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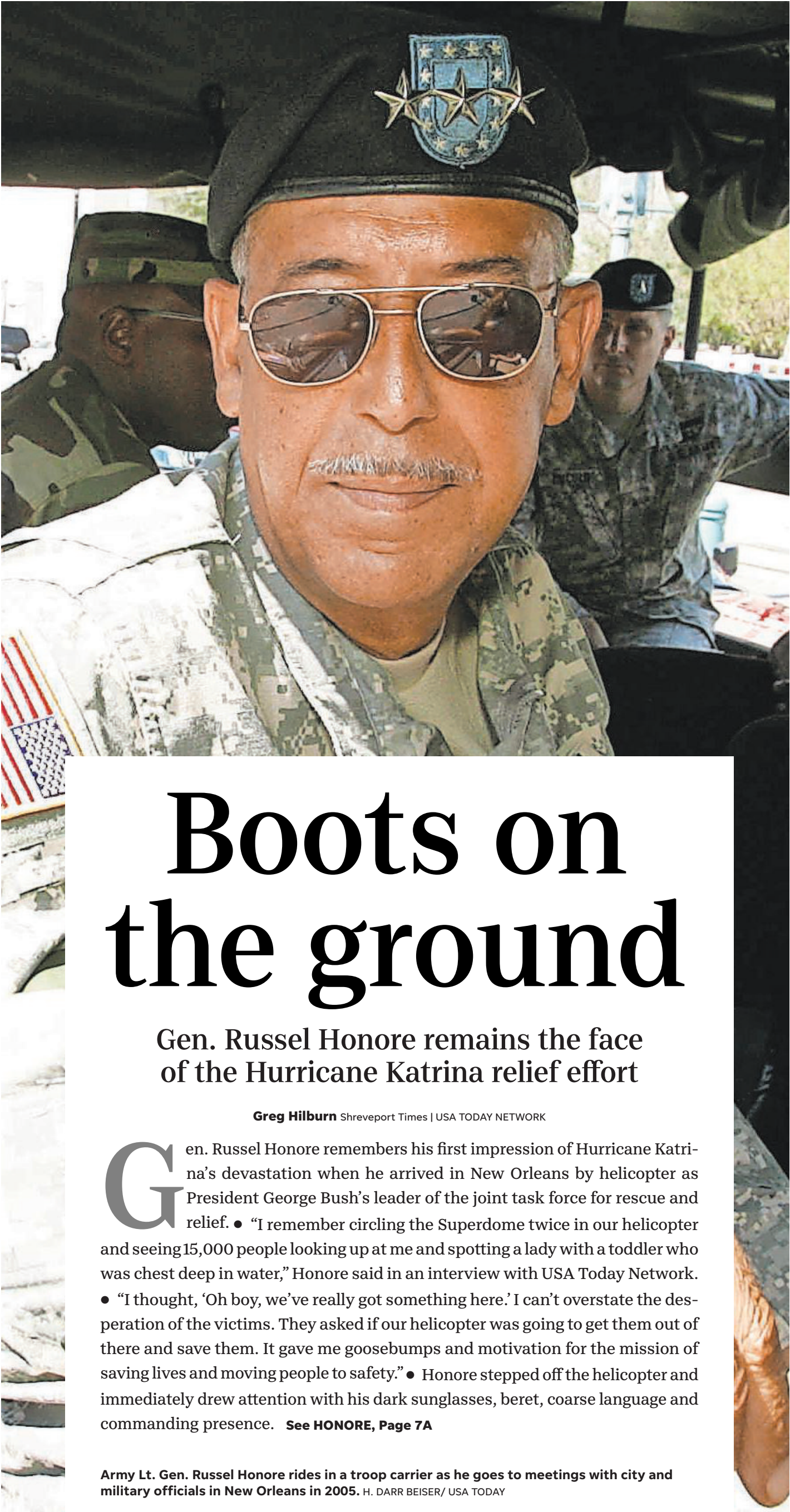
WEEKEND

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HURRICANE KATRINA 20 YEARS LATER



Boots on the ground

Gen. Russel Honore remains the face of the Hurricane Katrina relief effort

Greg Hilburn Shreveport Times | USA TODAY NETWORK

Gen. Russel Honore remembers his first impression of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation when he arrived in New Orleans by helicopter as President George Bush’s leader of the joint task force for rescue and relief. • “I remember circling the Superdome twice in our helicopter and seeing 15,000 people looking up at me and spotting a lady with a toddler who was chest deep in water,” Honore said in an interview with USA Today Network. • “I thought, ‘Oh boy, we’ve really got something here.’ I can’t overstate the desperation of the victims. They asked if our helicopter was going to get them out of there and save them. It gave me goosebumps and motivation for the mission of saving lives and moving people to safety.” • Honore stepped off the helicopter and immediately drew attention with his dark sunglasses, beret, coarse language and commanding presence. See HONORE, Page 7A

Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honore rides in a troop carrier as he goes to meetings with city and military officials in New Orleans in 2005. H. DARR BEISER/ USA TODAY

Lower Ninth Ward still fighting its way back

Rick Jervis
USA TODAY

Concrete steps still stand sentry over empty lots here in the Lower Ninth Ward, their houses long washed away. Overgrown lots outnumber grocery stores. Streets, once filled with the sounds of children playing or older folks playing dominoes, are mostly quiet, punctured occasionally by the sound of a distant lawn mower. “Wasn’t always like this,” said Harry Sims, 72, whose house, on aptly-named Flood Street, is ringed on three sides by empty lots. “Katrina chased them all away.”

It’s been 20 years since Hurricane Katrina roared ashore on the Gulf Coast on the morning of Aug. 29, 2005, and the federal levees failed across New Orleans, unleashing flood torrents across the city.

The Category 3 hurricane and the ensuing breached levees and floodwalls caused more than 1,300 deaths – many of them in the Lower Ninth Ward – and around \$200 billion in damages (adjusted for inflation), making it at the time the costliest hurricane ever to hit the USA.

The disaster still claims the third-highest death toll from a hurricane in recorded U.S. history, according to federal estimates.

Though Katrina also devastated parts of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, New Orleans received the lion’s share of damage: Around 80% of the city was underwater for weeks and the city lost more than 120,000 of its residents, who fled from the storm and never returned.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the storm, the USA TODAY Network is telling not only the story of New Orleans and its recovery – here in the Lower Ninth Ward and beyond – but also about those who fled the city in the storm’s wake and established new homes across the nation.

The storm not only redrew the racial makeup of New Orleans, but transformed other communities, too.

New Orleans today is less Black and more Latino, with many more out-of-town residents, many of whom were part of a wave of volunteers that descended onto the city to help rebuild, then stayed.

The percentage of Black residents in New Orleans, though still the majority, dropped from 67% in 2000 to 56% in 2024, according to The Data Center, which tracks New Orleans’ population

See NINTH WARD, Page 7A

Note to readers

We will not be printing a paper on Monday, Sept. 1, but will be providing it to you via the eNewspaper. You can always find the latest news on our website, mobile app, newsletters and social media. Subscribers can access the eNewspaper by going to our website and clicking on eNewspaper in the black navigation bar.

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