The general is a native of Lakeland, Louisiana, which is northwest of Baton Rouge. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in vocational agriculture from Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge in 1971. Honore was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the infantry upon graduation. He also has a master's degree in human resources from Troy State University.

He has served in a number of infantry command positions and at the Pentagon. Before taking command of the 1st Army, Honore commanded the Standing Joint Force Headquarters-Homeland Security, U.S. Northern Command.

He's known for his searing one-liners; a relentless schedule that allows only two hours of sleep a night; and a growly, commanding presence. He's also in charge of the military's response to hurricane Katrina. If that superstorm now rivals the 9/11 terror attacks on the scale of national disasters, then First Army Lt. Gen. Russel Honoré has emerged as the Rudy Giuliani of the Gulf Coast.

A rough-talking Louisiana native, he is credited with changing the character of the relief effort from a mad scramble to an increasingly orderly and effective rescue and restoration. But General Honoré is also having to navigate a fine line between necessary leadership and the specter of federal troops using force against American citizens. So far, he appears to have succeeded.

A SurveyUSA poll of 1,200 Americans this week voted General Honoré as the most effective leader of the relief operation, ahead of Louisiana Gov. Kathleen Blanco, New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin and, at the bottom of the list, Michael Brown, director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Running on a couple of hours' sleep a night, Honoré brings an unbridled passion to his job, challenging subordinates to keep up, his aides say. "The name fits: If he's not Honoré, he's ornery," says one volunteer.

"He's less a man than a force of nature," says his battle captain, Maj. John Rogers. "He knows the way and that's why he's leading. If you wonder whether God has a role in this relief effort, General Honoré is proof: He's the right man for the job."