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ABC News Transcripts

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**HEADLINE:** INTERVIEW PRESIDENT BUSH

**BODY:**

DIANE SAWYER, ABC NEWS

(Off Camera) Right, Robin. I want to tell you one more thing the president said to me as we continued the conversation after the interview. I said to him, you know, there was an evacuation order. A lot of these people stayed. And I just was curious. I said, do you blame the people for staying there? And he said, now is not the time to blame anyone. And he said, particularly when you look at the number of elderly people who didn't want to leave their home. He said, how can you ever say to a person like that, that you in any way hold them responsible, or blame them for not wanting to leave their home. Even though, as we know, it did result in a huge number of people who remain there and need to be rescued. And of course, the refugees themselves which could pose one of the most - the greatest challenges of this presidency.

graphics: good morning america exclusive

graphics: responding to hurricane katrina

DIANE SAWYER

(Off Camera) The prospect, some people are saying, is of a million American refugees in place for a very long time. It is really a 2-part question, which is, what are you saying to them about how far -the Federal government's gonna go to get their lives back? Do you promise jobs? Do you promise that they will be moved back into housing? And how soon?

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, UNITED STATES

Well, first of all, we have got to get a handle on the situation. In other words, we have got to stop the flooding in New Orleans, we gotta, you know, rescue the folks, and get them out of harm's way. Get food and medicine to people. And then take a serious assessment about what it is going to need to rebuild New Orleans, and parts of Mississippi.

DIANE SAWYER

(Off Camera) But given the fact that everyone anticipated a hurricane five, a possible hurricane five, hitting shore, are you satisfied with the pace at which this is arriving? And at which it was planned to

arrive.

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH**

Well, I fully understand people wanting things to have happened yesterday. I mean, I understand the anxiety of people on the ground. I can imagine -I just can't imagine what it is like to be waving a sign that says "come and get me now." So there -is frustration. But I want people to know there is a lot of help coming. I don't think anybody anticipated the breach of the **levees**. They did anticipate a serious storm. But these **levees** got breached. And as a result, much of New Orleans is flooded. And now we are having to deal with it, and will.

**DIANE SAWYER**

(Off Camera) And can America afford this cost? Because a number of people, again, are saying right now we are straining at the seams a bit. We are paying the war in Iraq, and the cost of that, in the tens and tens of millions of dollars a day. And do we have to make a choice at some point between what we are doing in Iraq, and what is needed right now to funnel massive amounts of money?

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH**

We can win the war on terror. And we must win the terror. Security of this nation is at stake, and we will help the people of New Orleans and Mississippi and Alabama as well.

**DIANE SAWYER**

(Off Camera) And again, Charlie and Robin, as I mentioned earlier during our conversation after the interview, he said, and we will do it without tax increases. So, back to you.

**ROBIN ROBERTS, ABC NEWS**

All right, Diane. And I'm glad that she asked him about, did he blame people for not getting out. Many people could not get out. They didn't have the financial means to evacuate. They don't have a car. They didn't have money to, to rent a car. And some -like in the case of my mother, health concerns. She didn't, physically was not able to get in a car and leave, and drive for that amount of time to get out of harm's way.

**CHARLES GIBSON, ABC NEWS**

We are gonna go next to ABC's Bill Weir, "Good Morning America" weekend anchor, who got into New Orleans by boat yesterday, and on the way, made a rather amazing discovery. Bill?

**LANGUAGE: ENGLISH**

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