



One Hundred Eighteenth Congress  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 10, 2024

The Honorable Lloyd Austin  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Secretary Austin:

The Committee on Homeland Security (Committee) is conducting oversight of the federal response to Hurricane Helene. Since Hurricane Helene's landfall on September 26, 2024,<sup>1</sup> the scale of mobilized resources, materiel, and personnel at the federal and state levels has been significant. The Committee seeks to better understand the use of military assets, the execution of Title 10 authorities, and how these efforts were coordinated in North Carolina, where the damage from Hurricane Helene is particularly acute.

On September 25, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper requested an Emergency Declaration under the Stafford Act and announced that "resources from the North Carolina National Guard" would be deployed to support impacted communities.<sup>2</sup> The following day, President Biden approved Governor Cooper's request, which allowed the state of North Carolina to receive reimbursement for some disaster-related costs incurred by the National Guard, such as search and rescue activities.<sup>3</sup> One-hundred seventy-five North Carolina National Guardsmen were activated by Governor Cooper by September 26.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requested that the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) provide trucking assets and "provide/stage initial 30 high-wheeled vehicles" to "move cargo and/or passengers, in support of disaster operations."<sup>5</sup> The Army Corps of Engineers' mission assignment was required to begin by September 27, while the DoD operational mission was required to be begin on September 29.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Hurricane Helene Makes Landfall in Florida*, NAT'L ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE, DATA, AND INFO. SERV., <https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/news/hurricane-helene-makes-landfall-florida> (last visited Nov. 4, 2024).

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, North Carolina Off. of the Governor, Governor Cooper Declares State of Emergency Ahead of Hurricane Helene (Sep. 25, 2024) available at <https://governor.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2024/09/25/governor-cooper-declares-state-emergency-ahead-hurricane-helene>.

<sup>3</sup> Press Release, Fed. Emergency Mgmt. Agency, 3617-EM-NC Initial Notice (Sep. 26, 2024) available at <https://www.fema.gov/disaster-federal-register-notice/3617-em-nc-initial-notice>.

<sup>4</sup> WCNC, *NC Gov. Cooper activates 175 National Guard soldiers due to Helene*, YOUTUBE (Sep. 26, 2024), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iSwXnXCsf00>.

<sup>5</sup> See *OpenFEMA Dataset: Mission Assignments – v2*, FED. EMERGENCY MGMT. AGENCY, <https://www.fema.gov/openfema-data-page/mission-assignments-v2> (last visited Nov. 4, 2024).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

Governor Cooper deployed an additional 378 National Guardsmen by September 28.<sup>7</sup> That same day, 3,200 federal personnel deployed for response efforts throughout multiple impacted states, including 800 from FEMA, and a number from the U.S. Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers.<sup>8</sup> On September 30, “more than 400” were activated by Governor Cooper.<sup>9</sup> President Biden also increased the cost share for National Guardsmen to 100 percent for 180 days by October 2.<sup>10</sup> By October 5, the number of federal personnel increased to 6,400, including 1,000 National Guard Bureau troops.<sup>11</sup> The intense breadth of Hurricane Helene’s impact requires significant DoD assets and personnel to assist in North Carolina’s immediate and long-term recovery.

To assist the Committee with its oversight of the federal response to Hurricane Helene, please provide the following documents and communications as soon as possible, but no later than 5:00 p.m. on December 24, 2024:

1. All documents and communications between or among any Department of Defense and FEMA, Department of Homeland Security, or the State of North Carolina’s employees or contractors, including but not limited to, e-mail, text messages, internal memoranda, and guidance, referring or relating to Title 10 requests for Hurricane Helene relief, response or recovery from September 23, 2024 to the present;
2. A document summarizing the timeline of when DoD received a Request For Assistance (RFA) by FEMA, with or without a Defense Coordinating Officer (DCO), and the interagency coordination and internal assessments that took place; and
3. Documents sufficient to show the roles, duties, and responsibilities of all DoD employees or contractors performing Hurricane Helene disaster relief, response, and recovery in North Carolina from September 23, 2024 to the present.

An attachment contains instructions for responding to this request. Please contact the Committee on Homeland Security Majority staff at (202) 226-8417 with any questions about this request.

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<sup>7</sup> *Supra* note 2.

<sup>8</sup> Press Release, Fed. Emergency Mgmt. Agency, FEMA, Federal Family Helene Response Update (Sep. 28, 2024) *available at* <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20240928/fema-federal-family-helene-response-update>.

<sup>9</sup> Press Release, North Carolina Off. of the Governor, An Unprecedented Response: State, Local and Federal Partners Surge Resources into Western NC Following Historic Damage from Hurricane Helene (Sep. 30, 2024) *available at* <https://www.ncdps.gov/news/press-releases/2024/09/30/unprecedented-response-state-local-and-federal-partners-surge-resources-western-nc-following>.

<sup>10</sup> Amy Lu and Ben Miller, *Biden ups federal cost share, support for Hurricane Helene recovery*, WVTM 13, Oct. 3, 2024, <https://www.wvtm13.com/article/biden-ups-federal-cost-share-support-for-hurricane-helene-recovery/62496439>.

<sup>11</sup> Press Release, Fed. Emergency Mgmt. Agency, FEMA, As Biden-Harris Administration Continues Search and Rescue, Response and Recovery Efforts Across Southeast, Federal Aid for Survivors Surpasses \$110 Million (Oct. 5, 2024) *available at* <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20241005/biden-harris-administration-continues-search-and-rescue-response-and>.

Secretary Austin  
December 10, 2024  
Page 3

Per Rule X of the U.S House of Representatives, the Committee on Homeland Security is the principal committee of jurisdiction for overall homeland security policy, and has special oversight functions of “all Government activities relating to homeland security, including the interaction of all departments and agencies with the Department of Homeland Security.”

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



MARK E. GREEN, M.D.  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security



ANTHONY D'ESPOSITO  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Emergency  
Management and Technology



DAN BISHOP  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight,  
Investigations, and Accountability

Encl.

cc: The Honorable Bennie Thompson, Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security

The Honorable Troy Carter, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Emergency Management and Technology

The Honorable Glenn Ivey, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability