

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to be present for rollcall votes 146, 147, and 148 due to medical reasons. Had I been present, I would have voted "yea" on rollcall votes 146, 147, and 148.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, April 29, 2003, had I been present for rollcall vote Nos. 146, 147, and 148, I would have voted the following way: Rollcall vote No. 146 "Aye"; rollcall vote No. 147 "Aye"; rollcall vote No. 148 "Aye."

ELECTION OF MEMBER TO COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I offer a resolution (H. Res. 205) and ask unanimous consent for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 205

Resolved, That the following Member be and is hereby elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

Committee on Resources: Mr. PUTNAM.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

COMMUNICATION FROM HON. NANCY PELOSI, DEMOCRATIC LEADER

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Democratic Leader:

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2003.

Hon. J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: pursuant to (section 1238(b)(3)) of the Floyd D. Spence National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (P.L. 106-398), I hereby reappoint Mr. George Becker of Pennsylvania, for a term to expire on December 31, 2005 and Mr. Michael Wessel of Virginia, for a term to expire on December 31, 2004, to the United States-China Security Review Commission.

Best regards,

NANCY PELOSI,
Democratic Leader.

AFRICA ON BRINK OF DEVASTATING FAMINE

(Mr. WOLF asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, I cannot believe it is happening again. A famine worse than the one that devastated Ethiopia in 1984 threatens the lives of millions of Africans. This is happening right now, today, and tragically, very

few people are even aware of the gravity of the situation.

This month's edition of Christianity Today includes an article detailing the imminent devastation. Africa is on the brink of a crisis of Biblical proportions, yet regular readers of The Washington Post, The New York Times, and nearly every other major news outlet would have no idea.

In 1984, 8 million people were in need of food aid. This past January, more than 11 million people struggled for their next meal. When I visited Ethiopia in January, I saw women and children, one, this young girl, who were too weak to feed themselves. Today, the situation is even more distressing.

The war in Iraq has demanded our attention, but we cannot allow this silent emergency to grow worse. The lives of millions of women and children depend on this story being shared loudly and boldly. How will history judge our response if millions die while more could have been done.

Madam Speaker, I include a copy of a letter I sent to President Bush regarding this matter, and factual information regarding Eritrea and Ethiopia.

The material referred to is as follows:
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 29, 2003.

Hon. GEORGE W. BUSH,
President, The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I am writing to encourage you to recommend that a special envoy for hunger be appointed by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan.

While Jim Morris, the director of the World Food Programme, is aggressively drawing attention to this crisis, it was distressing to read the recent cable from the American ambassador in Ethiopia describing a grimmer outlook for the coming months than had previously been expected. The cable and the latest NOAA weather forecast (both enclosed), which revises expectations for crop viability downward, paint a bleak outlook for millions of Ethiopians for months to come. Perhaps you might want to look at this idea and urge the U.N. to appoint this special envoy for a year.

I know that the U.S. has undertaken a number of other steps to respond to the famine in Ethiopia and around the world, but I feel that while the United States is doing a good job, it is important to enlist greater help from the other nations who have not fully participated. I am in no way doubting Mr. Morris's efforts or abilities, but believe that a special envoy could augment and complement his efforts.

Many European news outlets have run stories in recent days on the growing number of Africans, whose lives are now in jeopardy. The Ethiopian Government is planning another 'Live-Aid' concert to re-energize the donor community and draw international attention to the situation. The momentum of this concert, coupled with the appointment of a U.N. special envoy, may help draw enough attention and resources to the continent and save the lives of millions of women and children.

In Matthew 25, Jesus talks about the obligation to feed the hungry. I have noticed that in these villages and camps in Africa, it is the women and the children who are powerless and who are dying.

Your consideration would be appreciated.
Sincerely,

FRANK R. WOLF,
Member of Congress.

CLIMATE INFORMATION AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS FOR ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA

Background—This report contains the latest information from the Department of Commerce (DOC)/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) on weather and climate status, impact and outlook, including potential impacts on food security or hydrology for the following countries (the Appendix describes the weekly Africa Weather Hazards Assessment also attached):
Eastern Africa: Eritrea, Ethiopia.

CLIMATE STATUS, IMPACT AND OUTLOOK

Eastern Africa: These countries are just entering their rainy season. Emphasis is on current conditions and the impacts suggested by the seasonal forecasts.

ERITREA

Climatology

Eritrea has two major climate regimes, the desert lowland climate and the wetter, cooler highland climate.

The desert lowlands extend along the Red Sea coast. Annual rainfall amounts average less than 8 inches and summertime maximum temperatures often exceed 100°F. Nighttime lows during the summer are typically around 90°F.

In the highlands, the climate is cooler and wetter, with annual average rainfall amounts ranging from 18 to 24 inches. In the Eritrean capital, Asmara (elevation ~ 7700 feet), summertime high temperatures are typically in the upper 60s and low 70s with nighttime lows in the upper 50s and lower 60s.

Current Status

Dryness in recent years has resulted in long-term drought conditions across southern Eritrea. Over the last week we have seen a shift in the precipitation patterns with light rainfall extending northward into central and southern Eritrea. Based on the National Weather Service Global Forecast model this rainfall of less than about ½ inch per day is expected to continue through the next 4 days through April 21. Temperatures have been near-normal.

Outlook and Impact

May-July 2003: Near to above normal rainfall and above normal temperatures are expected throughout most of the country, which would benefit seasonal crops. However, poor pasture conditions and long-term moisture deficits are likely to persist.

August-October 2003: Near to above normal rainfall and above normal temperatures are expected throughout most of the country, which would benefit seasonal crops.

ETHIOPIA

Climatology:

Ethiopia has three major climate regimes, the highlands, the southern and eastern parts of the country, and north central Ethiopia.

The highlands cover most of western Ethiopia and are at elevations ranging from 3,000 to well over 8,000 feet. In the Ethiopian Highlands, there is one rainy season which begins in May and runs through September. The heaviest rains typically fall in July and August. From October through April, rainfall is typically light. Average annual rainfall across the Ethiopian Highlands can exceed 60 inches. Average summer maximum temperatures in the highlands are in the 60s and average minimums are in the 50s.

Addis Ababa, the capital and largest city (elevation ~7700 feet), averages 47.7 inches of rainfall per year and has average summertime maximums in the upper 60s and minimums in the mid-50s. However, extremes range from the 30s to the 90s. In general, the mountain weather is highly variable.

In the southern and eastern parts of the country, there are two rainy seasons, separated by a dry season. The first rainy season

occurs in April and May and is the major wet season accounting for most of the region's annual rainfall. Rainfall typically tapers off during June, July and August. This is followed by a second minor wet season in September and October. Average annual rainfall in this regime ranges from about 30 inches in the southwest to less than 10 inches in the southeast. Average summer maximum temperatures are in the 90s and average minimums are in the 70s.

The third major climate regime occurs in the Afar region of Ethiopia and the surrounding areas. Afar is in northern Ethiopia and shares a border with Eritrea and Djibouti. The first rainy season in this area occurs during March, April and May and is the minor wet season. Most of the rain falls during the second wet season which occurs during July and August. Except for occasional showers, the region is dry from mid-September through February. Average annual rainfall in this regime is less than 10 inches. Average summer maximum temperatures are in the 90s and average minimums are in the 70s.

Current Status:

Dryness in recent years has resulted in long-term drought conditions across Ethiopia's Afar region and southern Eritrea, and adjacent portions of Ethiopia's Tigray, Amhara and Oromiya regions. There are also indications conditions are becoming drier across parts of southeastern Ethiopia. Over the last week we have seen a shift in the precipitation patterns with light rainfall extending northward into central Ethiopia. Based on the National Weather Service Global Forecast model this rainfall of less than about ½ inch per day is expected to continue through the next 4 days through April 21. Temperatures have been near normal.

Outlook and Impact:

The Experimental Climate Outlook from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center (CPC) and the International Research Institute indicate the outlook for Ethiopia as follows:

May-July 2003: There is a small increase in the probability for above normal rainfall in northwest Ethiopia. This region is one of the wettest parts in the country. There is also a small increase in the probability for below normal rainfall in southeastern Ethiopia, which is semi-arid grassland. Normal rainfall is expected for the remainder of the country. Some improvement in long-term drought conditions is expected, however, poor pasture conditions and long-term moisture deficits are likely to persist in the Afar region. The potential exists for an increase in long-term rainfall deficits and vegetation stress in parts of southeastern Ethiopia.

August-October 2003: Near to above normal rainfall and above normal temperatures are expected throughout most of the country, which would benefit seasonal crops.

APPENDIX

It is important to recognize that many of the issues discussed are regional in nature. This is exemplified by the attached figure which depicts the most recent weekly Africa Weather Hazards Assessment. NOAA, with support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), has the lead for preparing this bulletin, using information from NOAA, NASA, and USGS. It is distributed as follows:

1. By electronic mail to the Department of State, USAID/FEWS, field contractor Chemonics staff, USGS, and NASA. Recipients also include the Drought Monitoring Centers in Nairobi, Kenya, and Harare, Zimbabwe, Agrhymet in Niamey, Niger, and the Southern Africa Development Community in Gaborone, Botswana.

2. The bulletin is placed on the Climate Prediction Center (CPC), National Weather Service (NWS) web site—<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/fews>

3. CPC's web site is hotlinked to the USAID/FEWS homepage at: <http://www.fews.net/>

The Africa Weather Hazards Assessment provides discussions and graphics which highlight areas of concern to policy makers, relief workers, decision makers and others with interest in the African continent. NOAA's CPC produces daily, weekly, 10-day, and monthly precipitation estimates for the Africa region, and also monitors meteorological and climatic phenomena for the continent. CPC monitors dryness, drought, flooding, temperature extremes, cyclones, and organized storm systems. This information is included in the weekly weather hazards product as guidance to help users make more accurate, relevant decisions.

With support from the USAID/FEWS, NOAA anticipate developing a similar weekly bulletin for Central America over the next few months.

Information on the seasonal outlooks is a result of a partnership between the NOAA/NWS Africa Desk and the NOAA-sponsored International Research Institute for Climate Prediction.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each:

MINORITY HEALTH DISPARITIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, I would like to first extend my gratitude to the gentlemen from Texas, Mr. RODRIGUEZ and Mr. HINOJOSA, along with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, for organizing this special order tonight to discuss minority health issues.

Earlier today, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Native American Caucus held a rally to call attention to the need to increase health care access.

In my home State of Indiana, Mr. Speaker, there were over 1.4 million people who did not have health insurance at some point last year. That is 26 percent of the nonelderly population.

Universal, affordable access to health care would be a major factor in eliminating the vast health disparities for minority populations. Affordable access to health care for the minority populations is a matter of economics as well as life.

I am sure many Members of Congress, Mr. Speaker, saw today where Bethlehem Steel in Maryland has sold out to another company, and all of the longstanding, hardworking employees there subsequently lost their health insurance.

In Indiana, black or African Americans comprise 8.4 percent of Indiana's

population. The top leading causes of death plaguing the African American population are heart disease; cancer; cerebrovascular diseases, predominantly stroke; and diabetes.

In the Hispanic population, the leading causes of death are heart disease, cancer, and unattended injuries.

In Indiana, a 20 percent excess mortality rate from incidence of heart disease exists for African Americans in comparison to whites; a 23 percent excess mortality rate from incidence of cancer exists for African Americans in comparison to whites; a 23 percent excess mortality rate from incidence of cerebrovascular disease, predominantly stroke, exists for blacks by comparison; a 105 percent excess mortality rate from the incidence of diabetes exists for blacks in comparison to whites. These excess rates not only take life, but create economic hardships of hospitalization, prescription drugs, and loss of income.

April is National Minority Health Month. We need to use this time to reflect on what changes need to be made in the way we view access to health and who gets the best treatment.

In Indiana, African Americans die at a higher rate, 25 percent. Per 100,000 population, cancer, 72 percent more African Americans; diabetes, 33 percent more deaths; heart disease, 73 more African American deaths; stroke, 18 percent more deaths.

The numbers are very troubling and alarming. Mr. Speaker, we must do something to counteract the disparity in health care and health insurance for minorities across this country.

Last year, the Institute of Medicine came out with a study: "Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care." It found that racial and ethnic minorities in the United States tend to receive lower quality health care than any others.

The report made many recommendations as to what should be done; and certainly, Mr. Speaker, we need to consider very seriously universal health care, not just to undergird the disparities that exist in minority health care, but to ensure that people across racial and economic lines access quality medical care in the same spirit and in the same way that current Members of Congress do.

Mr. Speaker, again I would like to commend the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) for calling this special order tonight. I trust that at the end of the conversation and the dialogue, that America will be better informed and Congress will be moved to act.

GET THE U.S. OUT OF THE U.N.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge the leadership of this body to bring a very important vote to the House floor.