

## **Geointeresting Podcast Transcript**

### **Episode 7: Lt. Gen Russel L. Honoré & Adm. Thad Allen**

#### **October 15, 2015**

Welcome to Geointeresting. Today, we have a special supersized episode featuring Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré and Admiral Thad Allen discussing customer service in times of crisis. General Honoré and Allen visited NGA earlier this month to speak to our workforce on their experiences serving as senior military leaders during the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita 10 years ago. Today's episode was recorded on October 5, 2015, at NGA Campus East's Allder Auditorium. The event was moderated by NGA's Shelby Pearson. Stay tuned for Geointeresting.

**NGA:** So with that, I'd like to turn it over to each of the gentlemen to make some opening remarks. So I'd like to turn it over to Admiral Allen first.

**Allen:** Thank you. Thanks for having us here this afternoon. I was able to participate in this event last year, and it's always an honor to be here. Let me say at the start: I was one of those people that called Jim Clapper in 2005, and he immediately said yes to anything I asked for. He's an extraordinary patriot. I'm glad he's where he's at DNI, and I consider him a close, personal friend, and you all should be very, very proud of him. So here's my pitch. Tom Freedmen, op-ed columnist for the New York Times, wrote a book awhile back called "The World is Flat." You may have read it. His next book will be "The World is Fast." And that's the conversion of technology, changes in climate and globalization. The upshot of all of that is everything we're going to be dealing with in the future, whether it's a fixed program or a crisis in this country and this world, is going to be complex. And I think you're going to find out, as we have our discussion today, complexity becomes a risk aggravator at some point [and] starts to defeat standard operating procedures, rebuttal presumptions, about how things should act, and I think we need to learn how to challenge assumptions and understand whether or not we're really trying to solve the problem. The second half of that is the antidote to complexity is coproduction and collaboration. As we heard in the antidote about where you move forces and who you ask permission, we tend to divide things up by authorization and appropriation, and the fact of the matter is no agency or private sector firm or NGO has resources to solve one of these large problems by themselves. So the question is, how do you coproduce the outcomes that meet the expectations of the American people? I use New Orleans as an example of complexity. We all thought it was a hurricane. I define it as the use of a weapon of mass effect in the city without criminality that resulted in the loss of the continuity of government, without decapitation of leadership.

**NGA:** That's all hyphenated.

**Allen:** It took us a week to figure that out. But once we did, Russ and I were able to put together a plan on how to address it and power local leaders to use their statutory authorities with the support of the federal government as appropriate to solve the problem moving forward. So as we look at these problems and the leadership it takes to address them, we need to start thinking about how we unhinge our thinking and start learning how to address the issues associated with complexity, which becomes a risk aggravator — how we take that apart and how we deal with it moving forward. You said five minutes.

**NGA:** It's like being on a high-school debate team. General Honoré.

**Honoré:** Well, thank you. Well, it's an honor to be here, and I'd like to thank all of you for what you all do — for what you all do for our country, for the home game here in America, and the away game, the things you do for our warriors and our soldiers, sailors, marines and coast guard around the world who need relevant information that helped them make smart decisions. They depend on you. They literally are like patients on life support that you're sitting here with information that might help some sailor on a ship trying to tell his boss what just happened and what might happen in the next 12 hours; or what happened in the last 24 hours. And somebody sitting behind a machine here is looking at that. And it's up to you to try and make sure that information gets through the pipeline and gets to the right person to make the right decision. As far as looking back 10 years, I guess I'll start off and recognize the fact that 10 years ago today, I was in Cameron Parish, Louisiana, dealing with Hurricane Rita. Because you had Katrina; then came Rita on the 24th of September, affectionately known by the government of Louisiana as the "Twisted Sisters," that basically laid waste to coastline and almost destroyed much of the infrastructure along the coast. But it also put into play the role of federal government inside the United States. From the Civil War forward, amendments to the Constitution and other things have been put in place to prevent the overreaching rule of the federal government in state activities — for a good reason. I couldn't tell you, the first 36 hours I was there, how many times some idiot walked up to me with something about the posse comitatus. Every [CENSORED] house lawyer between New York and Washington and the coast who had taken their course was watching what we were doing and how we were doing it, in terms of stretching out our authority to be there. But embedded in, as we shared with the executive staff earlier, we were focused on a mission, which was to save people's lives. The other thing is after 35 years in the service, and you just didn't fall off some pumpkin truck in New Orleans, and somebody says, "Look, we've discovered a leader." No, you've spent 35 years of investing in the two of us in professional development courses and successive commands, and when you get there, people accept for you to solve the problem. So you go in to gain — if it is to throw a football, well, that's what you do. You do the best that you can. You don't get down there and say, "Well, let me call back and ask for permission." You go in, and you make the best decision you can, particularly when you're in the life-saving phase. And, Admiral, agree with me, I hope, that when you're in the life-saving phase, you've got to do what you do to save people's lives. And sometimes you've got to break the rules. By the time we got people to the airport on Saturday morning and we got the New Orleans airport open, we had a couple of events that happened, and one of them [was] the TSA guy said in the middle of the evacuation, "We gotta stop because we don't have enough TSA people here." This is your government at work. He was following the rules. Now, there was a couple ways I could have handled that. I could have tried to find somebody in Secretary Chertoff's office who would've called the White House, who'd call somebody over at the FAU or the Secretary [INAUDIBLE], and two hours later, we would've had the floor open. The solution was: we need a solution right now, because if I wait two to three hours, then some people are going to find out about that, and then we are going to be looking stupid — because we stopped the evacuation because some guy from the TSA said he needed more wands to inspect people. So here's how we handled it. We get him in the room. We put him on the speakerphone, and I'm talking to him, and I said, "What's your problem?" And he said, "Well, we don't have enough equipment to screen everybody." I said, "OK. I understand why you're doing what you're doing, but I want to assure you, Osama bin Laden is not in New Orleans. We need you to load the damn airplanes." And the only thing I remember — I think the day before the president came in. He said, "Honoré, whatever you need to do, you get these people out of here; you understand?" That was good enough. We didn't need a revalidation that we had a mission, because inside our government, everything is set up to have the

balance between the authorities of the federal government and the rules. We all know why we put that rule in. And that is, again, a quick look. Two hours later, [the] next group of airplanes come in, brought in by TRANSCOM. [We] didn't have to do anything. General Schwartz just sent the stuff in. [The] airplane field is full of wide-body aircraft. That group of pilots came in, and they said, "Hey, we need to know who's in charge, because we can't take off, because the last group of airplanes didn't have a manifest." Imagine that: flying an airplane without a manifest. Well, these people don't have dual identification. There's no computers up at the airport. So here's a guy coming from Chicago, who spent the night at a five-star hotel bringing his federal rules in. You've got get a manifest. How are you going to create a manifest? These people need to go. Again, so we pull the same trick. We brought him in a room, put him on the blackberry, put him on speakerphone, and said, "OK, captain, how can we help you?" And he said, "I need a manifest. We can't take off without a manifest." Again, we could have gone, go call Admiral Allen, who might have gotten checked here, turn off, call back, and said, "Hey, we're going to create a rule to the exception to fly this plane without a manifest." Again, in that case, it was a very short conversation. "Look Captain, we can't create a manifest. We cannot pull a manifest out of your you-know-what. We need you to fly the airplane." And he ho hummed, and I said, "Bottom line is we got guns. You don't. Fly the damn airplanes." I'm telling you that, because everybody's trying to do their job. That captain is trying to follow the rules.

**Allen:** But nobody is coproducing the outcome

**Honoré:** That TSA guy is trying to follow the rules. But, in essence, when you're in the search-and-rescue mode, you've got to do what you've got to do, because you don't have time to run it back through the bureaucracy. In essence, in those first few days, when Admiral got settled in and after we finished search and rescue and gone through all the homes, we went back to the normal protocol. Stuff like that would come up, and I'd call him, and he'd take care of it. That was nice.

**Allen:** You're welcome.

**NGA:** What's he done?

**Honoré:** Oh I'm done.

**NGA:** Because you can't tell.

**Allen:** We're never quite sure.

**NGA:** We'll get him going again. I've had the privilege of spending some time with the gentlemen here this morning, and one of the things that struck me about how both of them speak about Katrina is they still speak about it like the day and the week was last week. They'll say, "Tuesday night I was here. Wednesday night I was there. Friday morning we were in such and such a Parish." And so to see that event be talked about that way 10 years later is quite remarkable. Admiral Allen, we talked a little bit about in your opening comments the challenging of assumptions, this natural tension, even in Ed's remarks that [the] Department of Defense wasn't totally cool with this at the beginning. And I know you came a couple days after General Honoré was on scene. Can you talk a little bit more about, and share with us your thoughts, the issues of finding that right balance, having people see things in a common way? And then, also, you mentioned over lunch that I'd like you to share with the audience your perceptions of law, policy and tradition.

**Allen:** Sure. As you all know there's a process for asking for DOD assets in a domestic crisis. Pursuant [to] an emergency declaration, there's a mission assignment, a request for forces, that all ends up going to the secretary of defense for an order book and coming back down. That is an ungainly process that puts in a lot of time. So the challenge I had, the challenge that Russ had, was trying to make that work in the condensed time frame. And in many cases some people advanced the resources and let the paperwork catch up. But if we don't do that, then you're not focused on the number-one priority, which is saving lives, and everybody can be melded together and focus on that single task to do that. And that's how people get bound together, coproduce the outcomes, and do things that are extraordinary that they normally wouldn't be able to do. But you have to overcome the complexity of the situation and create clarity around the task — what it is you're trying to do and how you're going to do that. The second thing is you've got to collaborate and coproduce, as I said before. One of the first things I did when I got down there was meet with Russ, and we decided there would be no air gap between us. There's one federal entity down here. It's us collectively; we're going to figure out how to work this together. And we are here in support of state and local authorities, because under our Constitution, all power is not granted to the federal government — reserved to the states, as Russ has said. So you have to craft a solution that respects the law but doesn't let the law constrain you. In this case it was providing elements to reconstitute civil society in New Orleans that allowed them to have police officers go house to house to see if there were survivors and deal with the very difficult issue of remains recovery and not presume their authorities. In this case it was access, security, rubber boats, [and] high-water vehicles provided by Navy 2nd Airborne and the Marines down in Saint Bernard Parish to accomplish that. But a lot of you have to check your egos at the door, focus on the task and get everybody bound together in the spirit of trust — that you're going to have a number-one task, and that's saving lives.

**NGA:** Do you think people fall back when you're not driven by the most compelling mission, which is, in this case, saving lives? That a few weeks later we're back to our paperwork. We're back to our bureaucracy.

**Allen:** Well, we have rules for a reason. And you can always claim you were saving lives and the [INAUDIBLE] of the situation — but the longer it takes and four, five weeks afterwards, and all of a sudden GAO and the IG don't understand what you did. So at some point there's a transition back to the rule of law, if you will, but it has to be a measured process where you have to establish the right priorities. And my theory was, and I think Russ would probably agree, you know, I always say if you can provide a model of what you were thinking about, how you accessed information, and most of the time you're operating under conditions of uncertainty in a compressed time frame with incomplete information. But if you can articulate how you challenge assumptions, how you made the decision, so that after the fact a reasonable person could say, "Yes, I get that," then you're arguing about the quality of your information, not what you did in terms of your own conduct. You start to have more time. Then you have to be more judicious about how you do it.

**NGA:** General Honoré.

**Honoré:** Well, let me get back into this and say I knew it was time for me to leave Louisiana about 10 years ago today. We had a pocket of cows down in Cameron Parish that we were trying to get out. We [had] just spent two days getting the major herds out, and the guy from the Farm Bureau came in and said, "We've got one more pocket of cows. We need to get some heat to them." So a guy walked up to me and said, "OK, my helicopter just left." So I called back through to headquarters and said, "Mission

me a couple of 'Hueys.'" We had a few marine Hueys down in New Orleans. So in a half hour I get a call from a chief of staff that said, "The lawyer at NORTHCOM said 'no.'" Wait a minute. I'm a JTF commander. What the hell? A lawyer at NORTHCOM? Because we've gone past the lifesaving. We're down in Cameron Parish saving cows. So some Marine lawyer major is saying no. So I said, "OK, it's time for me to leave. Get my damn helicopter here. I'm headed back to Belle Chasse, and when I get relieved, I'll leave the state," because it was time for me to leave there, because I could not go back to where we had been, which is processor requests. I'll have everybody chop on it to see if it was inside the intent of the law and if we were using military assets for what they could be used for. So you have this lawyer that — the thing is, it's no longer every day on the TV. It's every now and then, and he's looking at this, well, why would we want to use a Marine helicopter to go save cows? It doesn't fit his class he took. It's not on his checklist. It was time for me to leave. But let me go back and say this, just in context, because a lot of people who look at what happened in Louisiana, and you talk about confidence in people. You know, let me say this. The first responders inside the areas in Mississippi and Louisiana — they were victims. And a disaster's different when the first responders are victims. The same thing happened in Haiti. The police and fire, hospital people, EMS, they were victims. And you get a different kind of response than you get even at 9/11, where you've got a point event, and people come in from all over to come in and help. In an event like this, when the first responders themselves — a house is underwater, and they have no sanctuary, and they don't know where their families are — create a lot of chaos, and people draw from value-based discussions about the incompetence in the New Orleans Police Department. Well how good would you be if 90 percent of your police cars were under water? Your police — most of them [are] in civilian clothes, because they left their house in the middle of the night, or they were at the precinct, and their precinct headquarters was underwater. The courthouse where the police headquarters is had a full foot of water around it. So I often remind people that when you get a major disaster like this and the first responders are victims, the response is going to be disjointed. It's going to not look efficient. It's not going to look like it's coordinated, because in order to coordinate, you have to be able to talk, and we could not talk between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, because the grid went down — no power — and the digital grid went down, and the police even had trouble keeping the handheld devices charged. So that creates a structure that we response by block. We respond by districts inside of our local governments — would shock the surrounding by parishes. That was a major disrupter when Anderson Cooper — and I'm using Anderson, I'm blowing Anderson out the water here, but as a descriptor — show up the day after, and he's got the camera there and showing a body floating or showing babies needing water, and we're not there. And where is the police? Where are the EMS teams? Well, you know what? They're victims too. Or they show a picture of some dude with a 52-inch TV on his back in waist deep water and say there's a looting problem. So the world starts believing, to include the government, that we've got a security problem in New Orleans. Actually, we've got a logistics problem. That dude that's stealing the TV — he's not right. But there's no reason to shoot him. So putting the shoot-to-kill order out is not proper either, so we're working with that, and then when you go from Katrina to Rita, the mayor tells you, as he told me, well, he wants us to go in and force people out of their homes. Well, knowing a little bit about the Constitution, we could take a knee and say, "Well, we can't force people out of their home. That's state law. That's not something we do as federal troops, but we'll be there tomorrow for the ones that don't leave. And were going to get food and water. Because our job is to keep them alive." So those are the kind of conundrums you end up with, and you adapt, and if you can't figure it out, you pass it up the line.

**NGA:** General Honoré, when you reflect back now that you have a little bit of time, obviously, since those events, and you mentioned it in your opening remarks — this issue of thinking about the customer more as a patient, a patient-physician relationship. I think that's something that, again, in the context of customer service, we might want to reflect on that for the group.

**Honoré:** Well, I would say the idea of focusing on meeting the needs of the people that you serve is, at the end of the day, a requirement. But my concern with that as a theme for the enterprise is I had a similar situation when I commanded First Army and working 5th across 50 states with the National Guard Reserve, Air Force, and Navy and deploying troops around the world for the two big missions we had — is that people, my commanders, were tough: well, we are training the customer the way they want; what they want. Wait a minute. The customer has not been to war. How in the hell do you know what he wants? There is no such thing as a customer. I want you to give them what they need. Because the idea of a customer is that you've got a choice. If you don't want to go to this store, you go somewhere else. The idea behind a customer is you waiting for the customer to ask you what he wants; but only when you're dealing with troops. You've got to treat him like a patient. You want to infuse him with what you've got, because he don't know. The adjutant general in South Carolina — he's never dealt with a hurricane before. He [doesn't] know what you've got. If you wait on him to be a customer, to call you and say, "Hey, what can you help me with?" He [doesn't] know. The guy who's commanding Afghanistan, General Campbell, when he got there, he's never done that job before. He [doesn't] know what you've got. You know, if you go into the briefings, and you don't ask for products, you don't know what to ask for. So you've got to feed him what? Something in his IV to make sure he's getting what you've got. As opposed to saying, "Well, I'll wait until they call us," to give them this service you have, because at the end of the day, your job is to protect the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic. So if you are empowered with that, what have you got, and how are you getting it to the person that might make a difference? And that's what I would say we want to focus on — is how we push that information out and get it [to] somebody who might be able to make an intelligent decision about something, as opposed to waiting for them to call you. Because that's the attitude DOD went into Katrina with. We went in with the laws at the time, which was we would wait till FEMA asked us to do something. But I can tell you the Thursday before Katrina, I sent a force-requirements list to NORTHCOM, who sends the GFCOM for 20 ships. And by the time he got to GFCOM, some Admiral got on the phone and described to me how this works. And what he said was what was the policy at the time.

**Allen:** On this issue of customer service — just one quick anecdote. And I would add another term that Craig Fugate, current administrator of FEMA, who by the way, is doing a terrific job, and he calls it "survivor-centric" way to think about things. I was sit down as the deputy principal federal official to Mike Brown to take over and kind of stabilize the federal response in and around New Orleans with Russ's help. On the ninth of September, I was called to Baton Rouge by Secretary Chertoff, and he told me that Mike Brown would be going back to Washington, and I was going to take over the entire response in the Gulf. It was a little surprising, but we went down and had what was probably the most uncomfortable news conference I was ever a part of. And after the news conference, and Secretary Chertoff went back to D.C., Mike Brown stormed out, and a week later, he resigned as the FEMA administrator. I was sitting in the Joint Field Office in Baton Rouge. It had 5,000 people in it. Some of you may have been down there at the GIS section. If you were, thank you. I look at my aid, and she says, "What you going to do?" And I said, "I want an all-hands meeting." We couldn't get everybody in the

room, but there were about 2,000 people in what used to be an old first floor of a Dillard's warehouse. I got up on top of a desk with a loud hailer, and I said, "Listen. I've got to go back to New Orleans to make sure everything keeps going on." Russ had a great strong presence down there. We had a joint planning cell. We don't want to lose what we had gained. I said, "I'll come back in 24 hours." And then I looked at all of them and said, "I'm giving you all an order." OK, based on what we just said, you know, I had no legal authority of anybody in order. But there's an old statement that you don't have sovereignty unless you can exert it. So I basically looked at them all, and this sea of faces was just completely flat. I'd talked to a lady coming in to the building this morning, and she'd said, "I go back to my hotel room at night, and I can't stand to turn the television on, because I see my leaders and my agency vilified." So I looked at the crowd and said, "I'm giving you an order. You are to treat everyone you come in contact with that's been impacted by the storm as if they're a member of your own family: your mother, your father, your brother, your sister." Pretty clear, pretty simple, survivor-centric, customer-centric. I said, "If you do this, two things will happen. Number one, if you make an error on what you're doing, you can err on the side of doing too much, and at this point in the response, I'm okay with that. And the second issue, if somebody's got an issue with what you did, their problem is with me, not you, because I told you." People started openly weeping in the room, and there was a collective sigh that changed the barometric pressure in the building. Nobody had told these people in very simple terms what the mission was. Nobody ever told these people in very simple terms what the basis for trust that creates unity effort was. But most importantly, nobody ever told any of those people that somebody had their back.

**NGA:** So, Alan, when you think about that seminal moment, that top cover survivor-centric, can you compare that to what the climate was like when you were brought in for Deepwater Horizon? Totally different?

**Allen:** Totally different

**NGA:** Totally different, right. Can you talk about that?

**Allen:** Deepwater Horizon was 45 miles offshore. The well was 5,000 feet deep in the ocean floor. The reservoir was another 12,000 feet. So it was 17,000 feet from the surface of the water. State jurisdiction ends at three miles, so this is a clear case of federal preemption. In this case, my biggest problem regarding law was politics, because the local lease Parish president of Louisiana wanted complete control over the response, and they had neither the resources or the capability or capacity to actually deal with an oil spill — how you make decisions on what to do about critical resources and how you deal with that. And my largest challenge was dealing with managing the political leader up about what the doctrine was — how do you actually fix this problem? — and then maintaining a barrier, so the operational commanders could actually do their job, and I could deal with the National Press, The Congress and the White House. And I would just say this: we talked about policy and politics. You need to learn to be effective in a political process without being political. In other words, partisan. So here's Allen's simple equation: if this is the level of effort required to do a job containing current doctrine and SOP and stuff like that and a knowledge level of the political appointee that you're working for is here, they think you're pretty good. You guys really know what you're doing — here, competent. Let me know what's going on. Here, all of a sudden, you have a credibility issue on whether or not their expectations are being met by what the rebuttal, doctrine, or response is or your level of effort. That's bad. And

whether it's your fault [or] their fault, you've got to minimize that difference, and I spent more time in the oil spill and in the hurricane minimizing the difference of the political expectations and the need of political leaders to be relevant in the response to their constituencies than I did anything else in the response.

**NGA:** So before we open it up for questions, when I think about that topic, General Honoré, in terms of the political complexion, do you want to share with the group this afternoon some of the work that you've been doing recently on trying to help poor communities deal with pollution and how that's not only a political challenge, but it's a scientific challenge; it's an infrastructure challenge? And so, again, I think highlighting some of the work that you've been doing recently dovetails nicely with what we heard from Admiral Allen.

**Honoré:** In my spare time now I help poor communities in Louisiana and Texas and Mississippi deal with pollution. What is pretty relevant along the coast is that for the last 50 years, when the full exploration of oil and gas happen off our coast in Louisiana and Mississippi and Texas, is that they went in there, and they got the oil and gas. What is left is a mess of thousands of abandoned oil wells — thousands — and thousands of miles of exploration canal that is destroying our wetlands. In there, people live there, like Plaquemine Parish; like the code of Indians down in Vermillion Parish. Their villages are disappearing, because those canals allow salt water to come in, and now it killed the natural forest there, and we're going to have to displace a population of people in coastal Louisiana. You know, if the Russians came in and attacked that part of the country, we'd go to war over [it], but what we have is an impact of pollution that's having an impact along our coastline, and just last week, we've got a new superfund site in Louisiana. It's from a Crisil plant that was open 92 years ago that was designed to make the post that carries out telephone wires and electric wires. So the nation has been built with last-century stuff. In north Baton Rouge is the most toxic area in the United States, northeast Baton Rouge Parish, with a collection of toxic waste. That toxic waste — some people refer to that as an effective climate change, and when I talked to our former Vice President Gore, he wanted me to talk about climate change. I don't talk about climate change. I talk about pollution, because we are standing in oil. I see it as the biggest concern. The worst-case scenario for that I see could happen now is that we have a flood along the Mississippi River somewhere around Baton Rouge between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. There's a hundred chemical plants. Do you all know where they are? Those chemical plants could commit fratricide against one another, and if the chain starts, it's going to make Chernobyl look like an elementary-school problem. We put a hundred chemical plants along that river with no extra security. None of them have berms around them. So you take what the admiral dealt with. I'll deepen the ocean. We're going to be able to get to it, but the impact is when we go from a natural disaster to a manmade disaster, and right now, we're dealing one that was created over the last 50 years — Abandoned chemical sites, abandoned Crisil plants, abandoned oil wells throughout coastal Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas that's now affecting the aquifers. We've got three aquifers in Louisiana. All three are in trouble, and we need to start having a conversation in this nation about our water infrastructure. I've read two books [INAUDIBLE]. I project that the next wars will be over water. It won't be over oil. We've got less clean water in the world to date than we had yesterday. It's sad to see on your watch, because you're on duty now. Tomorrow morning, we have less clean water than we've got today. We're going to have to start thinking big time about how we're going to deal with this, because this is a lot more impact on human race than what Russia is doing in Syria or what was going on in some village in Afghanistan.

We've got a problem with industrial pollution that can go from a natural disaster like a Katrina. Were it was to hit a little further north in Louisiana and expose these hundred chemical plants, it's going to be a problem. That we will go from a natural disaster to a manmade disaster, like what happened in Japan, and those are the worst-case scenarios that I think we should need to be talking about — is, what are the status of those old nuclear plants, and what are we doing with the nuclear waste? Those are the problems, I think, that keep me up at night. It's not about these tactical actions that take place or the effects of them with the mass migration that's going on out of Syria and that part of the country. That concerns me, but what the biggest concern inside our country is how [we are] going to deal with these pockets of pollutions in our coastline that some of them have a nuclear power plants. The youngest nuclear power plant is what, 32 years old? And a lot of them are still running, and we don't have a shutdown plan. And if they get flooded by water just like it did in Japan, we've got a problem on our hand. We've got to figure out how we're going to deal with this worst-case scenario, and right now, Louisiana, we're just dealing with the pollution end of it, but it's having a major impact on people's health. And I'm sorry for such a long response.

**NGA:** It's a passionate topic, right?

**Honoré:** Yes, it's something we've got to deal with.

**NGA:** We're going to open it up for some questions. I have a few of my own, but we'll only use that as a stopgap measure. So for my colleagues here at NCE, we have the microphone set up here in the room. Any of you are welcome to step up, and we're happy to field questions. General Honoré is going to love this, because it's one of my southern colleagues here.

**Jason:** Hi, I'm Jason, and I'm originally from Eunice, so thank you for your leadership, and thanks for mentioning Hurricane Rita, too. It's an important event. So you talked about being ready; that when you were called to duty, that it wasn't just kind of a whim; that you all were ready to lead during those times; that you prepared for it. So what advice would you give to us, those of us who aspire to be ready when the time comes for that we might be called for a situation like what like you led through?

**Honoré:** Well, number one, be ready at home. How many of you have an evacuation plan? OK, we're not doing good. How many of you have five to six days' supply of food and water at home? I'm not talking about that old deer sausage from last year. The records show between the Red Cross and Gallup, who I do a little work with, only about 15 to 20 percent of our population really gets prepared for the most likely disaster, because if you're along the East Coast in the south, you pay attention to hurricane season. Last September was preparedness month. How many of you updated your preparedness plan? Well, we encourage people to do that. I think the best thing we can do and encourage all Americans: if you've got a job, you need to be prepared, because when this stuff goes down, the people we've got to look out for the [INAUDIBLE] is a vulnerable population. And that's almost a third of our population. That's the people that's on government subsistence. They're disabled, elderly or poor, and in some cases, all three. About 90 percent of people we recovered in New Orleans that died came from that vulnerable population: elderly, disabled and poor. So to those of us with jobs, you've got to be prepared, and if you've got a job like this, you need to be prepared to be your own first responder, taking care of your family. And then when you take care of your family, you take care of your neighbors, and then

when you do that, you take care of your extended family and make sure they are ready — three to five days' supply of food and water, [INAUDIBLE] certified crank radio that you can recharge your phone with, as well as to recharge the radio, so you stay informed. Think about what would happen right now if everybody here was told to shelter in place. Something happened in the city. You cannot get on the roads. Now think about what you're going to go on to. Some of you've got to pick kids up. Some of you've got to do what — go see about mom and dad, who might be shut in. Who would do this for you today if you could not leave here? And I think we've got to have adult conversations, and we need a cultural shift in America, because you all think you're going to have time, and these major disasters — again, if you think about what happened to Japan, one of the most prepared nations in the world, it could happen here. You don't live very far from a nuclear power plant that's just out there stumbling alone, probably about 35 years old. How many of you drive cars [that] are 35 years old? So you get the point I'm talking about? I would say be prepared. You've got a job. You get prepared, get your mom and dad prepared, wherever they are. You go visit them. You make sure they've got [a] preparedness plan. If you don't know what to do, then go to my website and download one. But be prepared is what I will tell you. The best thing you can do for our nation is prepare your family for the event you're not there and you've got to be here — that they could take care of themselves for three to five days, because that's how long it's going to take for the government to get there with full response if you've got road closures, airports closed, or area that's restricted because of chemicals or other dispersal. That that would be my recommendation.

**Allen:** Yes. The performance outcome of what Russia said, and I completely agree with them, is that if you do that, then you do not put a demand on emergency services, so you don't become the opportunity cost that didn't allow them to save somebody. Number two, you're compliant with local authorities, and if you're not driven out of your house by water or some other means, you should be able to stay there 72 to 96 hours and not become a demand signal on the resources in the local area. That's how you create community resiliency well.

**NGA:** Admiral Allen, what was the number one leadership quality, I'd mentioned it, that allowed you to lead at that moment? And I think that's also what Jason was hinting at as well.

**Allen:** I make this pretty simple. There's a lot of theories about leadership. You know, are leaders born, or are they made or whatever? I reject that completely. Everybody can be a better leader. In my view, leadership involves two things: first of all, my favorite definition of leadership is the ability to reconcile opportunity and competency. You hear Russ talked about being in the military 35 years and then having the opportunity to take those skills and apply them to the best needs of the citizens of the United States, which people very rarely get a chance to do, and, frankly, both of us would say it was an honor to have been asked to be down there. The two things that I tell folks: if you're looking at complexity and the challenge that we're facing in the future, the first essential is what I would call lifelong learning. If those synapses are not firing in your ear, and you're not working out in the middle of the gym, if you get put in a situation [where] we have to do rapid learning and adjust rapidly, it's hard to do. The second one is what I will call emotional intelligence. That's understanding what makes you mad, the ability to empathize with what's going on with people, [and] to talk to move from customer to patient to survivor centric to how we're doing this. That involves an empathetic view of the people you're trying to serve out there. So the two overwhelming things, and I teach this in courses that I talk about, are lifelong

learning and emotional intelligence. I was not a very well-behaved junior officer. I got angry. I got in trouble. You've got to learn how to control that, because if you don't, and you act out in public, you take the entire force you're serving in this society to what I would call an emotional basement. Tony Hayward, the CEO of BP, did that when he said on public television and the media, "I want my life back." There were 40,000 people down there, including Thad Allen, that will have their lives back, so what he said wasn't wrong. It just wasn't appropriate for a leader to say.

**NGA:** We have a question in the back. We'll take that one, and then we'll go out to St. Louis for one more question.

**Adam:** I'm Adam from Houston, Texas. [I] certainly appreciate what you all did down there helping our part of the country. So my question is partially [for] you, general. I'm not sure where you're from, admiral, so, hopefully, you can still answer this. A lot of what we pay attention to is knowing our customer [and] understanding our customer here. So being from Louisiana, do you think that's something that ended up helping you? What kind of assumptions do you think you made about the people, and did your emotions ever get a party, and did you ever have to kind of take a step back and say, "Alright, put my general hat on and kind of take my Louisiana hat off here."? And same to you, admiral.

**Honoré:** Yes, I take that hat off about every 20 minutes.

**NGA:** The accent got thicker when he answered that.

**Honoré:** And dealing with the — because the disaster will make a leader look stupid, and the press will make sure they know. Everybody knows, because there's some perception that you're in charge in a disaster. Well, that's why it's a disaster. I talk to these governors at governor's conferences and stuff, and they'll tell you their war story of when they had a tornado come to town, or they had a great flooding in Colorado, and they [INAUDIBLE] how they worked together, and they were in charge of everything. I say, "Well, OK then. Maybe you have people [that] died. You lost some structure. But a real disaster you don't have the capacity internally to deal with it." You've got to help. You've got to have help at least one or two levels up to deal with it. So when a mayor or governor starts bragging about how well they did when it flooded 10 years ago and how they internally handle it, then maybe it wasn't a disaster. A disaster, as I described it from Pascagoula, Mississippi, to Baton Rouge, Louisiana — there's no lights. The phone towers are down, and in between a city of half million, 80 percent of it is underwater. The hospitals are underwater. The nursing homes are blocked. Now, we're talking a disaster. In other words, you can't handle it with internal assets, so you've got to get help. That's the definition. The other piece of that is how do you deal with the messaging of that with the media. And I know we want to talk with [INAUDIBLE], so I'll use this minute to shoot back at the... What I would do different is probably try to be a more kind. There's some perception [that] came out [that] I was a mean dude, and I had nothing to do with it. I just hadn't had the time to give long answers to stuff. I mean, you've got people waiting to be rescued, and somebody wants you to describe why you didn't do this last week. So dealing with the media — if you don't talk to them, somebody else will. Let me put [it] that way. And then you're going to spend the rest of the 24 hours in the next news cycle trying to correct stuff that somebody else said. So talk to them early in the morning. Talk to them late at night. The other

thing is I would not talk to talk shows. I would not talk to those idiots that come on at night for an hour. I talk to news. News is on for two or three minutes, and you move on. I would not talk to somebody who had 24 hours to figure out what stupid questions they were going to ask you. So I talk to news people who are giving the six o'clock news in the morning and in the evening. The other thing is: remember, the e in email is evidence. And my computer was seized after Katrina, and because everybody was figured there was some something that the government in power did that was — again we didn't do something right. Something went wrong. And they downloaded my computer as they did the ones that FEMA and Mike Brown's computer, because they wanted to deconstruct what happened. So I just tell you if you put it on your Blackberry, or you put it in your computer, somebody's going to see it, and they can recover that information, and sometime it provides a chuckle, and sometime it's an embarrassing moment. But just remember: if you type it, it's there to stay, and somebody's going to see it — and for future references.

**Allen:** Yes. I call it the sociological equivalent of nonbiodegradable plastic. A couple of quick comments — first of all, you said you were from Houston. The largest disaster recovery center ever established in this country was established in Houston. Houston took over 200,000 people that left New Orleans and Mayor Bill White —

**Honoré:** Good man.

**Allen:** National treasure. We thank him for his service. I know he's no longer the mayor there, but thank you for that. I will make one comment, because I know there are other questions. Just, I want to reinforce what my compadre here said. So I'm going to give you my best Russ Honoré impersonation. Excuse me, are you, like, a commander reporter? Because if you think you're a commander reporter, that was a lieutenant question. Next!

**NGA:** You've got that down!

**Honoré:** Very good, admiral! I went out to fly —

**Allen:** I witnessed it

**Honoré:** I went out to Fort Leavenworth, and after Katrina, as did the students out there at the command and staff college. I went in a small group afterwards, and one of my troops that was there [said], "You know, general, they teach the majors here who [are] about to go back out to the Army the way not to do a press conference, and they use some of your clips."

**Allen:** Yes, the only thing they got out of Russ's email is words you can't use on television.

**Honoré:** I said, "Well, rightly so." I said, "They're damn majors. I was an army commander. I'm not going to act like a damn major. Majors ought to act like majors. I wouldn't want majors talking like me. So keep it in perspective." And so —

**NGA:** How did you handle this guy?

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**Honoré:** So you take that as a compliment, but, you know — and it was what it was.

**Allen:** Actually, I used to tell everybody working with Russ was like managing collateral goodness.

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