

Marco Rubio: Response to Hurricane Maria slowed because Puerto Rico distribution infrastructure destroyed

Florida Sen. Marco Rubio said the federal government's response to the devastation in Puerto Rico caused by Hurricane Maria was slow because the typical method of responding to natural disasters was itself a casualty of the storm.

"They responded to the storm the way we respond to storms. They responded to it in a way no different than Texas or Florida in terms of the assets. And what that is is the federal government says, 'We are here,' to the local government or to the state government, and in the case of Puerto Rico the territorial government there. 'We're here to help. Tell us what you need,'" Rubio said.

"That model generally works. It's worked in Florida a couple weeks ago. It's helped in Texas. It didn't work in Puerto Rico. And the reason why it didn't work is because the government of Puerto Rico itself is a victim of the storm.

"There are 78 municipalities. Some of those mayors themselves couldn't communicate with San Juan. And even if they could, and even if you could get to them and deliver aid to those mayors, they didn't have enough municipal employees to be able to deliver the aid."

President Trump has been criticized for his administration's response to the storm in recent days, especially after he spent much of Saturday criticizing Carmen Yulin Cruz, the mayor of San Juan.

Rubio said he's hopeful the recovery effort has turned a corner now that the Department of Defense is in charge.

He said the Pentagon is the only government department with the resources to truly take control of the situation on the island.

"The problem is, as I said to someone yesterday, there's aid getting to Puerto

Rico, but it wasn't getting to Puerto Ricans because it had to be distributed from San Juan to the different municipalities and then within those municipalities distributed to people," he said. "They had established this sort of hub and spoke system where all the aid came in and then had to be distributed out."

"Those distribution systems were victims of the storm themselves. They were broken. And so I felt and continue to feel that the Department of Defense are the only people that could have gone out and reestablished that. And I hope that that's what's begun to happen."

Source: <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/marco-rubio-response-to-hurricane-maria-slowed-because-puerto-rico-distribution-infrastructure-destroyed/article/2636216>

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