

US Failure to Airlift Endangered Floridians Out of Harm's Way

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Global Research, September 10, 2017

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#), [Poverty & Social Inequality](#)

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Most people evacuating threatened areas likely prefer making their own arrangements - in most cases either driving or booking flights to safe locations.

In most of Florida, ahead of Hurricane Irma's arrival, it's not easy, affordable, or possible for many. Highways are choked with traffic moving at a snail's pace - even during late night, pre-dawn hours.

Many gas stations ran out of fuel. Airlines cancelled thousands of flights. Price gouging for many people able to book them is deplorable, in some cases costing thousands of dollars, in others far higher than normal prices.

Dynamic pricing models airlines use hike prices dramatically when demand greatly exceeds capacity.

According to Airline Weekly's Seth Kaplan,

"(t)his is what happens when thousands of people want to leave a place all at once."

Airline algorithms adjust fares according to demand and what competitors are charging.

Post-Labor Day is a low-travel period, Kaplan explained

"so there were already less seats available now than last week. You're facing a lower supply and surging demand."

Some flights were added, but only so much can be done in a short window of time. Airlines plan months in advance for holiday periods like Christmas, New Year's and Thanksgiving.

Ones serving south, central and other Florida locations are way overbooked now. Many people wanting flights can't get them. Shelters in Florida cities are inadequate, unable to accommodate demand.

Millions of Floridians were warned to leave ahead of Hurricane Irma's arrival overnight

Saturday into Sunday morning.

Friday it was downgraded to a category 4 storm, on Saturday upgraded to category 5 with maximum sustained winds of 160 MPH, moving about 13 MPH west, northwest.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) warned that

“Irma is expected to make landfall in Florida as an extremely dangerous major hurricane (with) life-threatening wind to much of the state regardless of the exact track of the center.”

Life-threatening storm surge poses the greatest danger, especially to coastal areas of southern and central Florida, including the Keys.

Irma is a killer storm, a major threat to much of the state. Evacuating from harm’s way is essential.

Extra train and bus service would help greatly. Why didn’t Trump order a Pentagon airlift days ago? It has enormous capacity to move many thousands of people daily, especially with round-the-clock flights.

If requested earlier, NATO and other countries would likely have sent transport planes to Florida to aid Pentagon operations.

Many Florida residents are elderly and infirm, requiring help with their daily needs, unable to evacuate on their own. Nor can anyone ill or incapacitated.

Many others can’t afford sky-high airline ticket prices. Still others have no means of transportation without help.

Isn’t providing it, especially in times of extreme situations like now, what responsible government is supposed to be all about!

Washington did nothing to help Houston and surrounding areas ahead of Hurricane Harvey’s arrival. Nor is aid forthcoming now for affected residents, except perhaps woefully inadequate measures.

The same holds for Floridians – on their own in harm’s way to fend for themselves. The world’s richest country refuses to do anything except warn residents in Irma’s path to evacuate.

Why hasn’t it gone all out to help, beginning days ago, working round-the-clock to airlift or otherwise transport hundreds of thousands of people from areas threatened by Irma – especially ones unable to fend for themselves?

Why wasn’t planning done years ago to prepare for dire situations like now?

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