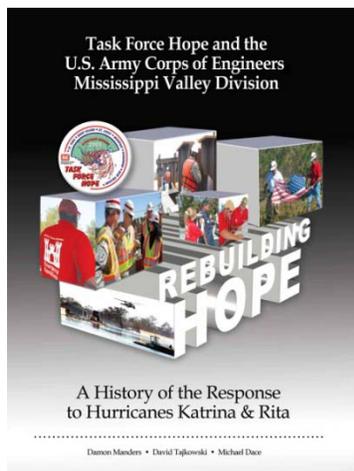


# November 2011



## ***Rebuilding Hope: Task Force Hope and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Mississippi Valley Division: A History of the Response to Hurricanes Katrina & Rita by Damon Manders, David Tajkowski & Michael Dace***

“Hurricane Katrina first made landfall on August 25, 2005, in South Florida where it hit as a Category 1 hurricane, with 80 mph winds. On August 29, Hurricane Katrina made landfall near Buras-Triumph, Louisiana with 125 mph winds, as a strong Category 3 storm. Hurricane Katrina made final

landfall near the mouth of the Pearl River, with the eye straddling St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana and Hancock County, Mississippi, on the morning of August 29 at about 9:45 AM CST.”

“Rita made landfall between Sabine Pass, Texas, and Johnson Bayou, Louisiana, at 02:38 CDT on September 24, 2005 as a Category 3 Hurricane with winds at 115 mph.”

“Hurricane Katrina was the most destructive hurricane in recorded history, causing at least \$81 billion in damages and costing roughly 1,500 lives. It was within the top three most intense hurricanes at landfall measured in central pressure and produced the largest waves ever measured in North America. Hurricane Rita, coming only three weeks after Katrina, was one of the largest hurricanes on record and was one of the most intense and destructive storms to hit the Gulf.”

The impact of the two hurricanes, in terms of lost lives, economic cost, number of responders involved, and lost confidence in government has been staggering. The humanitarian mission that resulted has been one of the largest ever attempted by the U.S. government, in general, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in particular. The Corps’ response spanned five states, directly involving three divisions and their districts, and indirectly involving many others. The Mississippi Valley Division had responsibility for FEMA missions in Louisiana and Mississippi.

The Corps of Engineers played a critical role in the story of the hurricanes. Many news reports and recent books have focused primarily on the poor federal response, the failure of the floodwalls, and mistakes made. But true life is both good and bad, with tragedy mixed with heroism, failures with triumphs. This was to become the largest response mission the Corps has ever performed, and the largest reconstruction mission it has ever attempted. “When all seemed hopeless, the Corps redoubled its efforts. It

worked to rebuild hope, hope in the future and hope in man's ability to come through disaster with greater strength and knowledge.”

Many people, both within the Corps and outside it, willingly gave of themselves to fight the resulting flood and help reconstruct the flooded areas. Altogether, more than 9,000 people, including 6,000 from nearly every Corps district and division, participated in the response mission of the Corps.

Because of the wide geographic area and mission areas, the authors of *Rebuilding Hope* have taken a topical approach to retelling the response and recovery story. The introduction begins with a brief history of the storms.

Part one discusses initial damage assessments, the formation of Task Force Hope, the restoration of navigation, and the response missions conducted for FEMA.

Part two focuses on the unwatering mission.

Part three discusses the work of Task Force Guardian in rehabilitating the hurricane protection system and includes descriptions of the investigations and their impact.

The conclusion discusses the state of recovery at the time the initial response to the storms ended in 2007. Although rebuilding continues, the manuscript ends here rather than describing what is a continuing story.

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