

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

After Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, conditions on the ground remain dire and it appears there are fundamental problems associated with the recovery efforts to date.

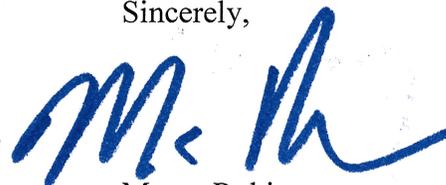
As you are aware, FEMA plays a significant supporting role in providing targeted federal assistance to local government officials. There are significant logistical concerns regarding the urgent actions your administration is taking to bring relief to our fellow Americans on the island of Puerto Rico. There is no clear command, control, and communication between local officials on the ground and federal agencies, and many roads and bridges remained unpassable, making it even more difficult for repair crews to restore power and communications to areas of the island outside of San Juan. As a result, significant lifesaving resources are sitting in containers at the Port of San Juan, with no way to move that assistance to those who need it most.

This unique situation requires a well-coordinated response led by the Department of Defense (DOD), which is the only entity capable of executing a recovery effort of this scale and complexity. DOD is internationally recognized for its humanitarian relief efforts and its expertise is required now more than ever. I urge you, as commander-in-chief, to make DOD the lead agency in the ground phase of recovery efforts.

I commend DOD's decision to appoint a brigadier general as the lead military official in charge of the humanitarian assistance mission in Puerto Rico, but time is of the essence. The logistical chain in Puerto Rico isn't just broken, at this point it is virtually non-existent. Unless DOD steps in quickly to establish emergency logistical assistance, it is my fear this situation will deteriorate rapidly.

Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to working with you on recovery efforts.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator