

- Lack of comprehensive national strategy and plans to unite communications plans, architectures, and standards.
- No guidance for worst case effects to the communications infrastructure.
- Federal response did not inform nongovernmental organizations what resources were required and how to connect local, State, and Federal emergency managers.
- There was no Federal coordinating entity with a complete understanding of the interdependency of critical infrastructure sectors.
- Focus on terrorism rather than all hazards.¹⁸²

G. New Leadership for the Department of Homeland Security

The discussion of Secretary Chertoff's response is in many ways the strongest part of the majority views. Unlike other areas, where the report eschews accountability, the majority makes affirmative findings that identify major shortcomings in Secretary Chertoff's actions. These findings are confirmed by the conclusions of GAO and the internal White House review.

Ultimately, though, the majority report does not draw the logical conclusion to its own findings. Former FEMA Director Michael Brown is the only federal official who has lost his job and been held accountable for the dismal federal response. He should not be alone. As the majority findings make clear, Secretary Chertoff provided ineffective leadership at a time of great crisis. We therefore recommend his replacement. We believe the President should appoint an official familiar with emergency management to the nation's top homeland security post.

V. THE NEED FOR AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION

Given the key gaps that remain in the Select Committee's work, we recommend the creation of an independent commission based on the model of the 9/11 Commission. The Select Committee has significantly advanced public understanding of the response to Hurricane Katrina. But it failed to surmount White House intransigence and rarely assigned accountability for mistakes. These shortcomings can only be addressed by the appointment of a truly independent commission.

¹⁸² *Id.*

The 9/11 Commission provides an excellent model. It examined fundamental questions, including whether advance warnings of the September 11 attacks were taken seriously, whether adequate preparation had been made for responding to such contingencies, and whether plans were executed to minimize the loss of American lives. The 9/11 Commission called the highest Administration officials to account, including Presidents Bush and Clinton, as well as Vice Presidents Cheney and Gore. The 9/11 Commission also obtained sworn testimony from various other White House officials, including National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice and National Security Council Counterterrorism Advisor Richard Clarke, among others.

This is exactly the type of forceful and independent investigation that the American people — and especially the residents of the devastated Gulf Coast region — deserve with respect to Hurricane Katrina.

During the course of its investigation, the 9/11 Commission received and reviewed more than 2.5 million pages of documents and over 1,000 hours of audiotape. The 9/11 Commission interviewed over 1,200 individuals in ten countries, and it issued a best-selling report recommending fundamental changes to the makeup of the federal government.

We commend Chairman Davis for his leadership of the Select Committee. He made numerous efforts to work with us, and he tried to approach the investigation in a bipartisan manner. But in the end, the model of congressional Republicans investigating a Republican White House has serious deficiencies. The Select Committee could not — or would not — insist on compliance when the White House resisted its requests for information. It failed to enforce its single subpoena to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld. Indeed, the Select Committee could not get a full accounting of withheld documents from even a single federal agency.

For these reasons, we conclude that only an independent commission with sufficient authority to obtain critical documents and other information from the Administration will be able to tell the full story of Hurricane Katrina. This endeavor is critical not only for historical and accountability purposes, but also to ensure that the nation will not falter again in the event of a future disaster.

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