



'HELP US, PLEASE'

AFTER THE DISASTER, CHAOS AND LAWLESSNESS RULE THE STREETS



STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT DUKE

NEW ORLEANS: A distraught Angela Perkins screams "Help us, please!" outside the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center on Thursday. A cloud of desperation settled over the hundreds of hungry, homeless people at the Convention Center, creating an atmosphere of fear and hopelessness.

Local leaders call relief efforts too little, too late

By Jed Horne
Staff writer

New Orleans on Thursday pulled back from an almost complete collapse of public order, a near anarchy that had supplanted receding floodwaters as the gravest threat to the city's still tenuous recovery.

Evidence that authorities were beginning to get a grip on gargantuan problems varied from the successful and orderly evacuation of Baptist Mercy Hospital to a sharp reduction in the menacing bands of idle refugees, many of them intent on looting that had haunted Uptown neighborhoods in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

With thousands of National Guard troops being mustered to join the Louisiana guardsmen already deployed to the hurricane-stricken city, one of the early signs of the beefed-up military presence was a Blackhawk helicopter

touching down near the Riverwalk to deliver water to some 1,000 refugees still sheltered in the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center.

The mounting relief effort did not allay concerns from local officials that it remained too little and mighty late. And Thursday offered continuing evidence that the city's flirtation with sheer chaos was not yet over: a medivac helicopter scared off by gunfire as it attempted to airlift patients from a downtown hospital; the Oakwood Mall reduced to charred rubble after looters broke in and set fires throughout the sprawling complex; corpses floating in flooded streets; scores of police officers simply abandoning their posts to flee a city gone at least temporarily mad.

State Police Cmdr. Henry Whitehorn said some troopers had resigned rather than accept an assignment to go into New Orleans.

He was uncertain how many, but I

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STAFF PHOTO BY ALEX BRANDON

NEW ORLEANS: Renowned singer Charmaine Neville weeps Thursday after telling New Orleans police Capt. Jeff Winn how she and others were attacked in her home after the hurricane.

Blanco demands thousands of troops

By Paul Purpura and Ed Anderson
Staff writers

BATON ROUGE - Thousands of National Guard troops are converging on southeastern Louisiana, and Gov. Kathleen Blanco on Thursday called for no less than 40,000 troops to be on the ground. But it remained unclear how many soldiers will be assigned to quell the violence that is sweeping the New Orleans area.

If we need more, I will ask for it, Blanco said Thursday in Baton Rouge. Looting and lawlessness will not be tolerated.

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