

Fallujah, Louisiana

Posted by

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PEJ News - C. L. Cook - Night is falling again in New Orleans, and reports aired by CNN paint a desperate picture. Without water, power, and hope for immediate rescue, the people stranded in the city face another night of thirst, hunger, deprivation, and now, reportedly, marauding armed gangs, and at least one insane sniper.

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C. L. Cook

PEJ News

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The dank waters of Lake Pontchartrain are oozing through the streets, carrying with them the industrial detritus of modern urban life. The chemical soup includes human and animal corpses, masses of rotting vegetation, and indigenous wildlife that includes alligators and poison snakes.

From the rooftop of a local police station house, a CNN reporter says police are dug in, the streets too dangerous to venture into. Police say there are significant numbers of missing officers, "deserters" as they termed it; all making support and evacuation of those trapped in the city impossible. A police spokesperson characterized those armed elements as the "worst of the worst." There have been, what one official termed, "running gun battles" between police and marauders.

National Guard, green replacements for the thousands stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a contingency of newly returned reservists from Iraq, are being mobilized and reportedly given [? shoot to kill?](#)

orders. Those trying to leave the city on foot are turned back at roadblocks, left to wander towards what high ground they can find, hoping to avoid armed thugs said to be threatening life

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and limb in all manner. Tourists are said to be favoured targets for people desperate for money and goods to barter for food and water.

A hospital Medi-vac helicopter came under fire today from, what must be assumed a madman with a rifle. Inside the hospitals, flooded morgues meant stacking bodies in stairwells and wherever else they could.

The highways leading out of the city are currently populated with untold numbers of refugees, all without water and food. Cars have been hijacked, and police in neighbouring states are stopping cars coming from New Orleans, some stolen and jammed with looted goods.

House speaker, Dennis Hastert wondered aloud early today whether rebuilding the city should even be attempted, a remark he spent the rest of the day tap-dancing into an unconditional guarantee of the federal government's determination to do whatever is necessary to rebuild.

The official line, heard repeatedly from government officials coming under increasing criticism for the laggard response to the crisis is to say: "This is no time for laying blame." That may be the case, but blame will be assigned. The failure of the federal government to provide adequate budgets to levee reconstruction has been a well-publicized sore point in Southern Louisiana for years.

George W. Bush was again [a day late and a dollar short](#) in response to the disaster. He spent the day after attending a ceremony in San Diego commemorating the defeat of the Japanese 60 years ago.

The anarchy and misery is more familiar coming from far-flung corners of the world, scenes increasingly frequent in recent years.

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Chris Cook hosts [Gorilla Radio](#) , broad/webcast from the University of Victoria, Canada. He?s also a contributing editor to PEJ News. You can check out the [GR Blog here](#)

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