

***Hurricane Katrina
New Orleans Deployment
After-Action Report***



***South Florida
Urban Search & Rescue
Task Force 2***

September 16th to September 30th 2005

***City of Miami Department of Fire Rescue
Sponsoring Agency***



Florida Task Force 2 Katrina – New Orleans Deployment September 16th to September 30th 2005

Executive Summary

Florida task Force Two was deployed to New Orleans, Louisiana on September 16th 2005 at 1500 hrs. The team arrived in the City of New Orleans on September 17th 2005.

Operations in the City of New Orleans were vastly different from operations at Gulfport. While there were no “rules of engagement” in Gulfport, New Orleans presented the Task Force a set of new challenges. In addition, due to our arrival after the initial two weeks of operations, most logistical matters had already been addressed. Our mission became one of responding to IST’s requests for search and rescue while staying within the rules of engagement which varied depending on location.

The team was demobilized on September 28th and arrived at it’s POA on September 30th 2005 at 2000 hours.

Task Force Operations

Activation

Florida Task Force 2 was activated on September 16th 2005 .

On Site deployment

09/18/2005

OPS: Recon of East Chalmette area with Rescue Team manager and TFL from FLTF 1. Team was directed to Chalmette for primary and secondary searches. One squad sent to do 911 calls. En-route, we were redirected from Chalmette to search an area of GPS coordinates N29 56.094 W89 55.302.

RESULTS: Three adult living facilities all completed. Area west of GPS coordinates with single family homes 30 percent complete. 911 calls are 50 percent complete. Met with local Fire department and IST for follow up and plan for tomorrow’s mission

09/19/2005

OPS: Conducted helicopter overflight with Operations Chief Dave Wheeler over East Charmette to determine damage to seach area and to assess other areas for future searches. Discussed possible search areas with St. Bernard Parish Fire department Captain and assigned new area. TFL Juan Mestas met with IST South Branch Director Dave Fiero to report progress.



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RESULTS: Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with maps marked with areas searched and completed. Attended Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day.

09/20/2005

OPS: FLTF-2 was split in order to send half to go search in St. Bernard while the other half paired up with FL TF-1 to search in the Ninth Ward.

RESULTS: Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with maps marked with areas searched and completed. Attended Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day.

09/21/2005

OPS: FLTF-2 paired up with FL TF-1 to search in the Ninth Ward. Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with Maps marked with areas searched and completed. Coordinated efforts with FLTF1 keeping IST advised of progress Attended Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day.

RESULTS: Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with maps marked with areas searched and completed. Coordinated efforts with FLTF1 keeping IST advised of progress Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day.

09/22/2005

OPS: Continued operations in the Ninth Ward with FLTF-1.

RESULTS: Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with maps marked with areas searched and completed. Coordinated efforts with FLTF1 keeping IST advised of progress Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day. IST discussed the possibility of limiting operations during the next few days due to the storm threat of hurricane Rita.

09/23/2005

OPS: FLTF-2 assigned to Robertson Division. Area reconned yesterday by TFL and Rescue Team Managers. Search criteria set forth by IST to be followed. Many structures in search area show significant damage which extends past the 5 ½ foot criteria set forth by IST for search. Due to Hurricane Rita's approach, winds are above 20 mph causing safety concerns for search teams, in addition certain areas are shown to have power. Based on the above mentioned safety concerns, search efforts were discontinued by TFL's and confirmed by IST. Teams instructed to decon and return to BoO.



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RESULTS: Data entry of documentation from previous day turned in to IST, along with maps marked with areas searched and completed. Attended Planning Meeting with IST to discuss operations for tomorrow and go over statistics of the current day. FLTF-2 assisted IST in making plans for weathering Hurricane Rita and possibility of re-deployment to other parts of Louisiana.

09/24/2005

OPS: Originally, due to weather conditions, IST halted all search operations and ordered all teams to remain at the BoO until further notice. Due some improvement of wind and rain conditions, at 0945, IST called for another Operational Briefing and assigned FLTF-2 to conduct primary and secondary searches to the West Golf Division. The area is has known standing water in excess of three feet.

RESULTS: FLTF-2 began the search the area of West Golf but due to bad weather from Hurricane Rita. IST called off all search efforts for the day and ordered all teams back to BoO.

09/25/2005

OPS: FLTF-2 continued search and rescue efforts in West Golf Division. Yesterday's search was slowed due to an excess of three feet of standing water and the need to wear waders. The water had receded considerably today making search efforts much faster. Primary and thorough secondary searches were performed on homes affected by Hurricane Katrina. Homes appear to primarily have water damage with structural damage cause by uprooted trees and debris.

RESULTS: FLTF-2 completed search and rescue efforts in the West Golf Division. All homes searched, findings documented and reported to IST.

09/26/2005

OPS: FLTF-2 was assigned to Robertson Division along with California and Utah teams to search areas that met search criteria. Area recon showed several areas that had in excess of 8 feet of water. The water had subsided but certain areas still remained very muddy. The majority of these homes had a primary search completed by unknown agencies. FLTF-2 performed secondary searches of these residences or businesses. The rescue teams were instructed to be descriptive as to how they gained access to the buildings. If previously breached by another team, it was to be noted.

RESULTS: FLTF-2 completed about 60% of assigned areas. Four HR's were found and Kenyon Contractor was notified. Numerous animals were rescued by our search and rescue teams and turned over to SPCA for care.



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09/27/2005

OPS: Assignment was to complete the Robertson Division. The area left to search included single family residential, multi family dwellings along with industrial and business structures. Conditions for search improved due to dry weather. Some areas are still muddy but manageable with search vehicles or on foot. Nebraska, California and Utah are also assigned to this area and will assist in completing the entire division.

RESULTS: FLTF-2 completed the assigned area. One HR was found and the Kenyon Contractor was notified. Numerous animals were rescued by our search and rescue teams and turned over to SPCA for care. The entire Robertson Division was completed with the combined efforts of FLTF-2, Nebraska, California and Utah.

Demobilization

09/28/2005

Stand down day. Base of Operations taken down by Logistics and Ground Support unit. Vehicle inspections were completed and prepared for departure.

09/29/2005

Travel day. Task force will only travel 10 hours per travel plan. Team stayed in the Cabot Lodge in Gainesville.

09/30/2005

FLTF-2 was demobilized on arrival at POA in Miami was on September 30th 2005 at 2000 hours.

Task Force Support

All supporting agencies, from the IST, New Orleans Police department, to the National Guard to our water tender were outstanding.

Overall Issues

There were chain of command issues, perhaps related to poor means of communication. With the amount of supervisory personnel, observers etc. it was sometimes difficult to know who we were reporting to and operational assignments were being communicated to task forces by someone other than their direct supervisors.



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As opposed to our Gulfport deployment, where there were few resources available, we were greeted with a fully functioning logistics infrastructure.

Relative to the issues being brought forth by the news media recently that residents of New Orleans are coming home to find dead bodies and that FEMA teams exited too early, we have the following observation. Search teams were given very specific guidelines as to which homes to search (we are enclosing a scanned copy of those guidelines). This precluded search teams (if they followed the guidelines) from making entry and a thorough search in many homes. FEMA has not responded to this. Perhaps meeting with the local authorities and the media and explaining this would have prevented this from happening.

Best Practices/Lessons Learned

Due to the length of this deployment, many of our personnel received on-the-job training in areas other than their primary specialty, specially Command and General staff.

Cache Management/Equipment Performance and Recommendations

Already addressed in Katrina Gulfport deployment