

Senate committee investigates FEMA response

Olivia Honeycutt
Staff Writer

"We were abandoned. City officials did nothing to protect us," said Patricia Thompson, a New Orleans evacuee, to the Senate Select Committee in a hearing. "We were told to go to the Superdome, the Convention Center, the interstate bridge for safety. We did this more than once. In fact, we tried them all for every day over a week. We saw buses, helicopters and FEMA trucks, but no one stopped to help us. We never felt so cut off in all our lives."

This quote underlies a picture of two distraught children, victims of Hurricane Katrina, in "A Failure of Initiative: Final Report of the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina" written by Virginia representative Thomas M. Davis III.

This report is part of the U.S. government's investigation into relief effort failures during Hurricane Katrina.

The report presents findings of

90 failures by many different people and organizations in many different arenas in the rescue, relief and recovery efforts after Katrina.

During a Senate panel on Feb. 10, former head of FEMA Michael Brown testified that he warned the White House that disaster was imminent.

Brown blamed poor federal response to the disaster on the Department of Homeland Security.

Brown said that he warned White House aides of massive flooding. He said that he talked with White House officials several times once Katrina made landfall. He also said that he spoke twice with President George W. Bush before the storm.

On Jan. 24, 2006, The Washington Post reported that it obtained documents supporting this statement.

FEMA presented the first cited document to White House aides two days before Katrina hit. It warned that storm surge "could greatly overtop levees and protective systems" and destroy nearly 90 percent of New Orleans' infrastruc-

ture.

The second document showed that the Department of Homeland Security's National Infrastructure Simulation and Analysis Center (NISAC) sent an assessment to the White House after midnight on Aug. 28. The document warned that Katrina would "likely lead to severe flooding and/or levee breaching."

In an interview on ABC's Good Morning America on Sep. 1, 2005, President Bush said, "I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the levees. They did anticipate a serious storm."

President Bush was on vacation in Crawford, Texas, when Katrina struck. Also on vacation were Chief of Staff Andrew H. Card, Jr., Homeland Security Adviser Frances Fragos Townsend, and Vice President Dick Cheney. The day after he received reports of catastrophic levee breaks, Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff traveled to Atlanta for a pandemic-flu meeting.

"I think Bush sitting on Trent Lott's porch was majorly symbolic,"

said Guilford student Menemsha Milnor.

Milnor is a part of a group of Guilford students and faculty who spent their Fall Break helping the Katrina relief effort. They spent their vacation hammering roof shingles, clearing yards and hauling away the debris.

Max Carter, Director of the Friends Center and Campus Ministry Coordinator, led the Guilford group. "Katrina was not the first disaster to hit The Bottoms," Carter said. He said it was obvious that the people who needed the most help were not getting it.

The people of Bogalusa told Carter that FEMA had not been to "The Bottoms," the neighborhood the group worked in. Some residents stated that Friends Disaster Service was the only organization to visit the area since FEMA dropped off roofing tarps.

On March 5, about 30 members of the Guilford community will join the Friends Disaster Service (FDS) for another round of relief work during Spring Break.

Raleigh Stout will be returning to Bogalusa, La., on the trip. "I have been to Louisiana twice with Guilford community members for Hurricane Katrina disaster relief," he said.

"I am concerned that while FEMA had operated efficiently before our 9/11 terrorist attacks, FEMA actually became disenfranchised from its core mission of serving Americans in catastrophe by being rolled up within the new Department of Homeland Security," Stout said. "So my gut reaction is that I was not surprised to see FEMA getting the blame for slow action during Katrina."

Guilford student Michael Thomson Harris said of the trips: "I've been on several of these work trips with Friends Disaster Service, and I find the work to be very fulfilling. You get to meet the people whose houses you're working on, and you realize the difference you're making. The sad part is that more groups like FDS are not pitching in. I didn't hear of many other groups in Bogalusa, especially in the part of town we were in." ❧

Danish cartoons ignite a 'clash of civilizations'

Ben Dedman
Staff Writer

The Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published a series of controversial cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad, instigating a "clash of civilizations" in the Middle East and leaving dozens dead.

The 12 cartoons, which included one of the Prophet Muhammad wearing a turban resembling a bomb, were printed in Denmark in September and reprinted in other European countries during the past three weeks.

Western powers, including the United States and the United Kingdom, have offered Denmark their unconditional support. The Danish and European newspapers have received hostile criticism since the cartoons were published, driving the editor of Jyllands-Posten to take a vacation for an indefinite period of time.

The cartoons incited riots and protests in many Islamic countries, including the fire-bombing of Danish embassies in Syria, which led to at least 11 deaths before Feb. 11. Last week in Benghazi, Libya, 11 protesters were killed in a riot; and at least 15 protestors were killed in Maiduguri, Nigeria on Feb. 18, according to The Vancouver Province.

The main problem that many Muslims have with the cartoons is that the depiction of the Prophet Muhammad is offensive to the principles of Islam.

"The reason for this is to prevent idolatry of the Prophet Muhammad and the other prophets. The Prophet Muhammad, during his life, stressed to followers that we need to worship God, and not him, since he is only a prophet," said senior Hatice Dogan.

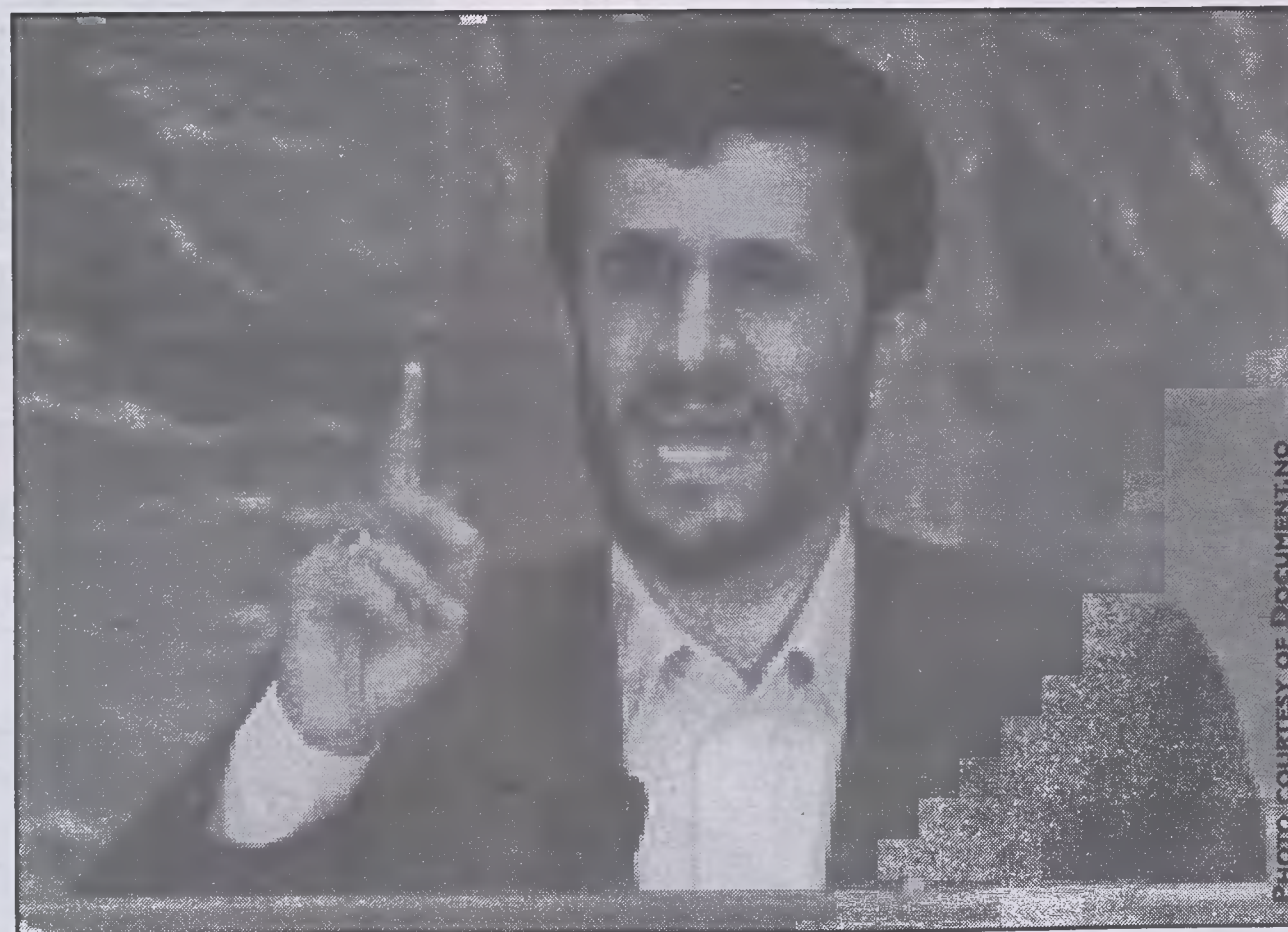
"We refrain from pictures of prophets to avoid idolatry and also to avoid distortion of images by oppressive and 'superior' cul-

tures for the images to fit their culture."

Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blamed the recent reappearances of the cartoons on an Israeli conspiracy in retribution for Hamas' recent victory

responsible cartoonists.

Pope Benedict XVI recently criticized both sides of the conflict. He said that he abhorred the violence by Muslims against Danish and European embassies, but he



Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad blames conspiracy for cartoon publication.

in Palestinian elections.

Hamshahri, an Iranian daily newspaper, started an international contest for a cartoon depicting the holocaust. The contest is meant to test the boundaries of free speech and oppose Jyllands-Posten, which used freedom of speech as a defense to ward off criticism of their cartoons. There have also been calls from the Islamic world for the assassinations of the

also added that freedom of speech must never be used to defame religion.

"I think that the Danish cartoon is ridiculously disgraceful and was done to intentionally offend Muslims," Dogan said. "The Prophet Muhammad was a peaceful man, and true Islam is a peaceful religion."

"It's just crazy," said Ken Gilmore, Chair of the Political Science department. "There's so much irresponsibility. It's irresponsible

for the papers to publish the cartoons, but then again I understand the right to free speech."

Gilmore tied the chaos into the political science theory that Benjamin Barber called "Jihad vs. McWorld." The theory describes the "clash of civilizations" between the globalization of western powers and the reaction to globalization from Islamic nations.

"The level of offense [Muslims] feel is not just about intolerance of tasteless and offensive free speech, but about groups who don't have the power to define global discourse or to influence global culture," said Shelini Harris, Chair of the Religious Studies department and Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies. "This issue is not unrelated to the problem of globalization in the wake of colonization and development, and the increasing marginalization of cultures that are not the ones who define global cultures, economics or the market."

Max Carter, Director of the Friends Center and Campus Ministry Coordinator, posed this question to those who pigeon-hole Muslims as terrorists: "Why is it that people call things Muslim terrorism and not Christian terrorism?"

"You could legitimately ask that when you kill 20,000-30,000 innocent civilians in the invasion of a country, and our country is perceived as a Christian country, 'is that Christian terrorism?'" Carter said. "We don't think it is; we think it's our right as a sovereign nation."

"I do not support bombing embassies as a reaction to cartoons, but at the same time I am upset with the cartoon's depiction and am fed up with the way we are portrayed as terrorists," said Dogan. "Those who do that do not represent all Muslims, but at the same time I can understand their anger and pain." ❧