



VIRGIN ISLANDS 35TH LEGISLATURE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND PUBLIC SAFETY
CHAIRPERSON, HONORABLE SENATOR KENNETH L. GITTENS

SEPTEMBER 12, 2023
VIRGIN ISLANDS NATIONAL GUARD TESTIMONY
MAJOR GENERAL KODJO S. KNOX-LIMBACKER



1 **Introduction**

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3 Good afternoon, Honorable Senator Kenneth L. Gittens, Chairman of the 35th Legislature
4 Homeland Security, Justice and Public Safety, other committee members present in the Senate
5 chambers and virtually; family, friends, and the general public viewing and listening locally and
6 abroad.

7 I am Major General Kodjo S. Knox-Limbacker, the 15th Adjutant General and Commander of
8 the Virgin Islands Army and Air National Guard. It is an honor to be sitting before this esteemed
9 body to discuss the National Guards Hurricane Preparedness.

10 **Context**

11 As we know the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) sits at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean and the
12 Caribbean Sea. The USVI has a collective population of approximately 87,146 persons, down
13 from 105,000 from over a decade ago. Much of its population is split between St. Croix and St.
14 Thomas, with approximately 40,000 (+) people on each. The remainder of its population is on St.
15 John Island with a small population on Water Island. We are geographically isolated from the
16 mainland United States which makes external support complex. With our limited force structure
17 and transportation issues caused by our geographical isolation, we estimate the manpower
18 available to respond during any response is approximately 330 Servicemembers, which is evenly
19 split between St. Thomas and St. Croix. When impacted by an All-Hazards event like hurricanes,
20 the territory is faced with a myriad of complex dilemmas. We are geographically isolated and
21 dispersed, which creates a set of conditions that are completely opposite of those responses that
22 occur in the Continental United States, where neighboring states can posture and assist.



23 Furthermore, the population in unable to fully evacuate the impacted areas as exercised in the
 24 states. Currently there is no military air assets in the USVI, and our neighbor island of Puerto
 25 Rico has only limited air assets. Neither Territory possess Air Force fixed wing capability in their
 26 respective National Guards, Puerto Rico having only a small amount Army rotary and fixed wing
 27 capability in their Army National Guard.

28 **Defense Support to Civil Authorities Strategic Requirements**

Operational Bottom Line Up Front

4 Levels of Hurricane Response; Levels 1 – 4

	# PAX Required	# HMMWVs Required	# LMTVs Required	# 800 MHz Radios	# SVGAR Radios	# Level 1 PPE	# Level 2 PPE	# Laser Thermal Scanners	# IR Thermal Cameras	# Quick Test Kits	# Chain Saw Kits	# Riot Kits	# MH 72 MEDVAC Helicopters	# UH 72 Utility Helicopters	# UH 60 Utility Helicopters	# CH 47 Cargo Helicopters
Level 1	232	30	17	55	20	114	98	24	4	100	18	0	0	0	0	0
Level 2	327	31	18	75	21	209	118	24	4	100	18	20	0	0	8	8
Level 3	618	51	25	138	25	313	201	34	5	125	18	60	6	0	2	6
Level 4	1343	118	77	300	83	656	687	96	14	350	36	120	6	4	14	6

- **Level 1** – Based on any response from a Tropical Storm up to a CAT 1 Hurricane requiring a local organic VING response.
- **Level 2** – Based on a major (CAT 2 or 3) hurricane impacting 1 of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Near 100% damage with some devastation. Government of Virgin Island is overwhelmed with regard to support or operations. Would require day and night operations.
- **Level 3** – Based on a catastrophic (CAT 4 or 5) hurricane impacting 1 of the U.S. Virgin Islands. Near 100% devastation and Government of Virgin Island is incapacitated regarding movement, support or operations. Would require day and night operations, with over blue water capability.
- **Level 4** – Based on a catastrophic (CAT 4 or 5) hurricane impacting at least 2 of the U.S. Virgin Islands. With nearly 100% devastation and Government of Virgin Island is incapacitated with regard to movement, support or operations throughout the Territory. Would require day and night operations.

Operationally, the worse day in the USVI requires an additional 989 PAX, 81 x HMMWVs, 56 x LMTVs, 78 x Riot Kits and 5 x SNAP Terminals. Some of this requirement will need to be deployed prior to landfall.

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32 Operationally, the worse day in the USVI requires an additional 989 PAX, 81 x HMMWV's,
33 56 x LMTVs, 78 x Riot Kits and 5 x SNAP Terminals. Some of these requirements will
34 need to be deployed prior to landfall.

35 Below are the Emergency Support Functions (ESF) that these assets will support.

- 36 • Establish a Dual Status Command for mission assignment for all T-32 and T-10 forces.
- 37 • Conduct Joint Reception Staging Onward Movement and Integration (JRSOI) or
38 responding to Department of Defense (DOD) agencies.
- 39 • Deploy immediate Response Teams (IRT) to predetermined locations in support of the
40 Virgin Islands Police Department (VIPD) and Virgin Islands Fire and Emergency Services
41 (VIFEMS).
- 42 • Provide Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Liaison Officer to support (Virgin Islands
43 Emergency Management Agency (VITEMA).
- 44 • Coordinate Emergency Management Agreement Compact with the National Guard
45 Bureau (NGB).
- 46 • Conduct Congregate Shelter Operations Medical screenings to support Department of
47 Human Services (DHS) and Department of Health (DOH).
- 48 • Movement of temporary power generators in support of VITEMA.
- 49 • Perform Route Clearance operations.
- 50 • Assist with patient movement tracking and liaison with military airlift for evacuation
51 supporting DOH, DHS, and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS).
- 52 • Conduct airport opening operations with DOD assets to support logistic sustainment
53 operations and personnel response.
- 54 • Conduct commodities transport to establish Points of Distributions with DHS.
- 55 • Conduct Traffic Control Points with Virgin Island Police Department during periods of
56 curfew.



57 **Closing**

58 I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify on the Virgin Islands National Guards
59 preparedness to support all 15 Emergency Support Functions when called. VING will continue
60 stay at a high level of readiness to provide Defense Support to Civil Authorities during times of
61 crises. Rest assure we will always be there with our ready, relevant, responsive joint force of
62 Soldiers, Airmen, and Civilians to answer our territories needs within our authorities. I stand by
63 for any questions.