

The NOTICIAS 24/7 video-interview (in spanish) is located here:

<https://www.facebook.com/noticias247pr/videos/10155680837074857/>

Full Transcript (ENGLISH translation):

Jose Alberto Irizarry (Reporter): Greetings viewers of Noticias 24/7. At this moment, I am in front of the Convention Center in Puerto Rico. As you know, this is the location where the main operations of the government agencies and FEMA take place at to coordinate the disaster relief for the whole island to address the Hurricane Maria crisis; and you know as well about the current situation with the distribution of gasoline and diesel.

With me is Victor Rodríguez of the Unión de Camioneros (the Truck driver Union/Syndicate of Puerto Rico representative) and Workers Union CEO Germán Vázquez (UTRA - Unión de Trabajadores y Ramas Anexas). What is the situation? When FEMA says there is no trucks to distribute the disaster relief containers we ask ourselves how is it possible there aren't enough licensed drivers--

Victor: That is false. Completely false. Since yesterday, I have told to the island's press that someone spread that falsehood to blame the truck drivers. The truck drivers are willing to drive, and in wait of FEMA releasing access to the Diesel to be able to distribute it so that commerce is able to open.

We have asked to the government to talk with us (the Truck Driver Union) to negotiate the curfew from 7pm to 2am to be able to transport the diesel and food nationwide to the commerce companies outside normal operations so that the distribution doesn't affect the population in day time, so that in the morning when people wake up they already have access to gasoline, groceries for their homes.

Not only to the metropolitan area, but to all of Puerto Rico: Aibonito, Orocovis, everywhere to all the good and humble people of this country which is suffering because FEMA has seized the diesel.

We just talked with the mayor of Vieques (a small island east of Puerto Rico) just now and he is unable to do anything because he has no diesel for all of Vieques.

Reporter: Just a second. I want to get this straight. You are saying that FEMA took jurisdiction of gasoline and groceries that arrived in the port containers for the disaster relief that is right now stuck in the ports?

Victor: That's correct. FEMA has seized everything and then they are not allowing the truck drivers to reach the food distribution centers to deliver them to the good and humble people of this country; and FEMA is cloistered inside the Convention Center, while the country is suffering, while the country is crying. Do you understand? We are asking the Governor of Puerto Rico to

straighten his pants, and to confront FEMA that they have to free their control on the diesel so that it can reach the humble people, so that it can reach the hospitals and everywhere. The elders, and children are right now in beds in the hospitals. The diesel isn't arriving. The hospitals run with diesel-powered generators. And in the gasoline stations there isn't any because FEMA doesn't allow the release of the diesel reserves.

Reporter: But yesterday, too, the president of [MIDA](#) (**Cámara de Mercadeo, Industria y Distribución de Alimentos**) mentioned they are requesting independent licensed truck drivers to distribute food and he also mentioned the lack of trucks--

Victor: Look. Manolo is a great person, but Manolo doesn't coordinate the trucks in this country. The trucks are coordinated by us. I am telling you, and I have told the country we are willing to drive these trucks; but if the truck itself doesn't have diesel fuel that is what is needed for the truck to get going and it is seized by FEMA, then nothing can be done no matter what FEMA wishes to accomplish.

Reporter: What can you tell us, UTRA president?

Germán: I have had various meetings with Manolo. He has been a diligent person. I called him by phone this morning, and he shared with me the idea. We understand, first, that after the curfew stipulation (7pm to 5am) the government should allow the gasoline stations to sell gasoline to the trucks distributing the food. Second, that FEMA get through their skull that without the diesel to fuel our trucks, we can't deliver the food to the regional distribution centers. Right now, all the supermarkets around Puerto Rico work with diesel-powered generators. You can open the supermarket to sell things such as canned food, but they can't use refrigerators because the refrigerated food rots. We are asking the government to release the diesel to allow those trucks to distribute the food and to allow the sale of diesel in gasoline stations so that trucks can be replenished to do their work.

Reporter: What's your goal coming here to the Convention Center where FEMA is stationed?

Victor: We want to talk to FEMA. To give us an opportunity to talk with them about how we can solve the problem of this country. Here what worries us is our people. We are Puerto Ricans. We love this country; but definitely there must be a logistics to be able to operate and distribute to the people that most need it.

Reporter: How many licensed truck drivers are available to help with the distribution nationwide?

Victor: We have 20,000 trucks to distribute food and gasoline.

Reporter: Are these trucks available?

Victor: They are all available and ready. The problem is that the majority of trucks able to distribute food operates with diesel fuel. With the lack of diesel, because FEMA has seized it and won't let it be used, then the whole island is paralyzed. Do you understand?

Editor's Note: There is a lot of blame on FEMA, but it is unknown who is really controlling the diesel flow. Some people say FEMA is not responsible on controlling that. Thus, there should be better coordination between the Governor and the Trucks union to fuel these 20,000 trucks. He clearly stated the drivers are willing to drive the trucks. It is turning into a logistical nightmare that needs to be addressed quickly. I am not affiliated with Noticias 24/7. I'm a Facebook reader like you. Just translated it the best I could for those who don't understand spanish.