



35th Legislature Committee on Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety

June 11, 2024, OTAG MG Kodjo Knox-Limbacker Testimony

1 Good day, Chairperson of the 35th Legislature's Committee on Homeland Security,
2 Justice and Public Safety Honorable Kenneth L Gittens, Vice Chairman Honorable
3 Ray Fonseca, Committee Members Honorable Angel L. Bolques, Jr., Honorable
4 Alma Francis Heyliger, Honorable Dwayne M. DeGraff, Honorable Javan E. James
5 Sr, Honorable Franklin D. Johnson; all non-committee members present in the
6 Senate chambers; and the general public viewing and listening locally as well as
7 abroad.

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9 Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written testimony to be read Mr.
10 Chairman, I am Major General Kodjo S. Knox-Limbacker, The Adjutant General,
11 and the Commander of the Virgin Islands National Guard. It is an honor and
12 privilege to provide written testimony on the Virgin Islands National Guard's
13 (VING) operational status regarding preparedness for the 2024 Hurricane Season.

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15 Unfortunately, delays in travel from the Virgin Islands to Texas, lead me to be
16 undergoing medical treatment in the United States today during the prescribed
17 hearing time. Please rest assured that VING has completed not only the territorial
18 capstone event, but also the annual Army North Rehearsal of Concept 3-4 June 2024
19 with Department of Defense military and civilian agencies, Federal Emergency
20 Management Agency, and other stakeholders. This exercise simulated two Category
21 5 Hurricanes hitting the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico and further transitioning up
22 the United States mainland along the coast. This exercise stimulated stress for all
23 supporting agencies to identify areas for improvement and gaps. VING has
24 successfully worked closely with 1st Mission Command Army Reserves out of
25 Puerto Rico and other confirmed Emergency Management Agreement Compact
26 State/Territory National Guard partners to ensure they are not late to need.

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28 The Virgin Islands National Guard readiness training, along with upcoming
29 Caribbean Thunder Exercise 1-9 August 2024 with 1st Mission Command Army
30 Reserves to validate and stress communication systems between the Virgin Islands,
31 Puerto Rico, and assisting DoD forces. VING's Pre-Combat Checks (PCC) and Pre-
32 Combat Inspection (PCI) will be conducted in accordance with All Hazards
33 preparation and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) as we continue to train and
34 prepare for the height of Hurricane season activities.



Virgin Islands National Guard Strategic Posture for Impending Hazards:

Upon the identification of a threat and the determination that the threat has the capability to adversely impact the Territory, the Governor of the Virgin Islands issues an Emergency declaration. This can occur up to 4-5 days pre-landfall. This allows the Virgin Islands National Guard (VING) to mobilize its members in a Territorial Active Duty (TAD) status. Additionally, the Joint Task Force (JTF) is established and the request for a Dual Status Commander (DSC) is submitted. During this period, coordination also begins with the Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO)/Defense Coordinating Element (DCE)/Joint Liaison Team (JLT) /Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) Joint Staff Enabling Team (JSET). The Task Forces that are established in each district begin to forward deploy their Immediate Response Teams (IRTs) pre-landfall to designated locations in preparation for supporting Civil Support Operations. Locations have been identified on St. Thomas, St. Croix and St. John. Each IRT is comprised of approximately 9 Service Members. They provide initial route assessment, route clearance, and protection of life and property. Finally, VING through the Virgin Islands Territorial Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA) and Department of Health (DOH) begins the coordination with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for the pre-landfall movement of critically ill patients to off island health care facilities. On the worse day we anticipate requiring an additional 989 pax and supporting equipment.

Key Pre-Landfall Actions: H-96 to H-24

- Arrival of the DCO/DCE/JLT/EMAC JSET elements via Commercial Air. We anticipate these elements being housed in hotels, but space may be a premium as other federal response entities will vie for this space. Identification of available sourcing solutions for equipment and manpower Title 10 vs EMAC in the aftermath of this event.

- Risks during this period is one of late to need due to our geographical dispersion. Air traffic can potentially close and so a decision to respond must be made No Later Than (NLT) H-96. Additionally, the availability of Strategic Airlift as well as rotary wing capability for intra island movement support in the aftermath of an event of this magnitude. Lodging and sustainment to support either T10 land-based forces or early EMAC forces must be considered.



73 ● Following the departure of hazardous weather, VING Tasks Forces in the Territory
74 provides the initial response. At the bottom we see the anticipated Time Phased Force
75 Deployment of forces spanning Hurricane (H) H to H+120. EMAC requirements are
76 validated and coordinated through VITEMA and the Joint Staff Enabling Team
77 (JSET) that arrived pre-landfall. For an event of this magnitude the Virgin Islands
78 anticipates that some type of external support will be required whether it is T10,
79 EMAC or a combination.

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- 81 ● Post Landfall Mission Ready Package (MRP) projections:
- 82 ○ Joint Force Land Component Command Staff Forces
 - 83 ○ Law Enforcement (Military Police)
 - 84 ○ Multi-Functional Engineer
 - 85 ○ Transportation Company
 - 86 ○ General Purpose Battalion
 - 87 ○ Quartermaster Company
 - 88 ○ Support Maintenance Company
 - 89 ○ Multifunctional Medical Battalion
- 90

91 The Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) Maritime package arrival time
92 depends on its location relative to VI and can potentially take up to 10 days to arrive.
93 Early air transportation capability from the DSCA Maritime Package (V22s and
94 others) will be key as this can allow for freedom of movement within the territory to
95 where the greatest need is. This Maritime DSCA package will provide immediate
96 humanitarian assistance and disaster relief support to civil authorities. If this package
97 is not available, then a similar capability whether EMAC or T10 land base must be
98 considered.

99

100 Risks

- 101 ● Overwhelming disaster for the VING forces immediately available
 - 102 ● Limited to no inter island transport capabilities
 - 103 ● STRATAIR lift for T10 or EMAC forces and equipment
 - 104 ● Maritime DSCA package availability
 - 105 ● T10 or EMAC late to need
 - 106 ● Insufficient bed Down for Forces
- 107
- 108



109 Decision Point(s) identified by your organization:

- 110 1. Landfall
- 111 2. Landfall plus 24 Hours (confirm EMAC Requirements) and T10 availability
- 112 3. Landfall plus 240 Hours (DSCA Maritime Retrograde/EMAC fully assumes
- 113 missions)
- 114 4. Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority (RIP/TOA) between forces

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116 This concludes VING's update.

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118 Thank you for this opportunity to provide an update of the readiness and preparedness
119 of the Virgin Islands National Guard for the 2024 Hurricane Season. VING will
120 continue to be a ready, relevant, and responsive joint force that supports all 15
121 Emergency Support Functions to save lives, protect key infrastructure, assist in
122 providing international security, and ease the suffering of Virgin Islanders.

123
124 Sincerely Major General Kodjo S. Knox-Limbacker.

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