(U) Imagery gave decision makers and responders a common view of the disasters.

(U) We've all seen images of the devastation and human heartache wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, but perhaps few people realize that the NRO, in collaboration with its mission partners, provided valuable support to recovery efforts.

(U) First Response

(U) Collection is in compliance with law (Executive Order 12333). Legal authorization to collect domestic imagery for this purpose has been obtained.

(Photo is UNCLASSIFIED.)
(U) Aerial image of damage from Hurricane Katrina. Photo courtesy of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.
When disaster strikes, information gives FEMA and other first responders a quick “big picture” perspective necessary to determine what areas are in most urgent need for rescue and relief—sort of a disaster triage—and the type of response needed. The information also guides transportation and logistics decisions, by determining the accessibility of key roads, rail lines, bridges, ports, and airports.

is a key to the provision of unclassified damage assessment maps and Web site postings for first responders. These products guide response efforts by showing the severity, type, and location of damage. For instance, areas in Gulf Port, Mississippi, suffered extensive storm surge and wind destruction, whereas large parts of the city of New Orleans suffered flooding due to levee breaches. These situations called for different types of response.

Commercial imagery has the advantage of giving a broad area view, for instance showing the wide extent of flooding. Unclassified products can be disseminated to a broad responder audience, enabling military and civil agencies to determine effective courses of action over widespread areas.

For example, imagery showed that the Interstate 10 Bridge crossing Lake Pontchartrain—one of the primary bridges in and out of the northeastern quarter of New Orleans—was impassible.
In addition, preliminary damage estimates that repair or replacement of some of the damage could take over one year to complete.

Maps showed, in a glance, the status of airfields and whether an airfield could accommodate large military transport aircraft, such as C-130s, to deliver supplies critical to saving lives and protecting property, or passenger jets to evacuate people.

Imagery also showed the locations of levee breaches, which helped the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plan and carry out their repair operations.

The storm displaced a number of these structures, breaking them free from their rigging, including one oil platform that lodged against a bridge in Biloxi, Mississippi. Several damaged petroleum structures leaked oil or natural gas.
determine airfield status and availability for recovery operations.

(U) Environmental Impact

(Graphic is UNCLASSIFIED.)

[Image of a map showing flood water.] For example, the flooding of such plants not only cut off the availability of fresh water, but also contributed to environmental health hazards.

(U) Other NRO Support

The Operational Support Office (OSO) of NRO's Directorate for Military Support deployed communications equipment and operators to Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, in support of data to the Naval Oceanographic Office (NAVO). For more information on OSO's Buzz Light support to NAVO, see article on page 14.