



On My Mind

NGA Responds to Gulf Coast Catastrophe

By Lt. Gen. James R. Clapper, Jr., USAF (Ret.), Director, National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency

Our nation is facing the tragic aftermath of the worst natural disaster in our history. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have devastated the Gulf Coast area of the United States, from Texas to Alabama. We extend our deepest sympathies to all those affected by this terrible, unprecedented catastrophe.

NGA is doing everything we can to support ongoing relief and recovery operations. Our Agency's efforts began even before Hurricane Katrina struck. On Friday, Aug. 26, NGA forwarded 100 graphics depicting the locations of key infrastructures—hospitals, police stations, highways, schools, etc.—for the counties in the path of Hurricane Katrina. Those graphics provided local and state government agencies with a common operational picture of key facilities.

Since the hurricanes struck, NGA personnel:

- Analyzed pre-hurricane and post-hurricane data to help develop damage assessments of the affected region, including critical infrastructure and long-range assessments of the petroleum industry.
- Provided the Federal Emergency Management Agency the first cloud-free satellite image of downtown New Orleans from a U.S. commercial satellite. Then, NGA personnel, working closely with commercial vendors, provided all our unclassified imagery holdings to the general public through the World Wide Web.
- Deployed to the impacted region to provide on-the-spot support to U.S. government agencies also deployed to the region. They exploited the ability to "reach back" to NGA for additional support.
- Took over operations from the damaged U.S. Coast Guard facility

and transmitted electronic Notice to Mariners updates along with weather information to mariners in the Gulf of Mexico.

- Developed an integrated strategy to task and acquire imagery from a variety of platforms and sensors. This provided the best information for analysis and public discussion.

Over the past several weeks, NGA's technological capabilities have been brought to bear as never before. Our response to these hurricanes clearly illuminated our technical know-how. Equally impressive has been NGA's analytical contribution to the relief efforts. NGA analysts have worked closely with the Federal Relief Community to provide round-the-clock support. NGA personnel created and provided tailored and specific analytic products that enabled national and operational situational awareness, assessment, planning and execution. Rapid decision making was the outcome during response and recovery. And, new customers who now appreciate the power of geospatial intelligence were established.

People helping people, whether technical, analytical or support, is what distinguishes NGA as we carry out our mission to "Know the Earth and Show the Way."

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James R. Clapper, Jr." The signature is fluid and cursive.

James R. Clapper, Jr.
Lieutenant General, USAF (Ret.)
Director