

# *FEMA awarded \$156 million Puerto Rico meal contract to company that didn't deliver*

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San Juan, Feb 9 (RHC)- The Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA, has come under fire after failing to deliver 30 million meals to hurricane-ravaged Puerto Rico. The agency awarded a major \$156-million meal contract to a small one-person company, Tribute Contracting, located in Atlanta, Georgia. Then, FEMA terminated the agreement 20 days after the deal was inked and the company only managed to distribute 50,000 meals – less than 0.25 percent of the targeted figure – according to the owner, Tiffany Brown.

FEMA paid \$255,000 for the 50,000 meals that were delivered, Brown said, adding that the payments from FEMA were not consistent and as a result contributed to her not being able to meet the demands of the contractual arrangement. "They need to really shore up their infrastructure for payment for their contractors," Brown said. "If you want someone to provide a service of \$155 million, you really should pay or wire transfer within 24 hours or pay a percentage." FEMA stated that the contract was terminated because the company did not package the food in "self-heating" bags.

Two Democrats are calling for FEMA to be subpoenaed for documents relating to Hurricane Maria, because the agency failed to provide the tens of millions of meals. U.S. Rep. Elijah Cummings and Stacey Plaskett signed a letter to the House Oversight Committee questioning the multi-million-dollar contract. "One of the primary reasons FEMA failed to deliver these meals is because it inexplicably awarded a contract worth approximately \$156 million to deliver 30 million emergency meals to a tiny, one-person company with a history of struggling with much smaller contracts," the letter stated.

Earlier this week, Brown complained that she has been overwhelmed and plans to sue the government for \$70 million. "Here is what I can say, I've had challenges with government contracts in the past. The primary reason is financial resources, and lack of support," she said.

CNN confirmed that Brown had multiple disputes with government agencies in the past. The federal prison system canceled contracts with her company in 2013 and 2014. And, the U.S. Government Publishing Office had deemed Tribute Contracting as ineligible for contracts until January 7, 2019.

Democrats on the House Oversight Committee said documents showed Brown's company had a history of problems handling smaller government contracts worth less than \$100,000 and had been barred from government work until 2019. "It is unclear why FEMA or any agency would have proceeded with a contract worth \$156 million in light of this company's poor contracting history and these explicit warnings," Democratic Representative Elijah Cummings said.

FEMA has also faced criticism for approving a \$30 million contract for emergency tarps and plastic sheeting—of which not a single tarp was ever delivered.

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