

The Limits of Intelligence and Policy: Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina is an excellent example of the limits of intelligence and the role of policy makers, even though it was not a foreign intelligence issue. The intelligence on Katrina was nearly perfect: the size and strength of the storm, the likely track of the storm, and the unique nature of the threat that it posed to New Orleans in particular because of that city's topography were all known. In fact, these were known for days before the storm hit New Orleans. However, policy makers in New Orleans and at the state level in Louisiana reacted much too late, thereby increasing the effect of the storm on an unprepared population. The lesson is that even perfect intelligence is useless unless someone acts on it.