

## **Water Bottles in Ceiba**

- The water bottles currently in Ceiba were not delivered to the Government of Puerto Rico to give out during an emergency since it was under FEMA's custody and it wasn't until April 2018 that the Government was notified that it was excess inventory that could be requested.
- On April 17, 2018, Puerto Rico's General Services Administration (GSA) publishes the amount of excess bottled water that FEMA has in Puerto Rico.
  - o In its publication, GSA published photos of bottles of water properly stored in a warehouse.
  - o A career official from GSA requested the excess water without informing supervisors. Current GSA director, Mr. Ottmar Chávez, was not the head of the agency at that time.
- On April 26, 2018, FEMA gives GSA the excess bottle water.
  - o FEMA had moved the bottled waters to the landing strip that is managed by the federal government in Ceiba (Puerto Rico).
  - o The Government of Puerto Rico does not have control over the federal land where these bottles were placed. The Government of Puerto Rico did not transport these bottles to their current, exposed location.
- On May 24, 2018, FEMA asks the Government of Puerto Rico when they could pick up the water bottles. The Government responds that it will pick it up between the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> of May.
- On the 30<sup>th</sup> of May, the Government of Puerto Rico goes for the first time to the landing strip to pick up the water bottles. The merchandise was distributed to different municipalities, including Barceloneta, Lares, San Sebastián and Yauco.
  - o From the 30<sup>th</sup> of May until August, 12 municipalities and other government entities received a total of 732 pallets of water.
- The Government received complaints by the Municipality of Barceloneta and an agency of the Government that indicated the water had a foul odor and had a bad taste.
- Given the complaints, the Government decided not to continue using the water bottles provided by FEMA in order to carry out tests and give it back to the federal government.
- FEMA should have:
  - o Given out the water during the emergency, since it was under their possession.
  - o Declare the water bottles as "excess inventory" before April 2018.
  - o Stored the water bottles properly at all times.
- Puerto Rico's GSA has ordered an internal investigation and assumes responsibility for:
  - o Requesting an amount of merchandise it could not handle in a timely manner
  - o Receiving merchandise that was not apt for consumption.

***This is a Statement by Héctor M. Pesquera, secretary of Puerto Rico's Department of Public Security.***

***From the Desk of  
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- GSA has, for years, lacked adequate internal controls and this is the reason Governor Rosselló announced its transformation and named a new director. The new director, Mr. Ottmar Chávez, was not in charge of the agency during the dates of this incidence.