

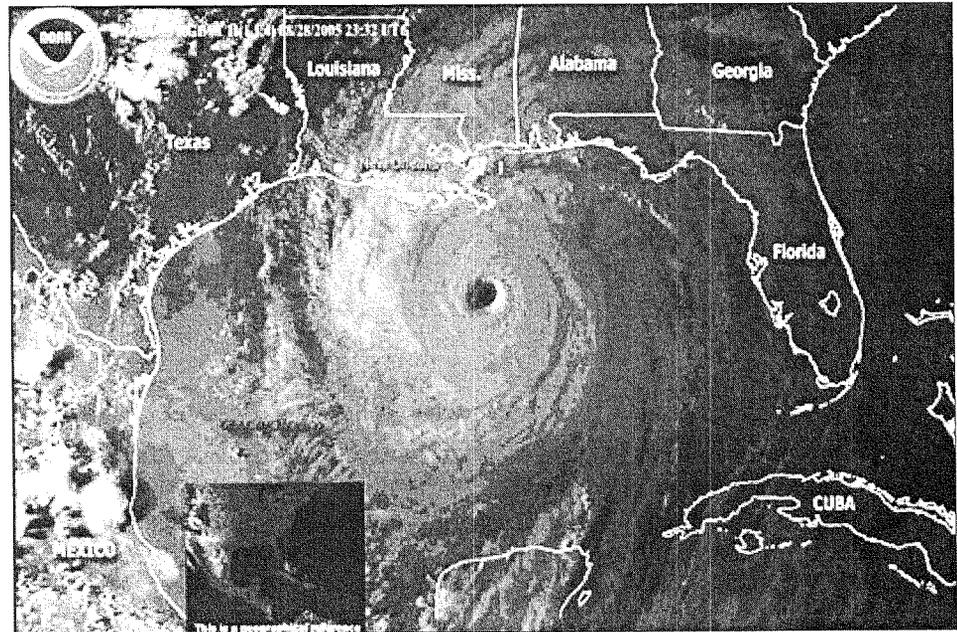
# Hurricane Katrina – A Perspective on Preparation

by LTC Karl Konzelman

*“If we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future.”*

— Sir Winston Churchill

Tuesday, August 23, 2005 was much like any other late summer day along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi and Louisiana; hot and humid. The kids and parents were focused on the new school year either about to begin or already in session. Little did anyone know that it was the beginning of a chain of events that would end the golden age for one of America’s oldest and historic cities, New Orleans, and utterly destroy some of the Nation’s premier oceanfront property in Mississippi. For it was August 23, in the Southeastern portion of the tranquil and hospitable Bahamas, that the 12<sup>th</sup> tropical depression of the season formed;<sup>1</sup> less than 24 hours later the tropical depression would turn into a tropical storm named Katrina (see Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> Before Katrina dissipated into the great interior of the United States, it would be “the most destructive natural disaster in American History, it would also prove to be one of the deadliest.”<sup>3</sup> Covering a swath of over 90,000 square miles, she would leave a patch of destruction from Florida into Alabama before loosing her total lethality on Mississippi’s Gulf Coast and the city of New Orleans. Katrina would leave a death toll between 1,300 and 1,800, with another 3,000



**Figure 1**  
*Hurricane Katrina bearing down on Louisiana and Mississippi*

missing, and an estimated damage of almost \$100 billion.<sup>4</sup> Two staggering totals the Nation has ever seen in both lives and dollars not matched in any other disaster, natural or man made.

The Congressional Bipartisan Committee’s final report into the preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina had the dramatic title, in bold capitalized lettering, with flooded homes in New Orleans behind it: “A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE.” And then in smaller text below it read: “Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina” (see

Figure 2). The title does beg the questions: Whose failure of initiative was it? What preparations were made? And what mitigation was available before Katrina hit?

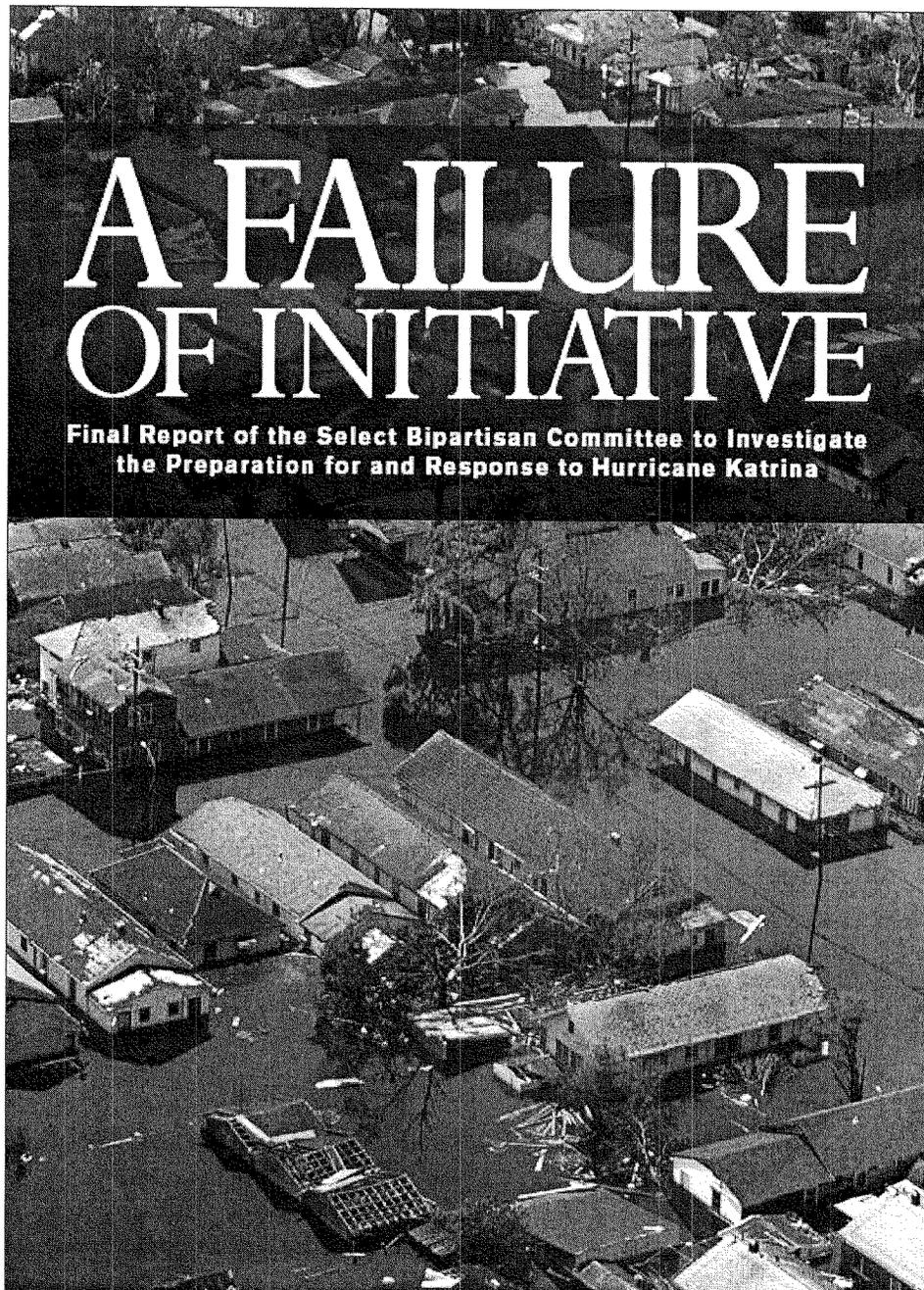
The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act for disaster mitigation and preparation provides the president of the United States with the authority to declare and provide for declarations for catastrophes, natural or man made, to states affected and overwhelmed by a catastrophe. The Stafford Act authorizes the president three types of declarations prior to a disaster: (1) direct the Department of Defense (DoD) to resource for dis-

aster response that could result from a catastrophic event; (2) direct assistance to fire emergencies that threaten all public property, forests, and grasslands with equipment, supplies and personnel as required; (3) authorize the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to position both personnel and supplies for emergency situations that are imminent for human health and safety reasons when no declaration has been issued.<sup>5</sup>

## “What measures were taken along the Gulf Coast before Katrina hit?”

What measures were taken along the Gulf Coast before Katrina hit? On Friday, August 26, two days before Katrina was scheduled to make landfall, both Governor Haley Barbour of Mississippi and Governor Kathleen Blanco of Louisiana declared states of emergencies in their states.<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Louisiana National Guard initiated the mobilization of 2,000 soldiers and airman and activated its Joint Operations Center to assist with coordination throughout the state for disaster response. The Mississippi National Guard was activated by Governor Barbour, primarily Military Police and engineers totaling 750 personnel. Mississippi also alerted and staffed their Emergency Operations Center to coordinate and mitigate any relief operations within their state. Mississippi and Louisiana did not stop with their National Guard forces, both states also alerted the state police forces for any and all contingency operations resulting from Katrina.<sup>3</sup>

The preparations and risk mitiga-



**Figure 2**  
*Front Cover of “A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE, Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina”*

tion were not limited to the National Guard and state police. On Saturday, August 27 Governor Blanco requested an emergency declaration in Louisiana due to Hurricane Katrina’s approach, and later that same day President Bush declared an emer-

gency for the state of Louisiana. The next day, Sunday, August 28, as Katrina intensified, Governor Blanco made another request to the president to “declare an expedited major disaster for the state of Louisiana as Hurricane Katrina, a category V

Hurricane, approaches our coast... beginning on August 28, 2005...<sup>6</sup> President Bush declared Louisiana a major disaster area the next day.

Sunday, August 28 was also a busy day for Mississippi and its citizens. President Bush, at Governor Barbour's request, proclaimed an emergency declaration for the state of Mississippi, and following another request from the governor declared Mississippi a major disaster area on Monday, August 29.<sup>3</sup>

Evacuations were underway in both states, but not at the speed or urgency that local, state and federal officials

would have hoped. As a result, President Bush also had a press release that stated "we cannot stress enough the danger this hurricane poses to Gulf Coast communities. I urge all citizens to put their own safety and the safety of their families first by moving to safe ground. Please listen carefully to instructions provided by state and local officials."<sup>7</sup>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) was also heavily engaged in Katrina mitigation/preparation. FEMA was holding daily video conferences with the potentially impacted states

regarding the preparation of supplies, and the movement of relief personnel and equipment forward to bring immediate relief to the affected areas.

FEMA was also very busy with the pre-positioning of supplies in what would be the largest stock pre-position operation in U.S. history. The historic level of supplies included 11 million bottles of water, almost 19 tons of ice, nearly 6 million Meals Ready to Eat, plus tarps, medical supplies, fuel, generators, blankets and cots.<sup>9</sup>

Prior to Katrina's landfall, and while all of these other preparations were underway at the local, state and Federal levels, the National Guard dispersed their helicopters away from the storm's hazards to ensure their availability after Katrina cleared the coastal areas. Due to high winds following in the storm's wake, the breached levees in New Orleans would not be known until late Tuesday, August 30, almost 24 hours after the eye of Katrina had passed inland.

Most of the nation and the press seemed completely unaware of the life and death struggles surrounding the city of New Orleans the day after the storm had passed. One headline read, "Amid the Devastation, Some Feel Relief." The article went on to say, "The idea of the Big One, a hurricane doomsday scenario of floods and death, has long haunted this city, and Hurricane Katrina looked to many like its terrifying incarnation. But on Monday evening, as crowds began filtering back onto city streets and inspecting the damage from glass-shattering winds and surging water, many here said with conviction that they were relieved." The article also went on to say, "Still, there was a palpable sense of relief among some longtime city residents that New Orleans, which sits six to eight feet lower than the surrounding waters, had avoided a far worse catastrophe."<sup>10</sup>

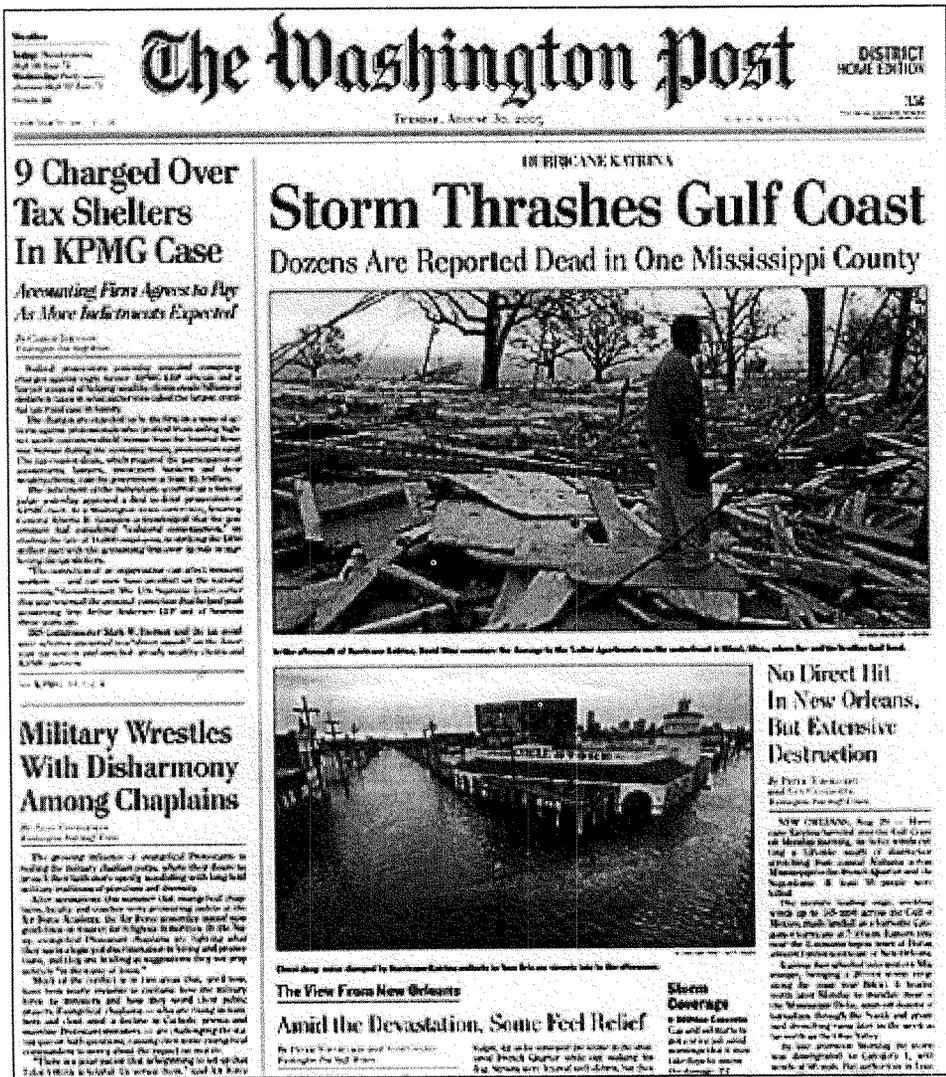


Figure 3  
Front Page Washington Post, August 30, 2005

The true picture of what was happening in New Orleans was not widely known until late Tuesday afternoon, when aerial footage began to filter in and the magnitude of the breached levees became apparent. The Louisiana National Guard Headquarters, located at the historic Jackson Barracks, was flooded, and most of the staff had relocated to the Superdome where many civilians had already evacuated for safety. It was late Tuesday, August 30 when the first major requests for help began to filter in. National Guard helicopters were the first on the scene and began extractions immediately. In the end, the National Guard alone saved almost 17,000 people by air and thousands more by boat.<sup>11</sup>

Planning for future operations requires gathering lessons learned from the past, and this is especially so for the government. The political discourse, however, often precludes any real changes as partisan finger pointing clouds what is best for the nation. What could the local, state and federal officials have done better? Should the recovery effort have been more centralized? If yes, who should have the lead: FEMA, Northern Command (NORTHCOM), the National Guard Bureau, the affected state(s)? Where should the overall command and control reside: the president, state governor, director of FEMA? These are just a few of the questions that the DoD is grappling with right now.

The Commission on National Guard and Reserve Matters, Chaired by MajGen (Ret) Arnold Punaro, addressed some of these issues in its Second Report to Congress, dated 01 March 2007. The report had 23 recommendations for better use and incorporation of the Guard and Reserves in the DoD. Seven recommendations specifically address equipping, command and control, budgeting for domestic incidents

within the Guard and Reserves, and better integration of the forces for relief operations. Some of the recommendations stated: (1) the DoD needs to include civil support requirements in their programming and budgeting; (2) the commander of NORTHCOM needs to advocate for civil support requirements; (3) the

“Most of the nation and the press seemed completely unaware of the life and death struggles surrounding the city of New Orleans the day after the storm had passed.”

Department of the Army and Department of the Air Force must include budget information for both civil support training and equipment requirements in the National Guard in their budgets; (4) Laws, plans and procedures need to be established to allow National Guard State Adjutant Generals (TAG), acting on Federal duty, to retain and continue in their state duties and be exempt from Posse Comitatus Act;<sup>12</sup> (5) the DoD needs to develop plans that incorporate the National Guard and Reserves as first military responders and federal forces in a unified effort.<sup>13</sup>

In early 2006, the Department of the Army initiated a hurricane preparation schedule. The meetings were hosted by the Army Operations Division (G3) and were designed to ensure that the 13 states and territo-

ries most likely to be impacted by a hurricane had all of the equipment they may/would require for a disaster response. The 13 states/territories are Alabama, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, Florida and Texas. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for equipment transfers and loans was drafted, staffed and signed between the three principal organizations: Department of the Army G3, Director of the Army National Guard and the Chief of the Army Reserve. The MOA also addressed command and control within the states, response procedures and the reimbursement of funds. The United States Army Reserve's (USAR) role is often overlooked in civil support operations. It is not widely known that the USAR has a Regional Readiness Center aligned to each of the 10 FEMA regions and plays a very important role in support to all civil military support operations.

In preparation for the 2007 hurricane season, which the forecasters are predicting to be busier than average, the principles from the Army G3, Army National Guard and Army Reserve are once again drafting an MOA. The important work they are doing with vital equipment transfers will plug any gaps in the National Guard equipment shortages, resulting from the operational tempo of the Guard and Reserves in the states and around the globe, for the 13 hurricane states most likely to be impacted by a disaster from the sea. These equipment transfers are more important than ever as the National Guard and Reserves continue to move away from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve in support of the Global War on Terror.

In the end, Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster of biblical proportions, much like the great Mississippi

flood of 1927 and the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. The raw images of flood ravaged neighborhoods made many American citizens feel helpless and angry. Could more have been done? Are changes needed in disaster management at local, state and federal levels? Everyone agrees that more could have been done and we need an overhaul to our response methods. Will the governmental bureaucracy allow the changes, who will implement them and can it be done in the current political environment? The preface to the Bipartisan Committee's report ended with this statement in bold letters: "IF 9/11 WAS A FAILURE OF IMAGINATION, THEN KATRINA WAS A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE. IT WAS A FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP." These are not the kind of words that would inspire an end to the bickering over the past and the present to ensure we have a better response in the future.

### End Notes

1. At 5 p.m. EDT on Aug. 23, 2005, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center issued the following: "TWELFTH DEPRESSION OF THE SEASON FORMS OVER THE BAHAMAS; TROPICAL STORM WARNINGS ISSUED." The 12th tropical depression of the 2005 Atlantic hurricane season would go on to become Hurricane Katrina, the most costly hurricane to strike the United States.
2. At 11 a.m. EDT on Aug. 24, 2005, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) National Weather Service, National Hurricane Center issued the following: "DEPRESSION

"In the end, Hurricane Katrina was a natural disaster of biblical proportions, much like the great Mississippi flood of 1927 and the San Francisco earthquake of 1906."

STRENGTHENS INTO TROPICAL STORM KATRINA OVER THE CENTRAL BAHAMAS."

Tropical Depression 12 spins into Tropical Storm Katrina packing maximum sustained winds near 40 mph.

3. *A FAILURE OF INITIATIVE, Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina*, February 15, 2006. The House of Representatives approved H.Res. 437, on 15 September 2005, to investigate both the preparation and response to Hurricane Katrina. The Committee was made up of 11 members, Republicans and Democrats. The report focused primarily on what happened one week before Katrina hit and two weeks after the storm cleared.
4. The Federal Response to Hurricane Katrina Lessons Learned February 2006.
5. The Disaster Mitigation Act, 42 U.S.C. is most commonly referred to as the Stafford Act. The Act established "Major disaster" as a tornado, earthquake, hurricane, fire, flood, landslide and other catastrophic incident "in any part of the United States." The Stafford Act also sets the boundaries for the disaster "of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected governments and that federal assistance is needed."
6. Letter from Kathleen Babineaux Blanco, Governor of Louisiana, to George W. Bush, President of the United States (August 27, 2005).
7. The White House, "President Discusses Hurricane Katrina..." news release, August 28, 2005.
9. Federal Emergency Management Agency, Commodity status by site as of August 28, 2007.
10. Headline and partial article from the Washington Post on August 30, 2005.
11. Dolinar, Lou, "Katrina: What the Media Missed," Real Clear Politics, May 23, 2006, available at [http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2006/05/katrina\\_what\\_the\\_media\\_missed.html](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2006/05/katrina_what_the_media_missed.html).
12. Posse Comitatus Act was passed on June 16, 1878, 18 U.S.C. 1385 Federal law. The Act prohibits Federal military troops and National Guard soldiers (and Air Force/Air National Guard added in 1956) from acting in a law enforcement capacity within the boundaries of the United States.
13. Commission on the National Guard and Reserves, Second Report to Congress March 1, 2007. In the National Defense Act of 2007, Congress tasked the Commission on the National Guard & Reserves to recommend changes in policy, law, regulation, and practice to ensure that the National Guard and reserves are

organized, trained and equipped, compensated, and resourced to best meet the national security requirements of the United States. Based on their interim report, dated March 1, 2007, the Commission identified 23 recommendations.

### **Author's Biography**

**Lieutenant Colonel Karl Konzelman** currently serves in the office of the Assistants to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for National Guard and Reserve Matters. LTC Konzelman is a graduate of Southeast Missouri State University (SEMO),

*TOURO University, and the Army Command and General Staff College. He was commissioned through the SEMO Reserve Officers' Training Corps program, Distinguished Military Graduate (DMG), in 1990 and consequently has served in a wide variety of command and staff positions as a Regular Army Officer and a Guardsman on active duty. He has served extensively in Central and South America to include a deployed Task Force to El Salvador in 1993. His assignments include the Republic of Panama, Fort Clayton (Platoon Leader, Shop Officer and Detachment Commander); the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division (Assault), Fort Campbell*

*(Battalion S4, Battalion S3, Company Commander); and The Army Test and Evaluation Command, Alexandria, Virginia. His National Guard jobs include Test Officer, Reserve Component Automation System (RCAS); Executive Officer RCAS; Executive Officer NGB J6; and, most recently, Aide/AXO to the Director of the Army National Guard, Army National Guard Readiness Center, Arlington Virginia. LTC Konzelman has received the Meritorious Service Medal (with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters), Army Commendation Medal (with Oak Leaf Cluster), Army Achievement Medal (with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters), and Humanitarian Service Medal.▼*

## **Logistics Spectrum Publication Schedule**

In order to make the *Spectrum* a true international journal, we are looking for more articles from around the world. We would like to hear from our SOLEurope and Asian/Pacific friends. If you've considered writing an article for the *Spectrum*, now is the time to do it! Below is the *Spectrum* publication schedule through the 2nd quarter

of 2008. If you would like to write an article that fits into one of the following themes, please contact the appropriate Theme Coordinator. We will, however, accept articles that do not fit into one of the scheduled themes. For all general articles, please send them to [maya.detzel@ae.ge.com](mailto:maya.detzel@ae.ge.com).

<b>Publication Date</b>	<b>Deadline for Articles</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Theme Coordinator</b>	<b>e-Mail address</b>
3rd quarter 2007 (September 1)	July 1, 2007	Logistics Transformation	Louis A. Kratz	<a href="mailto:louis.kratz@lmco.com">louis.kratz@lmco.com</a>
4th quarter 2007 (December 1)	October 1, 2007	Performance Based Logistics	Anthony E. Trovato, CPL	<a href="mailto:atrovato@socal.rr.com">atrovato@socal.rr.com</a>
1st quarter 2008 (March 1)	January 1, 2008	Logistics Standards	Peter R. Benson	<a href="mailto:peter.benson@eccma.org">peter.benson@eccma.org</a>
2nd quarter 2008 (June 1)	April 1, 2008	Medical Logistics	Dr. Joseph Curtis	<a href="mailto:curtisj@usa.redcross.org">curtisj@usa.redcross.org</a>