crisis, four leading environmental groups

change policy will be science based," President Bush declared in June 2001. But in 2002, when the Environmental Protection Agency submitted a study on global warming to the United Nations reflecting its expert research, Bush decided it as "a report put out by a bureaucracy," and excised the climate change assessment from the agency's annual report. The next year, when the EPA issued its first comprehensive "Report on the Environment," stating, "Climate change has global consequences for human health and the environment," the White House simply demanded removal of the line and all similar conclusions. At the G-8 meeting in Scotland this year, Bush successfully stymied any common action on global warming. Scientists,

prosperous and healthy. Indeed, this principle has long been adhered to by presidents and administrations of both parties in forming and implementing policies. The administration of George W. Bush has, however, disregarded this principle. The distortion of scientific knowledge for partisan political ends must cease." Bush completely ignored this statement.

In the two weeks preceding the storm in the Gulf, the trumping of science by ideology and expertise by special interests accelerated. The Federal Drug Administration announced that it was postponing sale of the morning-after contraceptive pill, despite overwhelming scientific evidence of its safety and its approval by the FDA's scientific

Bangladesh should offer assistance to Katrina victims

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

AFTER the mighty Mississippi spilled over its banks and levees in 1993 and flooded the surrounding areas, including such historic cities as Mark Twain's Hannibal, Missouri, the governors of America's mid-western states requested for and accepted assistance from all over the world. Bangladesh sent some tons of tea, and this gesture of friendship from Bangladesh was deeply appreciated by the governors and the residents of the American mid-west. In the aftermath of the hurricane Katrina, America's Gulf Coast has been hit by a calamity an order of magnitude worse than the mid-western flooding of 1993. Thousands of people have died, the historic jazz city of New Orleans, Louisiana, is submerged in water, perhaps for years, and the residents of the entire city have had to be evacuated. Once again, the governors of Louisiana and Mississippi have appealed for help. Generous Bangladeshis and the government of Bangladesh should respond and come to the aid of our American brothers and sisters in their time of need -- with tea, clothes, and everything else -- as soon as possible. Let our poverty not be an excuse.

This unfortunately is a man-made tragedy that could have, and should have been averted. As Paul Krugman of The New York Times reported on September 2: "Before 9/11, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) listed three most likely catastrophic disasters facing America: a terrorist attack on New York, major earthquake in San Francisco and a hurricane strike on New Orleans. 'The New Orleans hurricane scenario,' The Houston Chronicle wrote in December 2001, 'may be the deadliest of all.' It described a potential catastrophe very much like the one now happening. So why

were New Orleans and the nation so unprepared? After 9/11, hard questions were deferred in the name of national unity, then buried under a thick coat of whitewash. Why have aid and security taken so long to arrive? Katrina hit five days ago -- and it was already clear by last Friday that Katrina could do immense damage along the Gulf Coast. Yet the response you'd expect from an advanced country never happened. Thousands of Americans are dead or dying, not because they refused to evacuate, but because they were too poor or too sick to get out without help -- and help wasn't provided. Many have yet to receive any help at all.

"There will and should be many questions about the response of state and local governments; in particular, couldn't they have done more to help the poor and sick escape? But the evidence points, above all, to a stunning lack of both preparation and urgency in the federal government's response. Maybe administration officials believed that the local National Guard could keep order and deliver relief. But many members of the National Guard and much of its equipment -- including high-water vehicles -- are in Iraq. The National Guard needs that equipment back home to support the homeland security mission," a Louisiana Guard officer told reporters several weeks ago.

"Why wasn't more preventive action taken? After 2003 the Army Corps of Engineers sharply slowed its flood-control work, including work on sinking levees. 'The corps,' an Editor and Publisher article says, citing a series of articles in The Times-Picayune in New Orleans, 'never tried to hide the fact that the spending pressures of the war in Iraq, as well as homeland security -- coming at the same time as federal tax cuts -- was the reason for the strain.' In 2002 the corps' chief resigned, reportedly under threat of being fired, after he criticized the

LETTER FROM AMERICA

At this time of America's need, Bangladesh should demonstrate its well-known generosity by stretching out a hand of friendship and by assisting America in every way it can. Not for any quid pro quo, but because it is the humane, charitable and the decent thing to do.

administration's proposed cuts in the corps' budget, including flood-control spending.

"Did the Bush administration destroy FEMA's effectiveness? The administration has, by all accounts, treated the emergency management agency like an unwanted stepchild, leading to a mass exodus of experienced professionals. Last year James Lee Witt, who won bipartisan praise for his leadership of the agency during the Clinton years, said at a Congressional hearing: 'I am extremely concerned that the ability of our nation to prepare for and respond to disasters has been sharply eroded. I hear from emergency managers, local and state leaders, and first responders nearly every day that the FEMA they knew and worked well with has now disappeared.'

"I don't think this is a simple tale of incompetence. The reason the military wasn't rushed in to help along the Gulf Coast is, I believe, the same reason nothing was done to stop looting after the fall of Baghdad. Flood control was neglected for the same reason our troops in Iraq didn't get adequate armour. At a fundamental level, I'd argue, our current leaders just aren't serious about some of the essential functions of government. They like waging war, but they don't like providing security, rescuing those in need or spending on preventive measures. And they never, ever ask for shared sacrifice. Yesterday Mr. Bush made an utterly fantastic claim: that nobody expected the breach of the levees. In fact, there had been



repeated warnings about exactly that risk. So America, once famous for its can-do attitude, now has a can't-do government that makes excuses instead of doing its job. And while it makes those excuses, Americans are dying." Paul Krugman concluded.

The New York Times editorials were far less charitable towards Bush. On September 1 it wrote: "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

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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.

"We will, of course, endure, and the city of New Orleans must come back. But looking at the pictures on television yesterday of a place abandoned to the forces of flood, fire and looting, it was hard not to wonder exactly how that is going to come to pass. Right now, hundreds of thousands of American refugees need our national concern and care.

Remembering Mother Teresa

A life dedicated to the service of humanity

FATHER PATRICK GOMES

MOTHER Teresa has been called "Living Saint" because of her active charity rendered to the poor and the destitute. While she was on this earth Mother Teresa was endowed with divine inspiration and Christ's compassionate love. Because of and in order to love with mercy and compassion the Mother's only motto was CHARITY in service, in other words, active charity. The whole world was so much attracted and inspired by her active charity that it attributed her with the honour "living saint". Today, September 5, we commemorate her death. On this day in 1997 the whole world came together in Calcutta to pay tribute to her by joining and attending her funeral.

One becomes saint not in one day but through her/his life time. A saint is a charismatic person who is filled with the divine spirit. A saint dedicates his/her life for God and his people. This is consecration, this is sacrifice. A saint is most happy to do that through works of mercy and charity. The world witnessed her deep spirituality and close union with the Lord. Mother Teresa followed the ideals of Jesus: Blessed are those who are merciful; Blessed are those who are pure in spirit; Blessed are those who are pure in heart; Blessed are those who make peace; Blessed are those who mourn.

Ideals are always open to all. People are called to live on ideals, and when we live on ideals, we are on duty. Further, an ideal makes us live by attitude from which an action comes forth. Mother Teresa being endowed with the spirit of God and attitude of prayer, she was spiritually driven by the attitude of the beatitudes. Mother Teresa became a person of prayer, a person totally of and for God. And only a person whose life is deeply rooted in God and His teachings can lead a life of Beatitudes.

To lead a life of the Beatitudes Mother Teresa consecrated her life to God and humanity embracing three religious vows: Consecrated Chastity (remaining a virgin whole life), Poverty and Obedience (completely open and disposed for God and His service). Moved by compassionate love Mother Teresa began her works of mercy and charity among the poor, the afflicted, the orphan, the dying, the unloved, the illegitimate. This was her very embryonic but extremely revolutionary beginning.

Her universal love and charity had no border or boundary. She went to the streets, to the "Bastees", to the dying, to the prisoners, to the drug addicted, to those who are born illegitimately or those who are unwanted. And not withstanding many trials, misunderstandings, misinterpretations, even



sometimes rejections Mother Teresa moved forward with her convictions that what she was doing was according to the plan of God. God never wants humanity to be enslaved by sin, sufferings and afflictions -- God wants every man to be free and worship Him freely. The Mother was very much firm in her conviction and so by the power of God's grace she faced and overcame challenges. Surprisingly, thousands of calls came to her from different parts of the world to bring her charity and love to the people poor in different aspects.

Founded on Gospel Values, Mother Teresa's movement of charity and her option for the poor had miraculous effects: peace and joy. According to her the fruit of prayer is Faith, the fruit of Faith is Love, the fruit of Love is Peace and Joy. Wherever Mother and her Missionaries of Charity were and are, there were and are these visible fruits.

Bangladesh is a poor country; poor is many aspects. Mother Teresa came to Bangladesh, opened different houses in Dhaka City and in other towns and villages where Missionary Sisters are continuing the mission-tasks of Mother Teresa. The nature of Sisters' charitable works in Bangladesh are: caring the sick and afflicted, the dying; caring and loving the children many of whom are unwanted or found on the streets; caring and loving the mentally or physically retarded. Sisters go to the poorest of the poor. Initiated by the Mother the whole life style of the Missionar-

ies of Charity manifests total commitment to and dedication for love and service to the poor. In Bangladesh it is a challenging ideal to be inspired and followed by all.

Beginning from state authorities to the least counted in the society and family we all speak from the stage and pulpit about love and charity. We advise others in a fantastic manner and technique using attractive words and phrases to be dedicated, to be followers of people like Mother Teresa and be in action of selfless service. But the Mother's life brings us back to our conscience an authentic and realistic question: how much, as heads of social, political, educational administration, as heads of religious communities are we inspired by the exemplary life or lives? Do we practice in service what we preach from the stage? Bangladesh needs today dedicated people. The country longs for those who are ready to serve the poor, the sick, the unloved unconditionally, expecting no reward or recognition in return. Serving God becomes a reality by serving man.

Today we commemorate the death of Mother Teresa. Today let us not only pay our tribute to her with flowers, but also be inspired to love and serve the poor wherever we are and whatever environment and circumstance we are in. Let us be inspired by her ideals, by her life as a "living saint"; by her life that was totally consecrated for God and the poor. Let Mother Teresa bless the poorest of the poor.

seemed casual to the point of carelessness -- suggested that he understood the depth of the current crisis.

"While our attention must now be on the Gulf Coast's most immediate needs, the nation will soon ask why New Orleans's levees remained so inadequate. Publications from the local newspaper to National Geographic have fulminated about the bad state of flood protection in this beloved city, which is below sea level. Why were developers permitted to destroy wetlands and barrier islands that could have held back the hurricane's surge? Why was Congress, before it wandered off to vacation, engaged in slashing the budget for correcting some of the gaping holes in the area's flood protection?"

"It would be some comfort to think that, as Mr. Bush cheerily announced, America 'will be a stronger place' for enduring this crisis. Complacency will no longer suffice, especially if experts are right in warning that global warming may increase the intensity of future hurricanes. But since this administration won't acknowledge that global warming exists, the chances of leadership seem minimal."

The paper added on September 2: "The situation in New Orleans, which had seemed as bad as it could get, became considerably worse yesterday with reports of what seemed like a total breakdown of organized society. Americans who had been humbled by failures in Iraq saw that the authorities could not quickly cope with a natural disaster at home. People died for lack of water, medical care or timely rescues -- particularly the old and the young -- and victims were almost invariably poor and black. The city's police chief spoke of rapes, beatings and marauding mobs. The pictures were equally heartbreaking and maddening. Disaster planners were well aware that New Orleans could

be flooded by the combined effects of a hurricane and broken levees, yet somehow the government was unable to immediately rise to the occasion.

"Watching helplessly from afar, many citizens wondered whether rescue operations were hampered because almost one-third of the men and women of the Louisiana National Guard, and an even higher percentage of the Mississippi National Guard, were 7,000 miles away, fighting in Iraq. That's an even bigger loss than the raw numbers suggest because many of these part-time soldiers had to leave behind their full-time jobs in police and fire departments or their jobs as paramedics. Regardless of whether they wear public safety uniforms in civilian life, the guardsmen in Iraq are a crucial resource sorely missed during these early days, when hours have literally meant the difference between evacuation and inundation, between civic order and chaos, between life and death."

While America looks for a leader, it sees only a tentative politician in Mr. Bush. Mr. Bush arrived in the region almost a week too late, and only on the day a huge influx of troops and supplies reached the region to mitigate the misery. He first visited Mississippi, a politically solid ground for him. Mr. Bush steered clear of the streets of the major disaster area, New Orleans, whose population is disproportionately black and poor, who could not be trusted to hail him with open arms, like the white citizens of Mississippi. That, however, is an internal American issue, to be sorted out by the Americans. At this time of America's need, Bangladesh should demonstrate its well-known generosity by stretching out a hand of friendship and by assisting America in every way it can. Not for any quid pro quo, but because it is the humane, charitable and the decent thing to do.