

REPORTS of officers

Covering Period Immediately following hurricane.

August 9, 1899.

The Adjutant General,  
Department of Porto Rico,  
San Juan, P.R.,

Sir:-

The storm is apparently at an end. It rained all night. A government property totally destroyed. The town is almost a total wreck not a house but what was considerably damaged or totally destroyed. The distress of the natives is simply appalling. We must have aid as speedily as possible; I am issuing my troop rations. Will send wagons to Ponce as speedily as possible, probably not before tomorrow. Whatever I can do in aiding the distressed people I hope will meet with the approval Department Commander. The natives are without food, money or shelter.

Respectfully,

(Signed) H. W. Wheeler,  
Captain 5th Cavry  
Comdg. Post.

Reports of Officers Covering Period  
Immediately following hurricane -

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Adjuntas P.R. August 13, 1899

Adjutant general,  
Department of Porto Rico.

Since my report to you on the 10th inst., I have received additional reports from Utuado and surrounding country; the loss of life has been terrible and the destruction of property, great, both by wind and water. All the rivers have overflowed their banks to an extent heretofore unknown; the town of Jayuya, 1500 inhabitants, west of Utuado, was destroyed by the river; the loss of life in the town and neighborhood is set down at from 250 to 500 persons (latter doubtless exaggerated), the entire town, excepting eleven houses, was swept away.

In Utuado, the destruction of life in the town was about 15 but the number lost in the surrounding country goes into the hundreds; in one house near the town, eleven persons killed; the iron bridge at entrance to town is swept away; the cemetery partly destroyed by water and the jail blown down and prisoners liberated- I cannot communicate with Utuado except by messenger afoot. The roads and trails are utterly impassible for horses; I enclose report from the Sergeant commanding the detachment in Utuado.

I think any assistance for Utuado will be better sent from Arecibo, although I do not know the state of the road beyond Utuado.

I think by the 16th inst. the road from here to Ponce will be open for pack mules; I have revised the opinion as to the repair of the wagon road; I do not think the work of repair will be so great as I at first anticipated, the greater part is good and repairs are needed only in places; with necessary authority, I think I could put in passable order in a few weeks.

In my last report I suggested sending part of the troop to Ponce on account of scarcity of forage for the horses-I presume however I can get on as well here as in Ponce, with some assistance from the Q.M. Department in the way of aparejos etc we can manage to pack sufficient rations and grain for men and horses: I think the troop is and will be necessary here.

If the Department Commander will let me go to work on the wagon road, I would like to get at it as soon as possible.

Very respectfully,

(Sgd.) C.H.Watts

Capt. 5th Cav.  
Commanding.

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(Sgd.) C.H. Watts

Capt. 5th Cav.  
Commanding.

Arecibo, P.R.,  
August 14, 1899.

To the Adjutant General,  
Department Porto Rico,  
San Juan, P.R.,

sir:-

I have the honor to report as follows on the condition of the districts of Arecibo, Hatillo, Camuy, Quebradillas and Isabela, said report being made from a personal examination concluded by me yesterday.

#### General Conditions.

The recent war, followed by a change in government and a reduction in prices received abroad for island products, a loss of certain markets with no compensating gain, had naturally resulted in a lack of confidence in the pursuit of agricultural labors. The proprietors in the past year therefore planted much less than usual and sold less than usual. The confidence of this class was also impaired by the semi-political attack upon the Spanish proprietors, in September and October last, when many houses were burned and fields robbed of their crops and cattle stolen.

Taxes, often from lack of means, have not been regularly paid, so that at present the treasuries of the various districts are without any means.

The peon class has received much less than its usual amount of labor and has for some time been living on short rations, made up generally of the fruits that grow abundantly in the island, such as the mango, the cocconut, the platano, the aguacote, together with rice, corn and beans.

The impoverished condition of the natives led to the employment by the Insular Government of multitudes on road work in the early part of the year. This measure afforded temporary relief and tided over the time until the coming of the rains inaugurated agricultural work.

Either from natural improvidence or the miserable wages paid in the island, increased as such a condition is shiftlessness is by an eternally mild climate, the laborer here never has had any reserve capital other than his small stock of growing food.

The margin of safety against starvation is therefore, a narrow one. Any check in the work or food supply precipitates suffering and hunger. For generations this people has been underfed, and though a distinguished commission has reported in the past year, after a rapid tour through the island, that it was impossible to starve here, the fact remains that the anaemic condition of the blood, so apparent in the wan faces of the peons is due to a lack of nourishing food in the present and in the past. In short, this people frequently suffer a slow starvation.

The entire island has just received a severe check to all of its industries, in the form of the dominican hurricane that passed over the island from east to west, on the 8th of August, 1899.

The proprietors who were struggling along until better prices might be secured for their stores products, lost through the inroads of water and the falling of houses, not only a considerable portion of their goods

in store, but many valuable houses and the machinery in them.

This is especially true of the sugar planters who occupied the low lands, subject to overflow.

The coffee crop in berry was shaken down and lost; the coffee trees were so much injured as to materially lessen the crop due in 1900. Fruit trees, upon which the poor depended for sustenance, have been broken and destroyed.

Corn and beans, also important food components for the poor, have been destroyed.

Batatas (sweet potatoes) have, when planted in low ground, subject to over-flow, rotted in the earth.

The houses of the better class though generally withstanding the storm, have been shaken and injured.

A large percentage of the huts of the poor have been leveled to the ground, and in the low river bottoms have been swept away with all the clothing, cooking utensils and bedding of the unfortunate occupants.

Many cattle, horses and pigs, with the smaller animals, have in the low country been swept away.

Many houses disappeared, with their occupants, overwhelmed by the rushing waters.

#### social Condition Arecibo District.

Great and unprecedented flood from the Rio grande, submerging all the low lands south of town to the mountains, some five miles away, and extending east to Barcelonetta, some thirteen miles, covering some 65 square miles, ruining much of the growing cane and seriously injuring many of the great haciendas, destroying and sweeping away small houses and entire families.

The Alcalde reports that from one thousand to twelve hundred persons who occupied the low ground along and near the Rio Grande, from its mouth up to and in the gorge, leading to Utuado, have disappeared.

The rise in the river was most sudden, surrounding houses in a moment and cutting off all means of escape, except by boats, of which only a very few were available.

This was on the afternoon of August 8th; that evening and night a torrent of rain fell, and on the morning of the 9th, many houses in the bottom lands had disappeared.

The estimate of 1000 persons missing I cannot credit.

The number of bodies recovered and buried as the flood subsided is to this moment forty-three, but as the current was sweeping sea-wards very strong, it is apparent that the number of bodies recovered cannot approach the number of persons drowned.

About two hundred families, destitute of homes, clothing and food are now in the town being cared for.

The cane lands in the flooded districts have been much injured by the destruction of the growing cane, and the deposit of inferior material on the rich black loam.

Fifty per cent. of the small houses, or huts, through the district are blown down, and in many cases, the clothing and other small belongings of the occupants, blown away.

Fruit trees, such as cocoanut, aguacarte, mango, banana, pineapple, are broken and destroyed, damage 50%.

Corn and beans where crop had not been stored, totally destroyed-- loss 50%

Many cattle, horses and pigs drowned and swept sea-wards.

In the city itself, many of the poorer houses are down and uninhabitable. One bridge across Rio Santiago down, the other on road to station much weakened and in need of repair.

Large commercial houses in lower part of town flooded, with much loss of stores of cod-fish, salt, coffee, tobacco, etc.

The life saving station blown down and destroyed.

Minor damages to custom house property, easily repaired.

Custom house boat reported as lost, since recovered.

The loss of life in the district is believed to be confined to the low ground, south of town.

It is possibly five hundred persons, though actually forty-three bodies have been recovered.

Estimated loss in gold:

Houses and crops-----	\$900,000.00
Number of huts down in town-----	500
Number of huts down in country--	1200
Population of district-----	32000
Persons to whom it is necessary to furnish rations daily-----	4000

Ration recommended:-

Bacalao--codfish-----	8 ounces,
Arroz---rice-----	6-1/2 "
Chicharos-peas-----	4 "
Tocino--pork-----	2 "
Asugar--sugar-----	4 "
Sal--salt-----	1/2 "

The total cost of such a ration in Arecibo is a little less than ten centavos, or six cents american.

Owing to the difficulty in supplying food immediately, it was deemed best to furnish 1500 partial rations from the military supplies, consisting of hard bread, which was, through moisture, rapidly becoming unfit for use, bacon, flour, beans and rice.

The statement of military affairs here is as follows:

Men present for duty	65
Men in confinement	11
Men sick	8
Horses present	78
Horses absent	4
Q.M. 4 line wagons	10
Teams for same	11
Pack mules	7
Drivers	11
Packers	2

Rations now on hand:

Garrison, except fresh vegetables-----	4500
No hard bread, but 2000 rations of canned beef	2000
Fresh vegetable supply to end of month.	

Damage to Military stores, Building, etc.,

Two cavalry stables, blown down, wrecked.  
 One Q. M. Stable, partially blown down.  
 One cavalry horse drowned in flood.  
 One cavalry horse, badly injured, since died.  
 One Q. M. horse badly injured, since died.  
 75 halters and halter straps lost by horses of Troop "A", 5th Cavalry after destruction of stables.  
 Forage store house in lower part of town flooded, resulting in loss of-----  
     50,000 lbs. Oats,  
     50,000 " Hay.

Seven framed hospital tents, used by Q. M. employes, blown down, torn, rendered worthless.  
 Two hospital tents, used by post hospital blown down, torn, worthless  
     On hand one month's forage.

A considerable amount of clothing, belonging to enlisted men, in hands of washwomen, was lost by flooding of lower part of town.

An order was issued to the Quartermaster to at once proceed to re-erect one Q. M. stable and one cavalry stable, from the material on hand, employing native labor, and limiting the expenses of this work to \$500.00 this measure was deemed actually necessary for the proper care and safe guarding of the government animals.

HATILLO.

General conditions due to storm similar to those in Arecibo, omitting loss from flood.

Cattle and horse dead - - \* \* \* \* \*200

Many hogs.

Platano trees, brokenruined, new trees available in one year.

Batata crop, damage----- 50%

Tobacco in store (though wet) 10%

Cane (not much in district) 50%

Corn (about 50% in store saved) 50%

Beans, 50%

coffee crop lost for this year and much injured, say 75% for 1900.

One man wounded, leg broken by falling tree.

Number of houses of poor destroyed 450

Population 12000

Number of people requiring food and some clothing 1000

--CAMUY--

General condition, excepting flood, similar to Arecibo and Hatillo. small parts, including grain coffee and bata crops, seriously injured.

Many small houses in district down - - - - -	450
Alcaldia unroofed, not habitable	
Pepe Machado's house unroofed, not habitable.	
One man injured, arm out, flying tin.	
One man injured, struck by flying timber.	
Population - - - - -	14000
Number of persons to whom rations and some clothing must issue	2500

QUEBRADILLAS.

This district, though not a large one, nor thickly populated, is on high, generally rocky ground, and is a very poor population. The loss to food crops is especially felt here.

Number of small houses and huts down - - - - -	500
One man injured by falling tree	
Population - - - - -	6000
Number of persons in need of rations and some clothing	2500

ISABELA.

On high, rocky ground, poor population.

Houses and huts of poor destroyed, say - - - - -	500
Population - - - - -	14000
( in town 1200)	
No crops, no work.	
Rations needed for - - - - -	5000

In all these districts the treasuries are without money and the local authorities can afford but little relief .

MEASURES TAKEN.

I have purchased in open market here food supplies at low contract prices, and issued on the emergency relief ration, noted in this communication, as follows:

To Hatillo - - - - -	2000
To Camuy - - - - -	1000
To Quebradillas - - - - -	3000
To Isabela - - - - -	6000
To Arecibo	1500 partial U.S. rations
Total - - - - -	13500

I have, so far as possible, seen personally to the issue of these supplies, and seen that each town has formed a committee of responsible and honorable persons, who will see that rations are properly issued to



deserving individuals.

At the present writing there are on hand in this town for consumption the following number of pounds of:

Codfish-----	13000
Peas-----	3000
Rice-----	530000
Pork	16000
Sugar	1000000
Salt	1000
Flour	10000
Beans	3200

These supplies are not sufficient for any prolonged seize of famine and must be re-infaced promptly by sea. No more rations of the government will be issued. The necessity for more salt is especially noted. Another article of food, cheap, and desired here, is codfish.

#### COMMUNICATION.

##### Roads.

The railroad bridge at Manati is reported as gone; a smaller bridge, the western one at river grande here, is out. From this point west to Camuy, the terminus, the track is not seriously damaged, though one culvert is out some five miles west of here, in front of sr. Abrell's house.

The river Arceibo as well as the Manati, cuts all roads leading to the Capital; these rivers are still swollen and difficult of passage. A flat boat ferry can be arranged here if necessary, and I presume one at river Manati, on main road crossing.

The main road to Agudayilla is quite uneven and soft from sand, Arceibo to Hatillo; beyond that point the road is good and practicable.

The bridges across Camuy and Guajataca rivers are in excellent condition.

One important culvert being much damaged at the Quebrada Guineo, some three miles west of Camuy, I made a contract to have it put in excellent condition for sixty pesos(\$36.00)

The main road from here to Utuado is badly washed and at present impracticable for all purposes. It crosses the river which is still high, some seven times in reaching Utuado.

The new road Arceibo to Utuado, which passes along the slope of rocky hills, on the west bank of the Rio Grande, though not practicable for hweels, can be used by pack trains, but with difficulty.

The road from Lares to Arceibo is never practicable for wagons on account of the deep rocky gorge of the Camuy river and rocky ground from there into Lares, some 12 miles. The Camuy river at this gorge is up but can, I think, be now safely forced. The incompleated new roads can be used for pack animals, but is heavy in some places from clay.

##### Telegraph Lines.

The telegraph lines everywhere, broken and down. I have parties

out and expect the line from here to Isabela will be in working condition by the evening of August 15th. Upon the return of my parties the wire will be repaired to Barceloneta. I shall expect the Commanding Officer of Manati to put the wire in shape east of parceloneta, and the Commanding Officer of Isabela to repair the line from Isabella to Agudaila.

I request that a number of insulators and a supply of wire for repairs be sent me here by boat by the earliest opportunity; connection with Utuado being urgently needed.

some 300 yards east of the Guajataca River, which is about two and one half miles west of Quebradillas, the launch "WILLIE", of New York is wrecked.

She is a new strong boat but is "stove in" on port side forward, and on port side aft; the rocks have pierced her bow as well and passed through her bottom. The deck has separated from the timbers on the port side. The boat is fast upon the rocks. I consider her a total wreck and believe if repaired, she could not be floated. One anchor and chain I shall endeavor to save and bring to Arecibo.

The sanitary condition of Isabela, quebradillas, Camuy and patillo is entirely satisfactory. At Arecibo, from the amount of flooded district an evil smell may be noted, when south of town; this comes from decaying vegetable matter. The prevailing breeze blows this bad air away from the town, and I apprehend no evil results. But, as a wise precaution, the Alcalde is having all that part of town that was flooded, cleaned out and will then wash it with his fire-engine. The conditions here are good and unless people are weakened from famine, I see no reason to look for unusual sickness.

Your order of August 11, 1899, placing in this jurisdiction Barceloneta and removing it from Isabela is just received. The plain country lying between the rivers Grande and Manati is a great swamp, bounded on the south by the railroad and on the north by a range of low hills, separating it from the sea. In time of flood this section discharges its waters into the Arecibo river, near its mouth by the Caño Tiburones and similarly into the Manati river, by the extension of the same water-way.

There is a fringe of houses along the coast hills, and also along the hills just south of the railroad. The small town of parceloneta lies on a little higher ground, east of the true swamp, and on the west bank of the Manati river. There are two good roads connecting this town with the town of parceloneta, one lying along the coast and one just south of the railroad. But it is not practicable to use these roads for supply of that town, as the river Arecibo is not passable for wagons at present. Without definite knowledge, I should imagine Manati might supply parceloneta by wagons to the bank of the river Manati, very near the town. These supplies could be crossed in boats to that town.

A committee has just reached me from the town of Utuado with a most appalling story of death, hunger and suffering. They state that some 1500 persons in the jurisdiction have perished and that today the food supply is gone and starvation stares them in the face. They state that the road to Adjuntas is impassible and the road to this town, Aracibo, only fit for packs is difficult. I expect to send medicines and provisions to Utuado tomorrow morning on pack animals.

The population of that district being 40,000, the supplying them with rations from this point will draw heavily upon the food supplies here

Counting upon Isabel, which has been supplied from here thus far, and Utuado, the population drawing food from here will be something over 125,000 persons.

The daily supply to this number is something less than.

Of Rice-----	60,000 pounds,
Of Peas-----	40,000 "
Of Codfish-----	60,000
Of sugar-----	30,000
Of Salt-----	15,000

And though the relief rations will not meet this figure, the supply of food here available will be rapidly reduced. I suggest that a ship load of supplies be sent here without delay.

The firm of Roses & Co., the largest dealers here, have today ordered a supply of salt from their agents in San Juan. I think, after this, codfish is the article most needed, as the supply of rice is fairly good.

I received today an order to send Lieut. Valentine, 5th Cavry, and certain enlisted men, to San Juan, to appear as witnesses in a Court-Martial case.

I have ventured to retain Lt. Valentine here a few days, as I cannot properly leave this station to attend to necessary business, in the absence of my only Lieutenant. It is very probable that I will proceed in person to Utuado tomorrow, the 15th instant, returning August 16th, to personally examine into the truth of the alarming reports received from that point. If I find the situation as reported, I shall endeavor with native labor to improve the road from here to Utuado, with a view to supplying that town from Aracibo.

In the meantime, over three thousand rations will be sent there tomorrow, with medicines and dressings for the 300 men reported as wounded and in need of surgical aid.

Upon my return from Utuado I shall visit and inspect Barceloneta.

The following plan has been adopted for relief work:

- A.---Clear communications,
- B.---Bury bodies, animals.
- C.---Issue food--medicines.
- D.---Erect shelter.

----A----

Alcaldes to send out parties of peons to open roads through districts so as to reach distant barrios. Employment to be given to men not being fed by charity--pay 50 centavos. Employment to those being fed--25 centavos. If they do not care to work, remove name from ration list. Man in charge of road to receive one peso daily. Secure tools from quartermaster and from chief quartermaster at San Juan.

----B----

Bury immediately when found all bodies of animals and other bad smelling matter.

Bury all corpses when and where directed by recent rules, adopted by City Council and Board of Public Health.

----C----

Establish main ration depot in town, with branch depots in outlying districts.

At main depot, list all supplies received; determine amount of supplies for one ration. Keep full account of all supplies to branch depots.

At these smaller depots keep full list of all persons supplied, together with amounts of rations issued them.

----D----

Find out from carpenters the cost of repairing houses and cost of putting up small cheap shelters against bad weather.

As soon as roads are passable and some shelter is available, persuade all persons to return to their proper homes and plant such food plants as may quickly produce--corn, Batatas and Beans.

----E----

Report to health officer all cases of sickness, so they may be properly attended to.

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A Lieutenant of Insular Police came into town last night from Utuado and reports that the only road I can take pack animals into Utuado by, is to leave Arecibo by Lares road, follow this until near Pajoril; thence south-west to barrio Albonito, barrio Angeles, and easterly to Utuado. He reports that all roads down Rio Grande valley are absolutely destroyed.

If the Utuado, Ponce road be not repairable and it becomes necessary to supply Utuado from Arecibo, a fifty mule pack train here will be much needed.

I enclose a few photographs of the flood at Arecibo and shall

shall endeavor to take some views on my trip to Utuado.

The hurricane has been a most disasterous affair for the Island and its evil effects will be felt for years. At present the crying need is food, shelter, clothing.

The first requisite is being attended to; regarding the second, lumber, consisting of boards, small scantling and nails and singles are necessary. Any quantity of this material could be used to advantage throughout the Island.

If there is any duty on this material at present I trust it may be removed.

As regards clothing, calico for thr women and some sort of drill for the men is all that is essential.

Very respectfully,

(Signed) A. C. Macomb,

Captain 5th Cavalry,  
Commanding Post.

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Copy.

Capey, P.R.,

Aug. 10, 1899.

The Adjutant General,

Dept. of Porto Rico.

Sir:-

The more full the reports of the hurricane become the more serious the situation appears. There are reported dead in the town and vicinity from 25 to 50. The first estimate is almost certainly too low and even the second may be exceeded. Everything has been destroyed even the bannas on which these people rely as a last <sup>resource</sup> ~~issue~~. They are now eating the green ones broken off by the storm but they will only last a few days and then the people will actually starve if something is not done to help them. The town is now full of homeless people begging food. The Alcalde is doing all he can; he distributed a quantity of food today and will continue to do what he can to ~~maintain~~ alleviate the horror of the famine which will surely ensue here if help does not come from abroad and quickly. From all reports that I can gather it would seem that three months is as soon as a new supply of food can possibly be grown here. If work could be provided of course it would be better, but where work is to come from with all the coffee plantations destroyed I cannot see. I have employed all the men that could possibly ~~be~~ work in clearing away the debris of the barracks and hospital but in addition have been overrun with applications for work and aid. Individual effort can do but little. If the intention is to rebuild here it

should be started at once by giving employment to a hundred or two of laborers here ten times that many could be supported and charity would only be required for the women, children and sick. I have the stable roofed again and my men quartered in it as well as part of the horses. Tomorrow we will put up the tents and arrange the men more comfortably. Thanks to the work we did in graveling around barracks we have a model site for a camp and I have material enough sent here for the construction of a new stable to frame and floor the tents and hope in a few days to have my men comfortably in camp. When they are safely fixed up I request that I be given authority to visit San Juan to make a personal report and confer with the Chief Quartermaster as to what is to be done at this post.

From my detachment in Cuyama I hear that the town is partially destroyed as well as the sea port of Arroyo a few miles distant.

The Alcalde is a very active, energetic man and is untiring in his efforts to relieve the distress and I believe he can be counted on to faithfully assist in any effort at relief. The Priest refused to ~~allow~~ allow the poor people to be sheltered in the church and it took considerable diplemacy to make him change his mind. He finally did so however when I agreed to allow a sentinel to be placed on the church to see that no profanation took place. Incidentally I took great pleasure in telling him I would report just how he was conducting himself etc. At last he was persuaded(?) to consent but has done nothing ~~else~~ else whatever to help the people either by sympathy or material aid.

It has been a fine day and a number of roofs have been replaced and the greater part of the town people will probably by a little crowding sleep under some sort of a roof.

I have <sup>lost</sup> but three horses so badly injured that they had to be shot and 3 others are still unaccounted for. The rest have been gathered in but in very bad shape, many of them being cut and bruised so as to be for the present unserviceable.

Very respectfully,

Signed) F.W.Foster,

Captain 5th Cav, Comd'g.

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Cayey, Porto Rico, Aug. 10, 1899.

The Adjutant General,

Department of Porto Rico.

Str:-

Reports up to this time give the total deaths as 34 yesterday and today. I hope that is all.

Very respectfully,

Signed) F.W.Foster,

Capt. 5th Cav, Commanding.



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Post of Humacao, P.R.,

Aug. 10, 1899.

To the Adjutant General, Department of Porto Rico,

Sir:-

I have the honor to report as follows on conditions in this district. The worst reports are from Yabucoa. Ninety one dead and buried this morning. A large number are missing and a great number are wounded. There is a great scarcity of food and medical supplies. We have sent a doctor and some medicines but no food. Yabucoa contains about 2500 inhabitants. and is nearly destroyed. The walls of the church only are standing. From Vieques no very serious reports are received. Las Piedras no loss of life but villiage is destroyed except one house. The post of Humacao is destroyed and about 30 drowned and killed. Post of Maguabo destroyed and no deaths. Maguabo loss not great. Humacao 30 odd deaths and other conditions the same. In northern part of district loss seems to be less than here. I have no reports from portions south of Yabucoa. Norman N. North, a teamster in the Quartermaster Department, formerly of Troop C, 5th Cavalry, was drowned. His home is at Snow Hill, Md. I will have one lighter ready to receive freight from a steamer tomorrow but not more than two wagons. Considerable work has been done on the road to Playa and if we had wagons we could probably haul freight after tomorrow. The disaster to the fruit and crops seems to be very great. Notwithstanding the desperate conditions of the people it is hard to get work done. I had to force men to work on the road today under guard but with a promise of food and pay.

A guard had to be sent with men working on the telegraph line also. The Chief of Police gathered up laborers to work on the bakeries which are absolutely necessary at this time. I see nothing of the Insular Police. If they were under my orders I could use them and save my own men considerable work which may not be necessary. I have had requests to send troops to places where I know there ought to be sufficient Insular Police.

Respectfully, Your Obedient Servant,

Eben Swift, Capt. 5th Cav.,

Commanding.

1/17  
POST OF LARES, PORTO RICO.  
August 9, 1899.

Adjutant General,  
Department of Porto Rico,  
San Juan, P. R.

Sir:-

I have the honor to report that a severe hurricane visited this section on the 8th instant: no injury to any of the troops and but few injuries among the civilians of the town. Much material damage however was done to buildings and crops.

Of the buildings used by troops, the hospital was nearly all unroofed; the telegraph office and Post Office adjacent, completely so. Commissary and Quartermaster storehouse and barracks were partly unroofed; headquarters office and officers quarters were damaged as to front porch and roof by debris hurled against it from the house opposite which was completely unroofed. Stable shed at corral was also unroofed.

With good weather this damage to buildings can all be repaired in a few days- work now in ~~xxxxxx~~ progress. Commissary and other ~~xxx~~ stores were somewhat damaged by water- extent not yet known.

Every building in town was damaged more or less. The coffee crop appears to be nearly ruined, being beaten down to the ground and the berries thrashed off. The country is strewn with broken trees, and much fruit and vegetables have been destroyed.

The native huts were laid flat or made untenable, and the occupants sought shelter in stores and warehouses.

The storm ~~xxxxx~~ lasted from mid-night of the 7th until sunrise of the 9th instant. The rainfall was tremendous even for this country, being continuous and heavy during the whole storm.

The telegraph line went down during the night of the 7th-8th. Repair parties will start towards both Utuado and Aguadilla tomorrow.

No mail was received or sent yesterday.

Very respectfully,

(signed) Harry R. Lee,

Captain 11th Infantry,  
Commanding.

These reports come in on  
page 1 of report

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MANATI, PORTO RICO,  
August 11, 1899.

Adjutant General,  
Department of Porto Rico,  
San Juan, P. R.

Sir:-

I have the honor to report that on the 8th instant, at eight o'clock A.M., there was a severe storm, in the nature of a tornado, struck this post and the entire district. At the commencement of the storm, the wind was from the north, slowly veering to the South-east about 11 o'clock A.M. when the wind abated. Heavy rainfall from the commencement of the storm until about eight o'clock P.M., when until about eleven o'clock P.M., rained in torrents. A great deal of damage was done in the town of Manati, principally unroofing buildings, and destroying the poorer quality of houses. No lives were lost, and only one injury reported. The roof of the Quartermasters store-room was blown off, also roof of stables partially destroyed; no other damage to Government property, except by water.

At Morovis, the town was almost totally destroyed by wind. Church was blown down and nearly every house <sup>blown</sup> down or unroofed. Quarters occupied by detachment unroofed and stables destroyed. No deaths so far reported from that district, but a number of persons reported more or less injured: one horse, Troop K 5th Cavalry, so badly injured as to necessitate its being shot. Rations and forage totally destroyed.

At Ciales, considerable damage done by wind, principally to poorer quality of houses. Quarters occupied by detachment had roof blown off; stables, totally destroyed, also forage and rations. Twenty-one 21 deaths reported, but only three authenticated so far.

At Barceloneta, Poorer quality of houses destroyed, greatest damage being done by overflow of river, which was about three feet deep, leaving the town now flooded with drift. Railroad depot totally ~~destroyed~~ destroyed. Eight deaths so far reported, seven of which have been authenticated; two in the vicinity of Barceloneta, and five, all belonging in one family, near Florida.

The coffee crop in all the districts is almost totally destroyed not only the crop for this year, but the trees are torn up by the wind.

The sugar cane has been flooded, and is now covered with mud and drift. Oranges, bananas, Plantians and nearly every kind of vegetable are almost all totally destroyed by water. Mr. Carlaf, the sugar planter, claims to have lost \$150,000.00 by the storm, others from \$20,000.00 to \$50,000.00. *Sugar factories are badly wrecked and nearly all of the sugar on hand destroyed by water.*

The whole district is in a state of absolute destitution, the planters have no crop in prospect, nor have they any ready means, so can not give any support to the poor, or laboring class. I recommend, if possible, that work be given to this class on the roads which are almost impassable, as the only means of preventing great suffering.

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The telegraph line between this post and Ciales is completely wrecked. The railroad line badly damaged from Barceloneta to Vega Baja; about one half the poles will have to be re-set, and wire furnished before line can be repaired. The railroad depot and warehouse here un-roofed, and both here and at Barceloneta abandoned by the rail-road Company. Between here and Vega Baja track in fair condition, only ballasting required in a few places. Between here and Barceloneta, rail-road bridge and three culvert bridges washed off foundations; track for about half a mile washed away, remainder of track, ballasting washed out in a great many places.

Consolidated report of the damage done by the storm in the different Municipalities will be forwarded as soon as received.

There is now twenty days forage of grain and hay at this post and thirty days rations.

Very respectfully,

(signed) H. S. Bishop,

Captain, 5th Cavalry,  
Commanding.

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POST OF PONCE, PORTO RICO, AUGUST 12th., 1899.

Adjutant General,

Department of Porto Rico,

San Juan, P.R.

Sir:-

I have the honor to submit the following report of damages and consequences of the recent storm here in addition to report submitted on 9th instant.

In the Post as much work as possible has been done. Temporary roofs have been constructed over most of the five sets of officer's quarters to the north of Cuartel to protect the walls and afford shelter for Officers goods and Officers families living in those which are still habitable. The three sets of quarters to the south of Cuartel remain practically as left by the flood. As previously reported these are uninhabitable and their abandonment and removal as soon as practicable will probably be advisable.

The repair of the cavalry stables has been commenced and is proceeding as rapidly as possible. Under the direction of the Quartermaster, the road to La Playa has been cleared sufficiently for passage of wagons. Some of the iron from the roof of the wrecked Subsistence Storehouse has been hauled to the Post and used in temporary roofs over Officers quarters, etc.

Communication with La Playa has been had since the 10th Inst., first by means of cable and boats, and later, when river had fallen sufficiently, by ford across river. The damage to the Depot Commissary Storehouse at La Playa is more than stated in first report. The building is wrecked beyond repair. The roof fallen and mostly gone. The stores there are damaged and lost to a great extent, both by fresh and salt water; and while every effort is now being made to save those left, further deterioration and loss will of course follow to nearly all that are not issued and used immediately. A considerable amount of stores will have to be destroyed at once to prevent danger of disease.

A considerable amount of wood, coal and forage at La Playa has been lost, but to what amount is still unknown.

The refrigerating plant of Swift & Co., has been repaired so that they are now ready to store beef again. Sufficient water for the use of the plant can be hauled daily in barrels.

Other damages at La Playa not reported before are the wrecking of two sheds of the Customs Department, the unroofing of the third leaving the frame standing, and slight damages only to the other shed.

In and about the city the loss of life is far greater and the damages fully as great as indicated in former report. Up to last night one hundred and seventeen (117) bodies found in Ponce and the neighboring country have been buried in City Cemetery here. A good many missing have not been found and are supposed to be buried under piles of drift or carried to sea. The search is still going on.

The work on aqueduct has proceeded so that a little water came through the mains last night. Several weeks will probably be required

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for its completion.

About five hundred men are employed in cleaning up the streets and good progress is being made. All servicable wagons of the Q.M. Department that can be spared are being used to assist in this work.

Slight friction has arisen between the Alcalde and the Council and a few of the indigent and poorer classes. The Alcalde and Council are accused of negligence in failing to warn people of the approaching hurricane, and in care and protection of the sufferers during and after the storm. On the afternoon of the 9th, several hundred indigent natives, probably incited by a few evil minded persons, unknown, gathered in front of the Municipal Building and demanded the abdication of the Alcalde, accompanied by a few threats against him. This crowd was easily dispersed by the presence of the Commanding Officer and a small part of the troops here without the use of any further display of force.

At a meeting of the City Council which followed the same evening, the Alcalde and some of the Council attempted to resign. The Commanding Officer took advantage of this occasion to protest against the introduction of politics in a question already serious enough, and entirely foreign to matters political, and also against any change in the City government or the resignation of any official at this time. The Alcalde has however virtually turned the city government over to the Sub-Alcalde and it has been deemed necessary for the Commanding Officer to assume a general supervision only, over the matters connected with the city. And at present the removal of any official or any change in the city government is not recommended until, at least, the question of the alleviation of the suffering and the improvement of existing conditions here is to some extent settled. It is respectfully requested that this action and recommendation be approved and sustained.

Every effort is being made to preserve the best order throughout the city, as well as to assist the hungry and homeless.

The city has been covered with mounted patrols every night and the City hall and jail as well as Government property protected at all times by guards. So far there has hadly been the slightest evidence of disorder other than described above, and there is no doubt but that the feeling at present among the poor people is strongly in favor of the Americans.

Reports have been received from detachment at Coamo. The roof of building occupied as barracks is gone; One Q.M. mule killed, another seriously injured; and a part of rations damaged. Other damages slight, but private property throughout town damaged to a considerable extent. Twelve days rations have been sent them by pack-train.

Two thousand rations have been sent to Commanding Officer at Albonito in response to his request. No further rations could be spared at that time until it was discovered the extent of damage here and whether further supplies for this garrison could be obtained at San Juan. Four thousand pounds of hard bread, somewhat damaged, was also sent for issue to starving natives.

Very respectfully,

(signed) Albert L. Myer,

Major 11th Infantry,

Commanding Post.

also sent for leave to staying natives.  
San Juan. Four thousand pounds of hard bread, somewhat damaged, was  
and whether further supplies for this garrison could be obtained at  
it was discovered the extent of damage here  
WILLIAM WOOD

Very respectfully,  
(attn) Albert J. Myer,  
Major 11th Infantry,  
Commanding Post.



7/17  
Aguadilla, P. R., August 12, 1899.

The Adjutant General,  
Department of Porto Rico,  
San Juan, P. R.

Sir:-

In reference to the storm which passed over this place on the 8th inst., I have the honor to submit the following report:

The storm struck this city between 10 and 11 A.M. coming from almost due north and lasting until about 9 P.M. Between 1 and 2 P.M., the wind greatly abated and this lull lasted for more than an hour, when the storm returned from the Southeast, and as I say, lasted until about 9 P.M. The damage here was slight. Only a very few of the poorest houses were blown completely down, but the roofs of nearly every house in the town were more or less damaged, some being entirely blown off. All of these roofs were either of zinc, or as in the poorer houses, of "palm leaves" and are easily replaced. Most of them have already been replaced, and in a week's time the effects of the storm, as far as the houses are concerned, will hardly be noticed. It is impossible to say at present, what is the actual money value of the property destroyed, but it is so slight as to be inconsiderate. The only cost for repairing the roofs will be for the labor for replacing the zinc as most of the zinc blown off was uninjured and picked up. As for the "palm leaf roofs" they cost nothing to put them up in the first place and will cost nothing to replace them. At present there is no suffering here at all - no more than before the storm - but it is reported to me that all the coffee and sugar and other crops have been destroyed in the surrounding country, and if this proves true, actual

want will come later on. I have only heard from two of the neighboring towns, Moca and Rincon, and the Alcaldes claim that ~~claim that~~ great damage was done in both places, and that there is great suffering among the people. I have not visited these places as yet, but am inclined to think that these reports are greatly exaggerated. The Alcaldes of the other towns have been called upon to report, but have not yet from them. Unless the destruction in the surrounding country is <sup>much</sup> worse than <sup>in</sup> this town, there will be no necessity for, but little or any disbursements, at the present time. I think it will be necessary later on, when the food gets scarce, and the crops fail to materialize. There were no lives lost or serious injuries that I have heard of. The zinc roof on the barracks occupied by the native detachment, when they were here, was partly blown off, but it was replaced by the men themselves in a couple of days, and is now as good or better than before the storm. No government property was destroyed or injured to speak of. Business and everything else here are going on as if the storm had never happened. The only drawback is a lack of communication. There are no trains running between here and Mayaguez. I have heard that the Bridge at Anasco is down, and all the telegraph wires are down. As soon as the other towns in this District are heard from their reports will be forwarded. Take it "all in all", and from what we can hear from other places, this immediate District came off very light indeed.

Very respectfully,

Seaborn G. Chiles,

1st Lt. 11th Infantry,

Commanding Post.