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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: Governor HALEY BARBOUR, (R-MS)
Lieutenant Governor MITCH LANDRIEU, (D-LA)
Representative WILLIAM JEFFERSON, (D-LA)
Secretary MICHAEL CHERTOFF
Department of Homeland Security
JAN CRAWFORD GREENBURG
Chicago Tribune

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
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BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Good morning. This is FACE THE NATION.

Two major stories this morning. The aftermath of the hurricane, of course, and overnight, it was announced that the chief justice of the Supreme Court, William Rehnquist, has died.

First, the latest on the hurricane. President Bush is sending in thousands more troops to help. The death toll in New Orleans alone is expected to climb into the thousands, and hundreds of thousands are homeless. Two hundred fifty thousand, a quarter of a million people, are now being sheltered in Houston, Texas.

The death of Justice Rehnquist leaves two vacancies on the court. The nomination hearings for John Roberts are expected to begin this week. We'll talk about the justice and what this means for the court later in the broadcast. But first now the latest on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

We begin this morning with John Roberts who, of course, has been in New Orleans reporting on this story all week.

John, just give us your idea of what the situation is right now.

JOHN ROBERTS reporting:

Well, Bob, it's certainly gotten a lot better for all of those people who were housed at the Superdome and the convention center and conditions that one National Guard colonel described to me as like being in a biohazard area. They've all been taken out of town to safer ground in Texas and to other states, but there are still an awful lot of problems on the ground.

Even though the extent of the human suffering at least in the center of the city may be diminishing somewhat, there were still perhaps thousands of people who were trapped in flooded homes. Rescue workers have to get out and they have to get to them and bring them back because by this point they've got to be running out of food and water.

The law and order situation downtown has gotten markedly better. In fact, the city is fairly quiet this morning. Those New Orleans police officers who have been just stretched way, way past the breaking point are now getting a little bit of help. I mean, things were so bad that two New Orleans Police Department officers actually committed suicide.

There is a lot of other work to do, too. The Army Corps of Engineers has repaired that breach in the 17th Street levee. Once they get another breach fixed, then they can get those pumping stations back online and start to get some of that water out, but that's a process that's still going to take up to three months.

But there was a little ray of hope yesterday at least for rescue workers who are the ones now who are occupying the downtown since most of the residents have been out. The mayor told me late yesterday he hopes to get at least a little bit of running water on which would certainly be just a small comfort that those guys really need. Bob.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, thank you very much, John. Be careful and keep up the good work. We really appreciate it.

ROBERTS: Thanks, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: We want to go next to Baton Rouge where the lieutenant governor of Louisiana, Mitch Landrieu, who has been flying all over the state for the past week helping in the rescue efforts is standing by.

Governor, it seems to me there's a lot of finger pointing now. Federal officials suggesting that maybe local officials are at fault. Local officials pointing the finger at the federal government. What do you make of that?

Lieutenant Governor MITCH LANDRIEU (Louisiana): Well, first of all, it's expected and it's typical. It happens every time there's a major catastrophe. But what I'm going to ask everybody to do is to stop that right now. The blame game is going to come. People are going to be criticized. People are going to be praised. Heroes are going to be made and demons are going to be created, but that doesn't save one life.

What we're trying to do right now in the water, on the ground to save as many people as we can. And quite frankly that discussion is getting in the way. What we really need to be about is getting people out of the water, getting people safe, and then in these centers where all of our citizens are, many of our friends and relatives and neighbors, make sure they have what they need to get back to some semblance of life.

This is a human tragedy. We're in the first act. It's about to get worse. This thing is not going to end for a long period of time. I know the public's attention will get riveted to something else, the story of the day, perhaps Chief Justice Rehnquist's death, but this is going to transform these people's lives and it's going to take a tremendous effort and that's what we need to be focused on right now. We'll get to the blame game. The commissions will do their thing in nine or 10 months from now. You know, everything will happen that's going to happen. The chips will fall where they may and that's important. But the blame game doesn't help, and, you know, I would really hope that on the federal level and the state levels we kind of stay focused on the task at hand.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you about this, Governor. We know that nobody can make a true account of what the casualties are at this point, but some officials are saying that the deaths in Louisiana alone may run into the thousands. Do you think that's realistic?

Lt. Gov. LANDRIEU: I think it's very possible. Bob, one of the stories that hasn't been told--and, of course, understanding the nature of the media, we want to cover the most sensational stories. There was a tremendous amount of looting and bad things that happened on the street, but the story that wasn't told was the hundreds of thousands of re--folks that were in the water that were engaging in incredible acts of kindness and generosity towards each other. People have been in the water for a long period of time inside the theater, if you will. Individuals have been rescuing each other. Local law enforcement and citizens have been working on that.

However, this storm has done a couple of things. Not only did we have the storm, which resulted in the flood that has resulted in fires, but then we had the levee break. There's been standing water for a long time. And it's been particularly difficult for everybody to get to the folks that are still in that standing water. So the water hasn't receded yet, so we don't know how many people were actually stuck in the houses, and it--this thing is so widespread. It's not

just in New Orleans. It's in the entire New Orleans metropolitan area. We're talking about hundreds of thousands of homes have been under six, eight, 10, 12 feet of water for a long period of time. And I think that, being realistic and looking at this straight in the eye--I think we have to expect significant deaths.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Governor, thank you so much for joining us this morning, and good luck. Thank you.

Lt. Gov. LANDRIEU: Great. Thanks for having us. We appreciate the coverage.

SCHIEFFER: And joining us now from New Orleans, the secretary of Homeland Security, Michael Chertoff.

Mr. Chertoff, let me just start with a question that I think every American is asking today: Why did it take so long to get this rescue operation under way?

Secretary MICHAEL CHERTOFF (Department of Homeland Security): Well, this was not just one catastrophe. It was actually two catastrophes. There was a hurricane of force 4 which slammed into Louisiana, slammed into Mississippi, caused enormous destruction. The hurricane started to depart the area on Monday, and then Tuesday morning the levee broke and the water started to flood into New Orleans. So the initial operation, to rescue people based on the hurricane, was all of a sudden complicated by the fact that we now had an ongoing flood situation which prevented resupply operations.

SCHIEFFER: Well, doesn't this have--mean that you're going to--at the very least going to have to start over on planning for things of this kind? I mean, the president said the results are unacceptable. I think a lot of people around the country would use even stronger language.

Sec. CHERTOFF: I think that the lesson of this hurricane, which we will clearly look at as we go over an after-action evaluation, is going to be very valuable in moving forward. I mean, this was an ultra-catastrophe, but we have to be prepared even for ultra-catastrophes, even things that happen once in a lifetime and once in a generation. So, yes, we will be studying that.

But I have to tell you, Bob, we are still in the emergency. People are--must take seriously the fact that we have enormous ongoing challenges which we have to address right now or we're going to have--continue to have serious problems. We have to resupply people. We have to get them to shelter. We have to get them educated. We have to get them semipermanent housing. We've got to dewater and clean up New Orleans. We've got an enormous challenge, and we've got one in Mississippi and in other parts of Louisiana and Alabama. So right now the focus has to be, let's make sure we are addressing urgent requirements going forward.

SCHIEFFER: How many people have been evacuated so far, to your knowledge? How many people are still there in these devastated areas, Mr. Secretary?

Sec. CHERTOFF: Well, fortunately, many people left before the hurricane. Unfortunately, not as many left as we would have liked. Right now we have over 120,000 people in shelters. On top of that there are people who found their own shelter, either with relatives or in hotels. We've got a lot of evacuations to continue to perform in New Orleans and other places, because as the waters recede, people start to come out of houses where they were hiding. We're going to continue to pursue that evacuation as a first priority over the next days.

SCHIEFFER: Mr. Secretary, it's a hard question to ask because I know you're in the middle of an emergency, but aren't you going to have to put some new people in place down there? It seems to me that this has just been a total failure. I know you're on the scene now and there are National Guard people in there, but the way this began it just seems to me that the country, after all these years and spending billions of dollars since 9/11, was totally unprepared for this.

Sec. CHERTOFF: Well, I think, Bob, the country actually was not totally unprepared. There are things that worked very well and those are things we're going to want to continue to reinforce. There are things that didn't work well. We're going to have to look back, figure out what those are and get them fixed. But what I want to emphasize is this. It is a mistake to think that right now we are at the point we can take a deep breath and a sigh of relief and start to go back and view that evaluation. We have got a lot more work to do and it would be a tragic shame if by changing our focus, we failed to focus on what we need to do going forward.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Mr. Secretary, thank you so much for joining us. I know you are busy. I'll let you get back to work.

Sec. CHERTOFF: All right. Thanks a lot, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: And we'll be back with more on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Continuing now with our coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, with us now from Jackson, Mississippi, Governor Haley Barbour.

Governor, what are the main problems you're facing down there now?

Governor HALEY BARBOUR (Republican, Mississippi): Well, of course, all our infrastructure was obliterated, Bob--electricity, telephone, roads. And we're getting people back going, first search and rescue, and golly, people did fabulously--firemen. The Coast Guard rescued 1,700 people in Mississippi by hoisting them off of roofs or out of trees. But we're just--really don't have a lot of infrastructure in a lot of places. We're getting food and water to people, got a million MREs in last night to distribute, but distribution is not as good as we want it to be.

SCHIEFFER: Governor...

Gov. BARBOUR: Things are not as fast as we want it to be.

SCHIEFFER: Governor, how far inland does this damage go?

Gov. BARBOUR: Yeah. This is not just a calamity for the coast. It's 80 miles across the coast of sheer destruction but it goes 150 miles north. We had 12 fatalities in Laurel, where they had 110-mile-an-hour winds. It's almost 100 miles inland.

SCHIEFFER: How many--do you have any idea of what the casualties are in your state and how many people have been displaced?

Gov. BARBOUR: We know there's more than 150 fatalities and we know there are likely to be more because there are mountains of debris that you just have to dig out, turn over, square

yard by square yard. The number displaced is in the tens of thousands, though a lot of them are in family--staying with some of their family or friends. We only have a few thousand who are in shelters. But the number of homes destroyed is going to be in excess of 10,000 that are uninhabitable.

SCHIEFFER: What do you need now most?

Gov. BARBOUR: Oh, Bob, we're--the food coming in last night was helpful, and we're going to have about 9,000 National Guard by the end of the day today. Our sister states have been fabulous. The federal government's been fabulous. In our state, they have worked and worked and worked. Never been a president in my knowledge like Bush who on Sunday said, 'Please evacuate.' I went on TV and begged people to evacuate. And if everybody had evacuated we wouldn't--we'd have the destruction but we wouldn't have the death toll.

But we're trying to turn the corner to get into recovery and to start thinking about rebuilding. The thing people got to understand here is the Mississippi Gulf Coast has got to be completely rebuilt. And I'll tell you, I'm dedicated and confident that while it's going to take time and it's not going to be easy and we'll make mistakes along the way, we're going to rebuild the Gulf Coast bigger and better than it's ever been. And we're going to recover all up into the state and when it's all said and done Mississippi is...

SCHIEFFER: All right, Governor.

Gov. BARBOUR: ...going to be a state that we're very proud of.

SCHIEFFER: All right, Governor. Well, you're certainly in our thoughts. I want to thank you, and I appreciate you taking this time to talk to us this morning.

Gov. BARBOUR: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: And let's go now to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Representative William Jefferson is there.

Congressman Jefferson, you were with President Bush when he toured much of the devastated area on Friday. What can you tell us about that?

Representative WILLIAM JEFFERSON (Democrat, Louisiana): The most horrific scenes I've ever seen. I couldn't imagine that we would have seen it exactly as we did. It looked as if a bomb had exploded along the coast of Mississippi. And then when we got to my home state of Louisiana and my home district, covered with water, just 80 percent of the city, just a massive devastation.

SCHIEFFER: Some people have said the slowness of the relief is a national disgrace. Did you talk to the president about that, and what did he say about it?

Rep. JEFFERSON: I did, and I think he had to agree with us that it was a totally unacceptable response. I know it was an overwhelming storm, but that, of course, meant that the tragedy was enormous and the need to respond was greater than ever before. Yet we waited days to get a response. It was very unorganized, and people suffered as a consequence of it.

SCHIEFFER: What do you think the reason for that was?

Rep. JEFFERSON: I just think they were inefficient, and I don't think they could decide which course to take. Initially the corps couldn't decide how to stop the--work at stopping the breach. FEMA couldn't decide how to coordinate with the states and couldn't decide how to accept help. And it was just a massive set of inefficiencies.

SCHIEFFER: What do you make of some of the statements that some people have said that the fact that so many of these victims were African-Americans may have had something to with this?

Rep. JEFFERSON: Well, I don't know what to make of that. We'll have to see how that plays out in the future. But I kind of think it's more attributable to the fact that they just couldn't get it together for us, and didn't get it together early enough. That made the difference here.

You know, the trouble with--the poorest people were left behind in the storm, and that's kind of the story of how life goes for the poorest people in the nation. In my district, their income tax credit was just paid to people, as you know, who work every day who don't reach the poverty level. It's the second highest payment level anyplace in the country other than one district in Mississippi. So it's a place we have a lot of working poor people who just had to make, you know, very difficult choices, as they do every day, about how to survive through this process. And in some cases, the choices they had to make at the end of the month, there's no money. You know, what do you do? Can you go out and buy a hotel room or pay for the trip? It's just impossible, massive problems. And many of them stayed, and consequently, they were there as victims in this thing much more than anyone else.

And the response, I don't believe, was so much attributable to the fact that the folks left behind were the poorest and they were African-American except that the government really didn't step up and do its job. It was just a totally unacceptable response. But the same thing, of course, is true through other parts of Louisiana in St. Bernard and Plaquemines when they were largely white where the response wasn't any good there, either.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, thank you very much for joining us, Congressman, and we want to wish you the best of luck. We're all thinking about you.

Rep. JEFFERSON: Well, thank you very much. Got tough times ahead of us. We just want the whole nation to help us pull it together for us. Help us to pull it together. We've got a great, magnificent city. We want to see it there and see it back strong.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank you. Thank you so much.

Rep. JEFFERSON: Thank you.

SCHIEFFER: Two hundred and fifty thousand people have been evacuated from this disaster area and moved into the state of Texas. Many of them were in Houston. Our CBS News correspondent Trish Regan is at the Astrodome in Houston.

Trish, what's the latest there?

TRISH REGAN reporting:

Well, here we have about 16,000 people that are being housed in the Astrodome right behind me. This is serving as the primary shelter, Bob, in the state of Texas, but there are a total of 97 shelters with about 125,000 evacuees in them. There are also about 100,000 people staying in

Texas hotels. So all in, we are looking at about a quarter of a million people that are here, when you're counting people who are staying with friends and relatives. And the state of Texas is concerned that they really cannot handle any more sufficiently. And they are urging FEMA to divert people to other states, states like Louisiana that has 50,000 people. Also Arkansas has 50,000 people there with 20,000 more on the way. Tennessee has 15,000.

I can tell you that the conditions inside the Astrodome are relatively good. People have food 24/7. They have cots to sleep on. They just put in a computer system yesterday so that people can go online and look for housing. They can also look for jobs. And that's the biggest concern right now. Where do people go from here?

Bob.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, this is a story that's going to go on and on. We also--thank you very much, Trish.

We also had a big story overnight. Chief Justice William Rehnquist died. I was thinking the other day, you know, earlier last week we had a hundred thousand people trampled crossing a bridge in Baghdad and we were able to devote only a minute or so on the evening news to that because of this overwhelming story that we're covering here back home. We're much in the same position today. Jan Crawford Greenburg of the Chicago Tribune, our legal analyst, is with us here this morning.

Just tell us, Jan, what's going to happen next on this story? What happens now that Justice Rehnquist has died?

Ms. JAN CRAWFORD GREENBURG (Chicago Tribune): Well, it's highly unlikely that we will see a nomination for his successor before his funeral which will take place at some point this week. The White House would like to have this time for people to reflect on the chief justice and the long service that he gave to this nation. And that raises the question of whether or not the hearings--we've got hearings that are scheduled to begin on Tuesday for John Roberts who the White House nominated to replace Justice Sandra Day O'Connor. Will those hearings be postponed for perhaps a week so that the nation can have that time to reflect on the chief justice?

Democrats at the end of the week were calling for those hearings to be postponed in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. They thought we should wait another week because of this tremendous natural disaster that is occupying everyone's attention. Those calls are certain to intensify, but also keep in mind that we've got a court, a session that begins the first Monday in October. That's right around the corner. Obviously we have two vacancies now. So there's going to be a resistance I think to postponing those hearings.

SCHIEFFER: Well, none of us have inside information as to what the president is going to do and who he is going to nominate but give us some of the scenarios here.

Ms. GREENBURG: Well, I think the White House probably doesn't know at this point because everything's been thrown up into the air. I mean, they've been expecting this vacancy for many, many months. The chief justice announced in October that he had a very serious form of thyroid cancer. They had expected him to retire at the end of June when the court finished up its business last term. He did not. He decided to stay on. They had vetted many nominees at that point. They were ready to go with a nomination, but with the retirement first of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, the nomination of John Roberts, everything has changed.

They could ask John Roberts to be chief justice. They could go back to the original list that they had in June, turn to Attorney General Alberto Gonzales, Larry Thompson, several judges on the 4th Circuit down in Virginia, Mike Luttig, Harvie Wilkinson, a judge in Texas, Priscilla Owen. All of those names are in play and that's something the White House now is going to have to sit down and think about in the weeks to come.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thanks so much, Jan.

And we'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally, a personal thought. We have come through what may have been one of the worst weeks in America's history, a week in which government at every level failed the people it was created to serve. There is no purpose for government except to improve the lives of its citizens. Yet as scenes of horror that seemed to be coming from some Third World country flashed before us, official Washington was like a dog watching television. It saw the lights and images, but did not seem to comprehend their meaning or see any link to reality.

As the floodwaters rose, local officials in New Orleans ordered the city evacuated. They might as well have told their citizens to fly to the moon. How do you evacuate when you don't have a car? No hint of intelligent design in any of this. This was just survival of the richest.

By midweek a parade of Washington officials rushed before the cameras to urge patience. What good is patience to a mother who can't find food and water for a dehydrated child? Washington was coming out of an August vacation stupor and seemed unable to refocus on business or even think straight. Why else would Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert question aloud whether New Orleans should even be rebuilt? And when he was unable to get to Washington in time to vote on emergency aid funds, Hastert had an excuse only Washington could understand: He had to attend a fund-raiser back home.

Since 9/11, Washington has spent years and untold billions reorganizing the government to deal with crises brought on by possible terrorist attacks. If this is the result, we had better start over.

For those who wish to make donations to the relief effort, you can call the American Red Cross at 1 (800) HELP NOW, which is 1 (800) 435-7669. CBS News will have continuing coverage of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

And that's our broadcast. Thanks for watching FACE THE NATION.