



## **CNN NEWSNIGHT AARON BROWN**

### **Police Chief of New Orleans Announces Resignation; Oil Industry Benefiting From Hurricanes?**

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AARON BROWN, CNN ANCHOR: Good evening again, everyone. Hurricane Rita and Katrina are both generating headlines tonight along the Gulf Coast and in Washington.

Anderson back in New Orleans, where the chief of police abruptly announced his retirement today. He didn't give a reason, though there is no shortage of theories. More on that in a moment -- Anderson.

ANDERSON COOPER, CNN ANCHOR: Yes, especially among the police officers here you talk to.

I just want to show you a little bit where we are. We are in the Lakeview section of New Orleans. Behind me, these are the kind of things you see just about on any street you go down in this area. There is a car that has been slammed into a house, also into a tree. And if you look at this from the -- I mean, it just -- it's a dash of color on this otherwise beige street. This entire street is devoid of color, because everything is, except for this car, is coated in just this layer of grime and dirt and residue from the water that has dried up, Aaron. You see street after street like this here, especially in the Lakeview section.

We will show you more a little bit later on, Aaron.

A. BROWN: Anderson, thank you. We will get back to that in a minute.

First, a quick look at the some of the headlines that made news in the Gulf today.

Texas officials reported two more deaths from Hurricane Rita, a collapsed house the cause. The death toll from Rita stands at nine tonight.

President Bush said today that victims of Rita will be eligible for \$2,000 per household in emergency aid, the same as victims of Katrina. And they will need it. In Texas, an emergency official said today that many of storm's victims are living like cavemen, without electricity, water, gasoline or other relief, some blaming red tape for the delays.

The political fallout from Katrina. Those who are out of work for political reasons now stands at two. Mike Brown, who ran FEMA and today stoutly defended himself before Congress, was the first to go. And today, the New Orleans police superintendent, Eddie Compass, made it number two. We will hear from Mr. Brown in a bit, Mr. Compass first.

And while Katrina must have played some part in his decision to quit, there were signs before Katrina, too.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

BROWN (voice-over): For weeks, he's been the face and the often emotional voice of city's besieged police department. While most of his cops performed well, a fair number deserted. Some may have broken the law.

EDDIE COMPASS, SUPERINTENDENT, NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT: We were fighting odds that you couldn't imagine. We had no food. We had no water. We ran out of ammunition. We had no vehicles. We were fighting in waist-deep water that was infected and pollute.

A. BROWN: And, sometimes, he was flat-out wrong.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP, "OPRAH")

COMPASS: We have little babies in there, little babies getting raped.

OPRAH WINFREY, HOST: No, no, no, no.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

A. BROWN: But today's resignation may well have its roots not only in the chaos of Katrina, but also in the simmering friction between the police chief and the city's mayor, Ray Nagin. They were longtime friends who wound up at the top of the city's power elite.

MICHAEL PERLSTEIN, "THE NEW ORLEANS TIMES-PICAYUNE": They were certainly warm and had a great working business relationship. That's become strained, not just by Katrina, but, in recent months, by a stubborn murder rate.

BROWN: In fact, New Orleans business leaders who backed Mr. Nagin in his bid to win the mayor's job in the first place are said to have been livid over the fact that the city's murder rate has skyrocketed and that corruption, most of it low-level, was rampant.

So, Superintendent Compass was in the line of fire even before the perfect storm.

PERLSTEIN: The murder rate stayed persistently high. And that's the one crime category that everyone reads about. That scares off investment, business leaders. And it became quite a very troublesome public-relations problem for the city, in addition to just a

general state of unease among citizens.

BROWN: Add to that some criticism from some of his own officers, like this one, who did not want to be identified on camera.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We had nothing to work with in advance. The chief, I'm sure -- I have met the man many times. And he's a hardworking, very committed man. But no matter how hardworking and committed any of the people were beforehand or during, our poor planning really, really broke us down and I think cost some lives.

BROWN: When he took over as police chief three years ago, Mr. Compass said he wanted to be -- quote -- "an agent of change." Today, he said, he would go in the direction "God has planned for me."

(END VIDEOTAPE)

A. BROWN: There was this as well from the chief today. In an interview with the "Times-Picayune" newspaper, he gave some detail about the tribunals that will hear the cases of the nearly 250 police officers, roughly 15 percent of the force, who left their posts without permission during Katrina and its aftermath. Four of his assistant chiefs will sit on the tribunal. They will decide which officers were outright deserters and which had legitimate reasons for not showing up for work. The officers will have the right to appeal the decisions.

Katrina did what many disasters do. It brought out the best in people and it brought out the worst, the police no exception. Last week, we reported on accusations of looting by some of the very officers who were supposed to be keeping New Orleans safe from looters.

Tonight, new details to report, again, correspondent Drew Griffin.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

DREW GRIFFIN, CNN INVESTIGATIVE CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): His account last week was shocking, eight New Orleans police officers holed up on the 10th floor of his Canal Street hotel, drinking and eating by day, looting by night.

OSMAN KHAN, HOTEL MANAGER: Oh, yes. They would probably leave around 9:00, 10:00 at night and come back around 4:30 in the morning.

GRIFFIN (on camera): And what did you see them come back with?

KHAN: Oh, everything from Adidas shoes to Rolex watches.

GRIFFIN: Just lots of it?

KHAN: Oh, lots of it.

GRIFFIN: After six days, Osman Khan says the officers left.

KHAN: In their cop cars, they put so much stuff that barely -- the truck was almost hitting the ground. So, when they drove off, when they drove off, you could see like the car hitting the ground. That's how much stuff they had.

GRIFFIN: CNN has now obtained this videotape backing up parts of Khan's story. It is video taken on the Sunday after the storm, when the hotel was surrounded by water and the hotel engineer was telling a reporter about a threatening police officer on the 10th floor.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: They have been the biggest problem. They -- right now, it seems like we're being held hostage.

GRIFFIN: The reporter from WAFB-TV in Baton Rouge and a photographer from WAFF-TV in Huntsville, Alabama, decided to confront the officers. They climbed 10 stories up the fire escape. This is what happens next.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Excuse me. I'm the engineer of the building.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I'm (INAUDIBLE) Excuse me, sir.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Are you a New Orleans police officer?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Yes, sir. Excuse me.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Do you have a badge?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Hey, Keith (ph). Keith!

I am going to ask you one more time to move.

(CROSSTALK)

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: I am going to ask you one more time to move.

GRIFFIN (on camera): That confrontation took place here on the 10th floor fire escape at this door. Osman Khan says, while they were here, an officer armed with a gun stood watch right at this fire escape.

(Voice-over): Take another look. The man who identifies himself as a New Orleans police officer reaches down, grabs a gun and then pulls the door shut. Last week, New Orleans Police Captain Marlon Defillo called what happened misunderstanding.

CAPT. MARLON DEFILLO, NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT: The officers are saying that they were on the 10th floor, that this gentleman was on the second floor, that -- the officers are alleging that this person was taking food and taking other essential items for his own personal gain with people that he was staying with. So, there's two sides to every story.

GRIFFIN: Captain Defillo also told CNN the hotel owner failed to file a report, even after he was asked.

DEFILLO: And I spoke to him personally. And I asked him if he wanted to file a complaint against any police officer. And he said no.

GRIFFIN: That is not Osman Khan's recollection of what happened. In fact, the video taken that Sunday matches Khan's account that he did report the looting to this commander with the New Orleans police, but Khan said no one wrote anything down.

(On camera): And did you file a report with the state police?

KHAN: With the state police, I did.

GRIFFIN: And what happened?

KHAN: They told me they were not going to get into a hostile situation with the New Orleans police.

GRIFFIN (voice-over): Khan says, within an hour, the renegade police officers were leaving his hotel with their loot in tow. Today, Osman Khan is standing by everything he said. He wants justice. And he says the good cops of the New Orleans police are on his side.

KHAN: The police officers that I know, that I'm friends with, they have -- they have told me, Osman, get these guys. These are the guys that just -- that deserted them, that they -- you know, they did the opposite of what they should have been doing.

GRIFFIN (on camera): An official with the New Orleans Police Department confirms to CNN that the man seen in the video holding a gun on that 10th floor fire escape is indeed a New Orleans police officer, though the official declined to name him.

CNN has no reason to believe the alleged police looting in this city is widespread. Even Mr. Khan admits most of the police officers he observed during this disaster did the right thing, even more reason to find those, he says, who did not.

Drew Griffin, CNN, New Orleans.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

A. BROWN: More on the cops and the chief today.

Douglas Brinkley, the historian and author, lives and teaches in New Orleans -- or, at least he did, until he was displaced by Katrina. He joins us tonight from San Francisco.

I want to get to the chief in a second. But, first, on the police, do they have a reputation of investigating themselves fairly and honorably?

DOUGLAS BRINKLEY, PRESIDENTIAL HISTORIAN: No, they don't.

The New Orleans Police Department has been a disaster zone for as long as anybody can remember. They're used to be a man named Chief Pennington who improved it, under former Mayor Marc Morial, who is now head of the Urban League. But in the last -- and - - and I have to say, Ray Nagin's police force started getting a grip on some of the corruption within the police department.

But as of June and July of this summer, the police department was in disarray. There were a lot of different fiefdoms within the police department, including cases also of police officers raping people, of stealing. Your looting story you just ran, Aaron, it's not surprising, even pre-Katrina.

And then the Wild West, the lawlessness began after Katrina. And while there a lot of good policemen you talked about, it's a -- I think 15 percent is going to be not enough. It's more like 20 percent of the policemen left. And then there's probably another 20 percent that have been corrupt. So, you're dealing with 60 percent good cops, 40 percent bad.

A. BROWN: That's not a great ratio. You have a theory on why the chief decided to walk away from it?

BRINKLEY: Yes.

First off, Eddie Compass is a good man. And he's been one of the heroic faces of this tragedy. He was always close to Mayor Nagin. But -- and the police officers I have talked to, they call it Nagin land in New Orleans, where nobody is accountable for nothing, as one of them said.

And the feeling that Nagin is constantly trying to cover his own political backside, inviting people in -- the police, as you know, or Anderson Cooper or anybody knows, they are stretched to the limit. They're getting help from all over. And here, for the last weeks, every day, Nagin seems to want to bring in more people, tell the New Orleanians to come home.

The mayor is in Chamber of Commerce booster mode, when the police are frazzled and in disarray and unable to deal with basic problems. Hence, there is no 911. There is no police help. And the inside-the- police-department thought is that Eddie Compass is just fed up with Nagin and kind of broke and left.

A. BROWN: Do you have a sense that the mayor has gotten, I would not say a free pass, but perhaps more a free pass than he ought to be getting?

BRINKLEY: I believe that to be the case. I think that there -- the evacuation -- the evacuation plan was a disaster, as we know.

He has never stepped to the plate, Mayor Nagin, to take personal responsibility. Just to come clean to build the new New Orleans, he has got to say, we had a horrible hurricane evacuation plan. I screwed up. I screwed up at the Convention Center. We screwed up at the Superdome. I'm sorry, but I want to take part in the rebuild.

Instead, he's constantly blaming everybody else but himself. And it's a kind of conceited and arrogant way to be handling himself. And Eddie Compass is somebody who has been on the front line, basically covering for the mayor. And I think he just got -- grew tired of it.

A. BROWN: Doug, good to see you. Thanks for your time tonight, Douglas Brinkley.

BRINKLEY: Thanks, Aaron.

A. BROWN: Thank you. The mayor of New Orleans, Mr. Nagin named Mr. Compass' deputy, Warren Riley, today as acting superintendent of the police department. His job is to now steer the force, for the short term anyway, through a rough patch. The "Times-Picayune" describes Mr. Riley as a City Hall favorite who Mayor Nagin supported in an unsuccessful bid for criminal sheriff last year.

As attention shifts in New Orleans on to how to rebuild the city and especially how to protect it from another disaster, some lessons can be learned from what went wrong in the past.

Reporting for us tonight, CNN's Chris Lawrence.

(BEGIN VIDEOTAPE)

CHRIS LAWRENCE, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): Katrina wasn't the first hurricane to submerge entire neighborhoods in New Orleans. Betsy flooded those same streets 40 years ago this month.

(BEGIN AUDIO CLIP)

SEN. RUSSELL LONG, LOUISIANA: Mr. President, we have really had it down there and we need your help.

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: All right. You got it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

LAWRENCE: President Lyndon Johnson promised federal protection. And the Army Corps of Engineers designed a hurricane barrier, something to shield the city with floodgates. But it was never finished. An environmental group sued, arguing the government did not fully investigate how the barrier would affect the environment.

DARRYL MALEK-WILEY, SIERRA CLUB: The lawsuit was a good lawsuit. And here we are 30 years after that and why are we bringing this up now?

LAWRENCE: Darryl Malek-Wiley says it would have harmed fisheries and wetlands. Instead of completing the study, the Army gave up on the barrier and reinforced the levee system. Some are now blaming environmentalists for that levee system that failed so completely during Hurricane Katrina. Environmentalists say, no so.

MALEK-WILEY: The Corps of Engineers is part of problem and they're part of the solution. And we're not sure which part they're playing right now.

HASSAN MASHRIQUI, LSU HURRICANE CENTER: The clock is again ticking for the city of New Orleans and the Lower Ninth Ward.

LAWRENCE: Dr. Hassan Mashriqui says a barrier could have helped during Katrina's incredible storm surge. He says there's no substitute for flood gates to stop the water.

MASHRIQUI: When you block it, then you might create a wetland that slows down water coming in. But it's like, in plain English, if you create a hole, you plug that hole, no other way of saying it.

DR. JOHN W. DAY, LSU DEPARTMENT OF OCEANOGRAPHY: There's not a smoking gun here. There's a whole bunch of smoking guns.

LAWRENCE: Dr. John Day says the proposed barrier didn't account for Katrina's flooding along the Mississippi River.

DAY: There was massive overtopping of those levees.

LAWRENCE (on camera): But that barrier would have blocked the water from going into Lake Pontchartrain.

(CROSSTALK)

DAY: It would have, but there was no overtopping of the lakefront levees. There was a failure of these internal levees. And to the extent the barrier would have lessened that, I think that's something we don't know at this point.

(END VIDEOTAPE)

LAWRENCE: Yes, he is saying that the flooding problem had more to do with the river

down here than the lake up top.

Now, that barrier would have run about 25 miles with massive locks that snapped shut during a hurricane. In today's dollars, it would have cost about \$500 million. Katrina's reconstruction costs will be in the billions -- Anderson.

COOPER: Amazing, Chris.

Thanks very much for that.

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