

#ENVIRONMENT

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Trump praises response to Puerto Rico, says crisis straining budget

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump expressed satisfaction on Tuesday with the federal response to Hurricane Maria's devastation of Puerto Rico, despite criticism that the government was slow to address the crisis.



Trump, who has grappled with hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria in the past six weeks, said at a briefing that the disasters were straining the U.S. budget.

“I hate to tell you, Puerto Rico, but you’ve thrown our budget a little out of whack because we’ve spent a lot of money on Puerto Rico,” he said. “And that’s fine. We’ve saved a lot of lives.”

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Two weeks after it was hit by the worst hurricane in 90 years, many of Puerto Rico’s 3.4 million residents are still struggling without basic necessities. Shortly after Trump left Puerto Rico, Governor Ricardo Rosello said the death toll had risen from 16 to 34.

The U.S. territory’s economy already was in recession before Hurricane Maria and its government had filed for bankruptcy in the face of a \$72 billion debt load. In an interview with Fox News, Trump said the island’s debt would have to be erased.

“They owe a lot of money to your friends on Wall Street and we’re going to have to wipe that out. You’re going to say goodbye to that, I don’t know if it’s Goldman Sachs but whoever it is